

Good afternoon, Chairman Tom Tiffany, Ranking Member Joe Neguse, members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of legislative measures that grant equal rights to producers who are blessed to hold permits and use federal lands.

Currently, I serve as President of The Association of National Grasslands and am a member of the Wyoming Stockgrowers, NCBA, and have the privilege of holding a seat on the board of the Public Lands Council. Most importantly, I am a husband and father trying to carve out a living as a rancher- playing my part to build a legacy for generations to come. My wife and I, with our children, own and operate the historic Fiddleback ranch in NE Wyoming. We run about 1,000 head of Black Angus cow/calf pairs on 65,000 acres. I affectionately say, I am retired and always on vacation because I love what I do. Federal lands make my dreams possible. Without land use permits, there is no way I could afford to ranch on this scale.

The Association of National Grasslands (ANG) is an organization consisting of Grazing Associations and direct grazing permittees working in cooperation with the United States Forest Service in the protection, improvement, development and administration of the National Grasslands. We represent 30 national grasslands, grazing associations, and districts- with about 1275 members that utilize a million AUMs of permitted grazing on 4 million acres. The Association of National Grasslands appreciates Congresswoman Harriet Hageman's efforts in sponsoring, and the Subcommittee's consideration of House Bill 6300.

The proposed legislation seeks to give National Grasslands permittees the same due process rights that the Bureau of Land Management and National Forest permittees currently enjoy. The legislation will replace the words "lands within National Forests" with the words "National Forest System lands" in Section 1752 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA).

During the Congressional deliberations of the Federal Land Policy Management Act in 1976, original language included National Grassland permittees in the due process protections of 43 USC §1752; however, the National Grasslands permittee protections were removed in Committee. The final version of FLPMA omitted the National Grassland permittees, granting those due process rights only to the National Forest and Bureau of Land Management permittees.

The development of USDA Grazing Regulation 36 CFR 222.3 resulted. This regulation creates two classes of permits: one having more rights (Forest Service) and the other having less (National Grasslands). The basis for these two classes is due to FLPMA's exclusion of the National Grasslands in 43 USC § 1752(a).

Congresswoman Hageman's legislation will remedy this long-standing inequity.

The Proposed Amendment would allow National Grassland Permittees the following permit securities: 1.) the right to 10-year permits; 2.) first priority for receipt of new permit; 3.) entitlement to written notice of any permit violations and an opportunity to achieve compliance before cancellation or suspension proceedings related to the permit; and 4.) except in cases of emergency, no permit would be allowed cancelation without two (2) years prior notification. These protections that Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management permittees currently enjoy would enhance the relationship between the Forest Service and the National Grasslands permittees by creating more stability and a clearer set of rules governing the relationship.

According to the USDA Census of Agriculture the average age of ranchers is 58.1 years old. A lot of these producers are going to work until they can't, then be forced to sell out because the next generation needs a better foundation to forecast a more stable future. Putting the Grasslands on equal footing will give the young ranchers more confidence to continue producing high quality product as part of our national food security.

Since 2017 the US has lost over 17% of cattle ranches- more than 150,000 operations. The national herd numbers are at a 75 year low; while consumer demand for beef has grown ~9% over the past decade. (USDA) We can't afford to loose any more ranchers and they can't afford to loose Animal Unit Months (AUMs). The new USDA plan supports this by stating, "no net loss of AUMs."

The value of grazing can't go unrecognized. More than 60% of the western beef herd grazes on public lands, and more than 50% of the breeding ewes do, too. The DOI estimates grazing generates \$1.5 billion dollars in direct economic impact to the West each year. Grazing generates \$8.58 billion in ecosystem services annually.

As a legislative history, the Association of National Grasslands would like the following points made in the Congressional Record. First, the intent of the amendment is only to make the due process and other rights of 43 USC 1752 available National Forest System permittees, and not to make any other section of FLPMA applicable to National Grasslands. Second, the Conservation Practice program currently administered on the National Grasslands is intended to remain intact, as the Range Betterment Fund program contained in 43 USC 1751 is not changed or made applicable to the National Grasslands in any way by this amendment. Third, the National Grasslands exemptions contained in the Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA), specifically 43 USC 1907, are also intended to remain intact and not changed in any way by this amendment. Finally, the current program of issuing Grazing Agreements to Grazing Associations on the National Grasslands is intended remain intact, as the Grazing Associations would like to continue to assume the rights of a term permit holder.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, the proposed legislation simply seeks to give National Grasslands permittees the same due process rights that the Bureau of Land Management and National Forest permittees currently enjoy. H.R. 6300 will provide for stable and secure ten-year grazing agreements and permits. The modification sought by this legislation will, in fact, create a more uniform, equitable and less confusing framework for the relationship between the Forest Service managers and their rancher partners across the western portion of the United States.