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NCBA, PLC Support Spending Bill that Reins in EPA, Interior Department

WASHINGTON (July 13, 2011) – The U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Appropriations passed its fiscal year 2012 Department of Interior (DOI), environment and related agencies appropriations legislation. According to the [National Cattlemen's Beef Association](#) (NCBA) and the [Public Lands Council](#) (PLC), the bill included critical language to stop DOI and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from moving forward with regulations that could be harmful to the U.S. livestock industry. Of importance to U.S. livestock producers were provisions affecting federal lands grazing; the Clean Air Act; the Clean Water Act; range improvements; the Endangered Species Act (ESA); DOI's Wild Lands Secretarial Order; the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA); and the Administrative Procedures Act (APA).

Dustin Van Liew, NCBA director of federal lands and PLC executive director, said cattlemen and sheep producers across the western United States rely on access to federal lands to graze their livestock. However, he noted that federal statutes, including ESA, NEPA and APA have been used to reduce and, in some instances, block access to environmentally responsible federal lands grazing.

Van Liew said Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) included in the legislation a five-year extension of language to allow the renewal of grazing permits under existing terms and conditions as well as language to prohibit the management of bighorn sheep that would have harmful impacts on federal lands grazing of livestock. Also included in the legislation was a provision to limit new listings under ESA and block judicial review or challenge of a decision to remove the gray wolf from the Endangered Species List in Wyoming and the Great Lakes once those states produce authorized management plans.

Another measure was included to exempt the trailing of livestock from NEPA requirements. Van Liew hailed the passage of Rep. Cynthia Lummis' (R-Wyo.) amendment to continue the funding block on DOI's Secretarial Order 3310 regarding wild lands designations and voiced appreciation to Chairman Simpson for successfully explaining to the Committee why Rep. McCollum's (D-Minn.) amendment to increase the federal lands grazing fee should fail.

"Chairman Simpson and Rep. Lummis understand the pressures our federal lands ranchers face as agencies like DOI run roughshod over our industry with one burdensome regulation after another. They and their colleagues on the committee said enough is enough," Van Liew said. "NCBA and PLC fully support this legislation because it will stop the federal government from regulating ranchers off the range."

According to Ashley Lyon, NCBA deputy environmental counsel, the U.S. cattle industry, the largest segment of the agricultural industry in the United States, has been under attack from scientifically unfounded regulations from EPA. She said U.S. Representatives Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Tom Cole (R-Okla.) offered amendments that would prevent EPA from using any fiscal 2012 funding to advance dust and ammonia regulations under the Clean Air Act. Lyon added that Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.) offered an amendment to block funding for the implementation of EPA's numeric nutrient criteria in the state of Florida. The bill also included language that stops the attempted expanded regulation of waters under the EPA's proposed Clean Water Act guidance during fiscal year 2012.

"Government overreach by way of burdensome, scientifically unfounded regulations is putting U.S. farmers and ranchers out of business. We are thrilled to have members of Congress standing up for U.S. agriculture from EPA's gross overreach," said Lyon. "Regulating farmers and ranchers without sound science is not good for the environment or the economy."