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PLC, NCBA, ASI Support Legislation Requiring Transparency in Monument Designation Process

WASHINGTON (Feb. 21, 2011) – The [Public Lands Council](#) (PLC), [National Cattlemen’s Beef Association](#) (NCBA), [American Sheep Industry Association](#) (ASI) and 28 other livestock groups sent letters supporting legislation to amend the Antiquities Act to require oversight in the national monument designation process. The legislation, S. 407 and H.R. 758, would require the administration to seek congressional approval before designating future monuments. It was introduced in the U.S. Senate by Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) and 8 other senators and in the U.S. House of Representatives by Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) and 19 other representatives.

According to NCBA president, Bill Donald, the Antiquities Act was meant to protect “historic landmarks” and “objects of historic or scientific interest.” However, he said over the years, presidents have aggressively used the Antiquities Act to designate as monuments millions of acres of land across the western United States—much of it with unexceptional “historic or scientific” value.

“The current monument designation process has resulted in across-the-board restrictions of multiple uses on these lands,” Donald said. “Activities such as livestock grazing are a historic part of our nation’s ‘multiple-use’ tradition on public lands, contributing to both healthy landscapes and thriving rural economies. It’s a tradition we hope to continue for generations to come.”

The legislation would allow the president to designate only “the smallest area essential to ensure the proper care and management of the objects to be protected.” Additionally, the bills would establish procedures for the designation of monuments, including a public comment period; public hearings; and a report to Congress outlining the designation’s impact on the local economy, national energy security, and other uses associated with the land. All comments and analyses would be posted on the White House website. In order to take effect, proposed designations would require congressional approval within two years. Unapproved monuments could not be followed by repeat proposals.

“When a president designates thousands upon thousands of acres of monuments, local stakeholders such as ranchers, who rely on the resources for their livelihoods, suffer huge economic losses,” said ASI President Margaret Soulen Hinson. “How can we allow such important decisions to be made without local and state input?”

PLC President John Falen said, “Grazing is not only one of the multiple uses of federal lands that has made these areas so vibrant and beautiful — it’s an activity protected by laws, which are meant to allow our continued and sustainable access to an economic resource. Without the assurance of that access, our children will not be able to pick up the torch as stewards of our nation’s rangelands. These pieces of legislation will help protect that access and that tradition of stewardship.”

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