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NCBA, PLC: Congressional Oversight Needed for Wild Lands Order

WASHINGTON (March 1, 2011) – The [National Cattlemen's Beef Association](#) (NCBA) and the [Public Lands Council](#) (PLC) welcomed the House Committee on Natural Resource's oversight hearing, "The Impact of the Administration's Wild Lands Order on Jobs and Economic Growth," today, March 1, 2011. Dustin Van Liew, NCBA director of federal lands and PLC executive director, said the Department of the Interior's Secretarial Order 3310 (the Order) will have far-reaching negative effects on the western economy, which relies on a thriving public lands ranching industry.

"Shifting the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) mission to management for wilderness characteristics presents a threat to the longstanding multiple-use activities on public lands, including livestock grazing," Van Liew said. "Supporters of the Order claim it will not have any negative effects, but their claims don't match the facts. The loss of grazing rights will not only affect public lands ranchers, but the effects will also ripple throughout local and regional economies that rely on our industry. We commend Chairman Hastings (R-Wash.) and Subcommittee Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) for their leadership on this issue and will continue working with them to stop the Order."

Van Liew said according to the Wilderness Act of 1964, Congress, not the administration, has authority to designate wild lands. He said the order will allow the BLM to establish *de facto* wilderness areas without obtaining congressional approval.

"The law has been on the books for nearly 50 years. Just because this administration appears to prefer to manage the land to protect its wild characteristics, the reality is they don't have the authority to do so. And in fact, the Order will likely have extensive negative impacts on the very lands the administration claims to be protecting," Van Liew said. "When access to federal lands is limited, ranchers, the on-the-ground stewards, may be forced out of business, resulting in the fragmentation of open spaces. It is wrong for the administration to move forward with any plan that will result in such economic losses and lost jobs in our rural communities."

Van Liew said during the recent cattle industry convention, NCBA members approved policy opposing the Order that requests Secretary of Interior to rescind Secretarial Order 3310; requests the U.S. House of Representatives defund any attempt to implement the Order; and requests Congress to enact legislation clearly mandating the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw the Order.

"It is encouraging that Chairman Hastings and Subcommittee Chairman Bishop and members of his committee are working to shed light onto the negative effects the Order will have on our industry and our economy," Van Liew said. "The House has taken action both by holding this hearing and by including

language to prohibit funding to implement the Order in the recently passed continuing resolution. Now it's time for the Senate to join suit and stop the administration from moving forward with the Order.”