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Testimony for Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and  
Public Lands, 20Jul12 - Legislative Hearing on H.R. 5744,  
H.R. 5960 and H.R. 6089

July 20, 2012

The need for sweeping and massive reform in the mechanisms to expedite forest management projects to reduce hazardous fuels, increase forest health and economic development cannot be stressed enough. The current system in place is heavily laden with out-of-date along with unclear and conflicting mandates upon the land management agencies, slowing down an already cumbersome system even more. Many more roadblocks to fuels reduction, stewardship activities by Counties along with pre and post fire activities need to be addressed and removed as well. There is no doubt in the minds of residents and elected officials throughout Apache County and the Western States in general that a catastrophic loss of a natural resource is occurring. Unless drastic and sweeping changes are made to the management practices of federally managed lands, we will lose our great western timber stands. Effecting the very cultural and historic uses of the people, ability to derive economic benefit, recreational abilities, strategic capabilities and national defense along with massive amounts of habitat and wildlife. H.R. 5744 can greatly aid in this endeavor and is of utmost importance considering our current situation.

The road networks throughout each forest are not only an economic and social asset to each County and State they fall within, but an absolutely necessary item in the

abatement of, and dealing with, wildfire incidents. These road networks need to be retained in their entirety, fully intact as they are on the ground and must not be encumbered by any legal or physical blockages, removed from mapping inventories or in any way hindered in their ability to be used.

Sweeping changes are necessary in the Stewardship of our lands, and the model of County Stewardship by Apache County, Arizona needs to be replicated throughout the country. If Stewardship is to be successful, it must be in the hands of the County Governments who often are the most experienced in the care of our lands, the cultural and historic uses and the most logical and feasible local governing body. Only through concise coordination with County Government as a lead entity on the treatment and conservation of our resources will the National Forest System be able to survive.

Post-fire activities, rehabilitation, restoration and emergency measures are greatly hindered and in many cases so encumbered as to be a continual cause of great losses of economy, habitat and livelihoods. Many of the post-fire recovery programs are so short-sided, mismanaged or misguided as to be useless to the very people and resources they are meant to be helping.

Unless the very fabric and core of the management practices and conservation of our natural resources in this country are concisely reviewed using the best available science, one of the greatest losses to our country will continue to progress to the point of being lost forever. And in fact, the entire system of lands, timber stands, resources, human environments and culture that people across this nation look to as one of the greatest assets in our country is threatened with permanent and unrecoverable damage.