

SE Utah Grazing Improvement Program

c/o Sandy L. Johnson , Secretary – Telephone 435-459-1269
Fry Canyon, HC 60 Box 220, Lake Powell, UT 84533

Board Members: Don Holyoak (Chrmn. 435-260-9982) John Sampinos – Ross Hinkins – Wade Jensen – Earl Gordon Dee Taylor – Steven Redd – Butch Jensen (State Rep.) David Robinson – Sandy Johnson – Charley Tracy

DRAFT July 3, 2013

Congressman Rob Bishop,

The Southeastern Utah Grazing Advisory Board (SEGAB) has this response to your letter dated June 3, 2013. Our Board has met and discussed your letter at great length. Below are the issues we have identified and listed in order of importance to us representing Ranchers and Grazers in Carbon, Emery, Grand and San Juan Counties. We appreciate the opportunity to share these important issues.

We appreciate your recognition of importance of grazing and ranchers in this public lands process. We have a vested interest in the future of public lands. Many producers in the southeast corner of the state have been involved in the cultural, social, economic and historic aspect of public land management for as many as six generations. The use of public lands is critical to the sustainability of agriculture in this region which is critical to the sustainability of this region as a whole. Grazing on public lands is a necessary tool for fuel reduction and fire control and contributes economic activity by harvesting a renewable resource that produces food and fiber for the Nation. Studies by Utah State University show that each cow in a county contributes approximately \$500/year in economic activity with no multipliers. Private land is scarce in our counties, in Carbon County, 42% of our land is private; in Grand it is 12% whereas in San Juan and Emery Counties it is only 8% private land. Nearly all grazing animals spend the majority of the year grazing on public lands. Therefore public land grazing is critical to the economic stability of rural Utah.

- i. WILDERNESS DESIGNATION: As a board we strongly discourage creating more wilderness designation. “Multiple-use” has made this country great and provides opportunity and sustainability. The creation of Wilderness Areas eliminates multiple- use and serves only one special use group: recreation. We want the issue of Wilderness Study Areas (WSA’s) addressed and those lands released from this designation. Much of this area does not qualify for Wilderness under the Wilderness Act stipulations. Areas now held by BLM and Forest Service as Wilderness Study Areas do not qualify for wilderness designation in the BLM’s

1191 Wilderness Inventory analysis, should have “hard release” and be returned to multiple use management as provided for in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). Should designations occur, the South Eastern Regional Grazing Advisory Board (SEGAB) feels very strongly that permit holders in lands proposed for wilderness designation should have opportunity to address this action and have issues such as maintenance and creation of range improvements clearly protected. Grazing allotments within designations and those adjacent to them with suspended and active AUM’s should be itemized in a noticed public hearing and debated. We also feel very strongly that there should be no net loss of historic grazing rights, water rights, and that the ability to access and maintain these rights by mechanical means.

- ii. **WATER RIGHTS:** SEGAB asks that you take every measure to protect water rights that belong to the State of Utah and individuals. Clarify in federal law that water rights are state controlled, and create legislation that prevents the Forest Service and BLM from pressuring permit holders to give up water rights to the government in order to have permits renewed. We strongly oppose the pursuits of the National Park Service and their filing for and requesting that **all** water rights within four miles of a park boundary be granted and held by the DOI/NPS to maintain a buffer from development and multiple-use.
- iii. **POSITION ON STATE LANDS:** We encourage you to maintain State ownership of scattered trust lands sections. These lands provide the needed flexibility on federal land permits. The interspersed pattern of these state lands gives the state a stronger position for influence in the management of the surrounding federal lands and requires access be granted to the state lands. We understand the importance of land trades in making public lands legislation viable. We hope that each trade would be considered on a case by case basis with local input from all with affected interests. Also, if and when trades occur, roads that accessed former state parcels need to be maintained and permanently recognized.
- iv. **ROADS:** We are concerned that any public lands legislation will decrease or make it more difficult to access public lands. Carefully created transportation plans have been created in collaborative efforts and should be respected and where needed perfected, but not ignored. Counties have waged a long-fought battle over RS:2477 roads and grazers are concerned that any legislation could negate efforts in that respect. Roads are a vital part of the infrastructure of public lands and need to be protected and maintained.
- v. **NATIONAL PARKS AND MONUMENTS** -We are also concerned with the trend to create and expand more and more national parks and monuments. Once land becomes a park or monument, it is no longer available for mineral development, grazing, timber uses, or any other resource use. The only use allowed is

recreation. The creation of additional monuments and parks is an abuse of the 1906 Antiquities Act. They are created without collaboration, consensus, or dialogue.

Although the following items may not be addressed in your public lands legislation, we draw your attention to additional concerns that make the sustainability of agriculture in our areas difficult and discouraging. We ask that you consider the following points and consider addressing them at a future time.

- The turnover of Federal agency personnel has become a large problem in managing the land with any consistency. Employees are thrown into management decisions without ever seeing the land or witnessing the issues. Many federal land managers are responsible for millions of acres at a time, and have only begun to be familiar with the issues on these large parcels of land. Federal personnel with greater tenure in a position or location would be much better suited to make resource management decisions on land they are with for 20 years or more. Also, this would provide more consistent interpretation of federal law, provide additional certainty to the people and the communities that depend on the land for their survival.
- The Loss of timber industry due to litigation by special interest groups and management decisions from the judicial bench has led to a loss in flexibility and loss of another rural economic base. We no longer manage timber and are having more devastating wildfires that are increasing in size and intensity.
- Water development and new reservoirs are critical for people to sustain themselves, while providing an excellent clean renewable energy source. (?What?)
- The Endangered Species act needs to be reformed. Instead of a tool to restore species, it is a weapon to take away private land rights and reduce multiple-use on public lands. The latest example is the sage-grouse, which is now to grazing lands like the spotted owl was to the Northwest timber industry. Instead of a regulatory system, the act should move to a system that will provide incentives for the conservation of species. If landowners and grazers were rewarded for creating habitat and preserving species, the species and everyone would benefit. The current act has bred a shoot-

shovel-and-shut-up attitude with the people who have the potential do the most good for recovering the species.

- Taylor Grazing Act: The principles in the Taylor Grazing act remain important today. Management of federal and state lands should maintain compliance with this act and the guidelines found therein. It should continue the allocation of rangeland resources that came as a result of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. Adherence to the act would stop and reverse the reallocation of livestock grazing lands to wildlife, wild horses and burros, and to conservation only.
- Stop the closure, retiring, and reallocating of grazing allotments. Rural communities need a broad economic base for sustainability. For western communities to put all their eggs in one basket is a recipe for disaster, Look at logging in the northwest as an example of what can happen in one-resource focused communities. The same thing can happen with recreation.
- Encourage 20-year or longer term grazing leases. This would reduce workload for the agencies, and 20- year leases would provide much greater certainty for the ranching community and the economies of rural communities. Revisiting the NEPA process in general is greatly needed. This act has been and continues to be used as a tool to stop grazing management and costs the American public millions every year. It gives one who has never seen the land in question as much say in management as one who lives on, around or makes a living from that land, or the professional hired to manage the land.
- Wild horses and burros are another issue that needs to be addressed in the Western United States. BLM needs to be given authority by congress to take the measures necessary to protect the rangelands from wild horses and burros, where the population has exceeded carrying-capacity of the range. In addition something needs to be done to prevent these animals from being held indefinitely at tax payer expense in government holding facilities. Adoption hasn't worked. We need to put horse processing back in business in the United States.

Again we thank you for the opportunity for input. If we can be of any further assistance as you move forward in your efforts, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Don Holyoak,
Chairman Southeast Region Grazing Improvement Board