Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 17, 2012

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom McClintock
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Water and Power
1522 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Subcommittee National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
1017 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings, Chairman McClintock, and Chairman Bishop:

We request a field hearing in Western Colorado to examine the impacts of forest management issues and the bark beetle epidemic in the West. Properly managing our national forests is critical to western economies and livelihoods, a healthy natural environment, and affordable and reliable water and power supplies.

Many of our western national forests are currently threatened by unhealthy conditions and bark beetle infestation that increase susceptibility to wildfire and damage wildlife habitat. These problems threaten lives and impact valuable jobs in the timber, energy, and recreation industries as well as countless indirect jobs in related industries. Increased fire risk also threatens western water quantity and quality and the generation and transmission of electricity.

Through prudent forest management and the ability to access and actively manage timber resources, communities can support jobs that depend on a viable timber industry. Effective forest management fosters healthy forests, protects against wildfires, and safeguards the natural beauty and tourism draw that western states provide while maintaining dependable water and power supplies.

The 2002 Hayman Fire, the largest in the Colorado's history, burned over 138,000 acres, cost nearly $40 million in firefighting costs, destroyed 133 homes and forced the evacuation of 5,340 people. The post-fire landscape also continues to create silting and erosion problems and associated remediation costs for local water supplies. This catastrophic event could very well happen again if our forests are left to burn and, in fact, we were very recently reminded of the dangerous risk of wildfire that Colorado faces. As the summer season approaches, the probability of wildfire increases even further. It is our hope that a hearing on these interconnected issues will

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help highlight the problems that led to these conditions, reverse some of the damage that has been done, and help avoid similar situations in the future.

We respectfully urge you to hold a hearing so that we can hear firsthand from impacted residents who can help identify the hurdles to effective forest management and work towards common sense measures that will support Western communities and protect our forests and water and power supplies.

Sincerely,

Mike Coffman
Member of Congress
Colorado's 6th District

Scott Tipton
Member of Congress
Colorado's 3rd District