



COLORADO

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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April 17, 2015

Congressman Scott Tipton
225 North 5th St., Suite 702
Grand Junction, CO 81501

218 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 695 Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act

Dear Congressman Tipton,

Mesa County's citizens, watersheds, natural resources, and economy will all be greatly and positively impacted by the Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act, and as the Mesa County Board of Commissioners, we therefore strongly support this bill.

Years of unfortunate and misguided management practices and decisions have resulted in numerous issues plaguing our state's forests, including disease, insect infestation, and insufficient fuels management. This has created thousands of acres of dead, dry timber which present a tremendous potential for catastrophic wildfire, exacerbated by drought conditions.

It goes without saying that Mesa County would be greatly affected by wildfire, both in our local forests, and in our neighboring counties. A wildfire in the Upper Colorado River Watershed, for example, could cause untold economic damage, terribly impacting the water supply of both Mesa County and downstream users, and would take many years and millions of dollars to remediate. Clearly, prevention of such a catastrophic incident is critical.

This bill would address some of the issues contributing to the conditions that create such a hazardous environment, and would also put in place needed preventive measures. As an additional benefit, these measures, including the strategic and proactive removal of accumulated fuels and commercial harvesting, would have a positive economic impact on several Western Slope communities, for which Mesa County serves as a regional hub.

Finally, we appreciate the increase in local input on management decisions which this bill provides for in regards to our state's forests. Local experts and authorities are in the best position to identify problem areas and make appropriate management decisions, and are most directly impacted by those decisions.

We strongly urge the passage and implementation of H.R. 695.

Sincerely,
Mesa County Board of Commissioners

Rose Pugliese, Chair
Board of Commissioners

John Justman
Commissioner

Scott McInnis
Commissioner

cc: Senator Michael Bennet
Senator Corey Gardner