

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

BETSY BLECHA

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March 9, 2015

The Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman
The Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

The Board of County Commissioners of Jackson County, Colorado understands that H.R. 695, a bill to expand the authorities established in the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003, has been, or will be referred to the Committee on Natural Resources. In our county the bark beetle epidemic, drought, deteriorating forest health conditions, and high risk of wildfires is an imminent threat to human safety, property, infrastructure, wildlife habitat, and water quality.

H.R. 695, also cited as the Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act, contains provisions that we believe take much needed steps to address this issue of poor forest health in the West. We support proactive measures to address these conditions, specifically the designation of high risk areas and the development of proposed emergency hazardous fuels reduction projects in these high risk areas.

H.R. 695 will provide authority to our governor, working with the affected county governments, to address wildfire threats in our back yards. This will allow those with the most at stake to evaluate and address the risk to their residents, their property and the environment. We appreciate the expedited procedures provided for in H.R. 695 for emergency hazardous fuels reduction projects in identified high risk areas. We recognize the importance of local involvement in the decision making process and cooperative mitigation efforts just makes good common sense. We believe H.R. 695 is a good common sense measure that will help foster long term forest health.

The Board of County Commissioners of Jackson County appreciates this opportunity to provide comments on this important legislation. Your favorable consideration will help provide state and local governments with the tools and authority necessary to improve forest health and ensure the protection of our public lands.

H.R. 695 would be a valuable tool to address forest health and fire mitigation in the long term, and we wish to express our full support for the bill.

Sincerely,
Board of County Commissioners
Jackson County, Colorado

By:


James A. Murphy, Chair