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July 19th, 2012

The Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman
The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

We understand that the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands will be considering HR 6089, the Healthy Forest Management Act of 2012. We wish to provide some comments for consideration during this hearing.

The State of Colorado and much of the western United States has been hit with severe drought conditions this past year. This, coupled with areas of extensive insect infestation and thick stands of forest overgrowth, has created an environment ripe for intense wild fire. In fact, this summer has already seen one of the worst fire seasons in recent memory. Hinsdale County had the largest wildfire in its known history, the Little Sand Fire, which burned nearly 25,000 acres in Archuleta and Hinsdale Counties. We therefore support proactive measures to address forest health and mitigate the dangers unnaturally intense wild fires pose to human safety, property, infrastructure, wildlife habitat, and water quality.

Hinsdale County also recognizes the importance of building on our already positive relationship with the entities that work within our County.

It is the nature of the western United States' climate to see cycles of ample precipitation and drought, and insect infestation will always be a part of the equation. We have known for a long period that the state of our forests' health was, in many areas, experiencing some deterioration and a lack of diversity in tree age. It has been known that this condition would lend itself to large, intensive and destructive wild fires, and it seems that these predictions are coming to fruition this season. It is our view that actions to combat the dangers posed by wild fires ought not be reactive, but proactive.

Thank you and your subcommittee members for your efforts regarding this issue.

Sincerely,
Hinsdale Board of County Commissioners

Allen Brown, Chair

Cindy Dozier, Commissioner

Stan Whinnery, Commissioner