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March 11, 2013

Congressman Scott Tipton
U.S. House of Representatives
Third District, Colorado
Durango Office
835 E. 2nd Avenue, Suite 230
Durango, CO 81301

Dear Representative Tipton,

The Montezuma County Board of County Commissioners would like to express our strong support for the proposed *"Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2012"*.

This proactive measure addresses two very poignant concerns for the Western United States:

First it addresses the immediate and growing concerns over the health and long term productivity of our forest reserves which is much needed and timely. Prolonged drought and unprecedented insect infestations have left hundreds of thousands of acres of forests in the western United States decimated and ripe for disaster.

This bill will provide the federal land management agencies the ability to cut through the layers of red tape and quickly gain approval for mitigation projects on lands identified by state and local authorities to be at high risk. Furthermore it will allow necessary projects to move forward in areas identified as threatened or endangered species habitat.

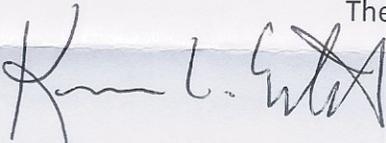
Secondly this bill addresses the lack of state and local influence in federal land management activities. This bill is a step in the right direction by empowering state and local governments with the ability to identify high risk areas and initiate emergency mitigation measures aimed at protecting human safety, property, critical infrastructure, wildlife water, timber and scenic resources. We strongly support increased local influence in emergency planning and forest management resulting in fuel reduction projects, and we support extending the authority for stewardship contracting to 20 years.

We support permanent Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management authority to conduct “good-neighbor cooperation” with States to reduce wildfire risks. This bill will elevate coordination with the Department of Agriculture and Department of the Interior to a meaningful level and improve the working relationship between federal, state and local governments.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to collaborating with you on more commonsense reforms that increase state and local influence in federal land management actions.

Respectfully on behalf of the,

The Montezuma County Board of County Commissioners

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keenan G. Ertel". The signature is stylized and written over a horizontal line.

Keenan G. Ertel
Vice Chair