

**Statement of  
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Bureau of Land Management  
Before the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee  
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests  
S. 2379, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument Voluntary and Equitable Grazing Conflict  
Resolution Act  
February 27, 2008**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S. 2379, the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument Voluntary and Equitable Grazing Conflict Resolution Act. While we support the goals of this legislation we cannot support some of the specific provisions. We would like the opportunity to work with the sponsor and the Committee to address these issues.

**Background**

The Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (Monument) was established by Presidential Proclamation on June 9, 2000. Encompassing nearly 53,000 acres of Federal land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Monument is a place of great biological diversity due to its location at the confluence of three converging mountain ecoregions—the Cascade, Klamath and Eastern Cascade. The proclamation withdrew these public lands from a number of uses and limited commercial harvest of timber within the Monument “except when part of an authorized science-based ecological restoration project.” Additionally, the proclamation directed the Secretary of the Interior to undertake a study of livestock grazing within the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and the effects of grazing on the Monument with specific attention to sustaining the natural ecosystem dynamics.

The BLM has been managing the Monument consistent with the proclamation for nearly eight years. A comprehensive management plan is currently pending final approval. Additionally, the BLM recently completed the mandated studies of livestock impacts within the Monument and released them to the public. The findings of these studies are currently being evaluated by the BLM, along with other available data, to determine whether grazing is occurring consistent with the Presidential Proclamation establishing the Monument. Currently 11 ranchers hold grazing leases within the Monument that authorize use of 2,714 active animal unit months (AUMs).

**S. 2379**

S. 2379, the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument Voluntary and Equitable Grazing Conflict Resolution Act, provides for: a Federal buyout of grazing preferences within the Monument; a land exchange within the Monument between the BLM and a private landowner; and, the designation of approximately 23,000 acres of land within the Monument as wilderness. The bill as introduced references maps without dates. It is our understanding that it is the sponsor’s intention to reference a map created by the BLM at the request of his office. This testimony is based on that map dated December 12, 2006.

Section 4 of S. 2379 establishes a program to buy out grazing lessees within the Monument, requiring the Secretary (subject to the availability of funds) to offer payment of \$300 an AUM to ranchers with authorized grazing within the Monument. If an individual rancher accepts the

payment, the Secretary then must terminate the grazing lease and permanently end grazing in the allotment or portion of the grazing allotment. Donation of grazing leases, and subsequent mandatory grazing closures, are also contained in the bill. In addition, the BLM is obligated under the bill to construct and maintain fencing to exclude livestock from grazing allotments where the BLM may no longer lease grazing use. Finally, three grazing allotments that have been vacant for over a decade are permanently retired from grazing by the legislation.

The BLM is opposed to Federal government buyouts of grazing permits and the permanent retirement of those permits. However, the BLM also recognizes the value of working cooperatively and collaboratively with local stakeholders to fulfill its multiple use mission on BLM lands. The BLM is committed to working with the committee, the sponsors, and stakeholders in the spirit of cooperative conservation within our existing authority.

In addition, we are opposed to language obligating the Federal government to both construction and maintenance of fencing. Typically, fencing decisions are made cooperatively by the BLM and the permittee, and the BLM encourages cooperative cost sharing. The BLM's range improvement policy requires that the BLM assign maintenance of structural range improvements, such as fences, to the permittee who is obligated to maintain them. This legislation represents a serious divergence from two decades of land management practices.

Section 5 of the bill provides for a land exchange between the BLM and the Box R Ranch. We believe that the public interest would be served by this exchange; however, we recommend that the bill be amended to ensure that the exchange is consistent with section 206 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act regarding government land exchanges, including appraisals and equal value exchange. Appraisals should follow nationally recognized appraisal standards, such as the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions and the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice. The owner of Box R Ranch is obligated under Section 5 to donate his grazing lease to the Federal government. It is unclear if the intent is to value the grazing lease as part of the exchange. As noted above, we believe the exchange should independently stand on its own.

The BLM-managed land proposed for exchange is an isolated parcel of land surrounded by the Box R Ranch. The private land proposed for exchange to the Federal government is important habitat for Jenny Creek suckers and redband trout (both sensitive fish species), and its acquisition is consistent with the goals of the Monument. We should note that both parcels are within the Monument boundary.

Section 6 of S. 2379, designates approximately 23,000 acres of BLM-managed land within the Monument as the Soda Mountain Wilderness (this includes the present Soda Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA)). The proposed Soda Mountain Wilderness hosts an unusually high variety of species in a geographically small area due to several complex biological and geological factors and processes operating simultaneously. Ranging from 2,300 feet to 6,000 feet, the proposed wilderness area is a jewel of biological variety and encompasses some of the most diverse vegetation in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. Plant communities include open grassy slopes and meadows, hardwood and shrub woodlands, as well as dense mixed conifer and white fir forests. The Oregon Gulch Research Natural Area, with its mixed

conifer Douglas-fir and Ponderosa forest with large Sugar Pine and incense cedar, and Scotch Creek Research Natural Area, with steep-sided drainages and waterfalls, are within the proposed wilderness. Along with one of the highest diversities of butterfly species in the United States (as many as 112 different species have been identified within the Monument), the area is also home to an extensive population of small and large mammals (including black-tailed deer, elk, bear, mountain lions and bobcats), as well as widespread fish species in the many creeks. The area provides critical habitat for several sensitive, rare, threatened, and/or endangered species such as peregrine falcons, northern spotted owls, Greene's mariposa lily, Gentner's fritillary, Bellinger's meadow foam, redband trout, and the Mardon skipper butterfly.

Congress has the sole authority to designate lands to be managed permanently as wilderness. We believe these areas are manageable as wilderness, and we support the designation. There are some technical issues related to section 6 that we would like the opportunity to clarify. In particular, we would like the opportunity to work with the sponsor and the Committee on possible minor boundary adjustments to ensure efficient manageability and avoid conflicts.

Section 8 of the bill authorizes appropriations for compensation for grazing buyouts, fencing and other costs to exclude cattle from allotments that are retired. We oppose this section, and note that the amounts authorized appear insufficient to complete the work anticipated by the bill and that the BLM does not have alternative sources of funding. In addition, the authorized amounts are not included in the FY2009 President's Budget request and are not available within current Congressional appropriations.

In addition to the specific issues we have raised, there are a number of minor or technical modifications (including mapping issues) that we would like to discuss with the sponsor, as well as the Committee, before this legislation moves forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I will be happy to answer any questions.