



**Western  
Watersheds  
Project**

**Hailey Office**

PO Box 1770

Hailey, ID 83333

tel: (208) 788-2290

fax: (208) 475-4702

email: [wwp@westernwatersheds.org](mailto:wwp@westernwatersheds.org)

web site: [www.westernwatersheds.org](http://www.westernwatersheds.org)

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*Working to protect and restore Western Watersheds and Wildlife*

28 February 2012

Chief Tom Tidwell  
US Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave  
Washington, D.C. 20250-1355  
Sent via email to [ttidwell@fs.fed.us](mailto:ttidwell@fs.fed.us)

**RE: 2013 USFS Budget and Livestock Grazing Program**

Dear Chief Tidwell,

Like your colleagues at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), you have proposed to slash the agency budget for the public lands' livestock grazing program by about \$15 million dollars in 2012. Unlike your colleagues at the BLM, the Forest Service has failed to propose any novel administrative fees to mitigate this loss. We are writing today to ask for an explanation, and to urge you to reconsider the current budget proposal.

As you know, the USFS loses money every year in administering the grazing program. The Government Accountability Office estimated that the agency only recovered \$5.7 million in 2004 but spent at least \$74.2 million on this program.<sup>1</sup> Now, despite the fact that the agency has set the 2013 fee for grazing public lands' allotments at the lowest possible level of \$1.35 per Animal Unit Month (1 cow/calf pair or 5 sheep)<sup>2</sup> for the last six years, the USFS is also proposing to cut the budget of the grazing management program by 27 percent.

As advocates for wildlife and healthy watersheds, we encourage you to recognize that the budget reductions proposed this year suggest that the agency must also plan to scale back the extent of livestock grazing it allows on federal lands if the agency is to conform with federal laws. We support cutting the budget if doing so was accompanied by proposed matched cuts to the program, but allowing the status quo levels of livestock grazing use to continue with even less financial support is entirely unacceptable. Livestock grazing endangers species, pollutes waters, degrades soils, pollutes air, and fouls archeological and cultural resources that are held in trust by all Americans. The federal land management agencies have a trust responsibility that cannot be met without sufficient resources allocated to range programs.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://westernwatersheds.org/reports/05/GAO-grazing-report-2005.pdf>

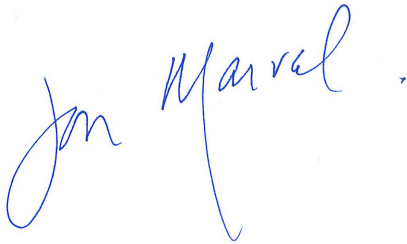
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fs.fed.us/news/2012/releases/01/grazingfee.shtml>

Agency complaints that Forests can not afford to monitor at levels necessary to ensure the conservation of natural resources remains pervasive and already strains the agency's ability to maintain compliance with the law. Lack of budget resources is frequently cited as an excuse for poor oversight of animal husbandry and degradation of natural resource conditions. In light of this, the fact that the agency is cutting funds to a program that is already woefully underfunded is a worrisome development.

Western Watersheds Project and others have repeatedly asked for new rulemaking to establish a fair grazing fee on our federal lands. It appears that BLM is set to undertake such rulemaking, and it has proposed an additional administrative fee in the interim.<sup>3</sup> Is USFS also preparing to address this ongoing problem with new fees or a new formula?

Please do respond in writing and explain these budgetary choices.

Sincerely,



Jon Marvel  
Executive Director

cc: Rep. James P. Moran, c/o Tim Aiken: [tim.aiken@mail.house.gov](mailto:tim.aiken@mail.house.gov)  
Rep. Betty McCollum, c/o Irene Lin: [irene.lin@mail.house.gov](mailto:irene.lin@mail.house.gov)  
Rep. Maurice D. Hinchey, c/o Michael Iger: [michael.iger@mail.house.gov](mailto:michael.iger@mail.house.gov)  
Rep. José E. Serrano, c/o Nadine Berg: [nadine.berg@mail.house.gov](mailto:nadine.berg@mail.house.gov)  
Rep. Michael K. Simpson, c/o Lindsey Slater: [lindsay.slater@mail.house.gov](mailto:lindsay.slater@mail.house.gov)

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<sup>3</sup> Secretary Salazar's statement on BLM 2013 budget: <http://bit.ly/ABcAJg>