



**Western
Watersheds
Project**

Arizona Office

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Working to protect and restore Western Watersheds

July 14, 2010

Secretary Tom Vilsak
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Secretary Ken Salazar
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Addressing Budget Cuts by Adopting a Fair Grazing Fee

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Salazar,

We are writing to draw your attention once again to the annual budgetary shortfall created by the artificially low grazing fee charged for federal land livestock grazing. The fee has failed to keep pace with inflation, failed to cover even the administrative costs of operating the grazing program, and incentivizes destructive grazing practices on public land. In addition to this multitude of reasons, now there is an even greater reason to address the grazing fee: Presidential request.

On June 8, 2010, the White House directed federal agencies to develop plans to trim at least five percent of their annual budgets. Setting a fair grazing fee—or eliminating the federal grazing program—would partially or completely fulfill the five percent cut for the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service. In 2005 the Government Accountability Office reported:

- The Bureau of Land Management's annual shortfall for administering the grazing program is at least \$46.5 million dollars. This is equal to five percent of the agency's 2011 total budget request.
- The Forest Service loses at least \$69.5 million dollars a year on the grazing program. This is more than one percent of the agency's 2011 budget request.

In both cases, ending the subsidy to public lands ranching would help meet the President's directive and, in the case of the Bureau of Land Management, setting a fair grazing fee would trim the requested amount from the agency budget without cutting any federal jobs or programs.

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our members, we hope you will consider this solution to resolve budget shortfalls.

Sincerely,



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cc:

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Chief Tom Tidwell, U.S. Forest Service, 1400 Independence Ave, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-0003