

New Mexico Coalition of Conservation Districts

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February 27, 2014

Senator Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senate
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Heinrich:

I am writing this letter to express the sincere concern of the New Mexico Coalition of Conservation Districts (NMCCD) regarding S.258, the Grazing Improvement Act, in its current form.

As originally introduced by Senator Barrasso, the proposed changes to FLPMA such as increasing grazing permits from 10 to 20 years, and allowing grazing to continue on public lands while the backlog of environmental analysis required under NEPA is addressed, among other changes, seemed to be practical solutions given limited agency budgets which are increasingly being funneled toward defending normal multiple use activities against radical environmental interest groups.

The marked-up version is not consistent with FLPMA in that it takes away permit certainty from the current 10 year period down to as little as one year, as we understand the current language. The resulting uncertainty would create an impractical business management climate for New Mexico's federal land ranching community. The current version of S.258 would also change the multiple use provision in FLPMA, allowing for the permanent retirement of grazing allotments in New Mexico. This provision would lead to economic and social instability in our rural communities and the unforeseen consequences of little to no land management.

Our members, soil and water conservation districts which are governmental subdivisions of the state, are charged by statute, in part, to "...conserve and develop the natural resources of the state, provide for flood control, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of New Mexico." As such, passage of the S.258 in its current form would be contrary to the spirit and intent of FLPMA and the interests of the New Mexicans our members are elected to serve and an abrogation of their sworn duties as elected officials.

It is in the best interest of the state of New Mexico and its citizens that S.258 does not pass the full Senate and we respectfully ask that you vote against the legislation in its current form given the concerns stated above.

Sincerely yours,

David W. King
President

DW/JVL/mw