Opening Statement
Ranking Member Grijalva
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing
September 9, 2011

As Chairman of this subcommittee in the last Congress, I was pleased to hold hearings on Chairman Hastings' cabin fee legislation and to work with him to get that bill favorably reported from this Committee. I share the Chairman's concern regarding the proposed fee increases and look forward to continuing to work cooperatively to seek a solution that might mitigate those increases without negatively impacting the federal budget.

Regarding the other two measures on today's agenda -- hunting, fishing, trapping, and other recreational activities that depend on robust wildlife populations have flourished on federal lands – mostly because Congress has stayed out of the way.

Most federal land is open to hunting and fishing and federal regulation is minimal, with states managing most aspects of these activities.

As a result, hunting and fishing are enormously popular on federal land and support a multi-million-dollar industry, employing tens of thousands of people in outfitting, guiding and equipment manufacturing.

As an example, roughly 8% of visitors to the National Forests between 2005 and 2009 listed hunting as their primary activity – that is more than 13 million people in each of those years.

If a threat to these activities exists, it is not from biased federal land managers or animal rights activists. The real threat to hunting, fishing and other wildlife dependant activities comes from *Congress,* in the form of misguided budget priorities and short-

sighted land management policies that could destroy habitat and reduce wildlife populations.

On the funding front, proposals to slash budgets for federal land management agencies threaten efforts to address backlogged maintenance on roads, trails, campgrounds and other facilities used by hunters, anglers and other visitors.

Proposals to virtually eliminate funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund would destroy plans to acquire and preserve valuable habitat. As urban development swallows more and more open space, defunding the Land and Water Conservation Fund – as Republicans in Congress have proposed to do -- would deprive the federal government of the one tool we could use to preserve opportunities for hunting and fishing.

On the policy front, attacks on the National Environmental Policy Act, along with attempts to weaken management of wilderness, threaten to further limit opportunities to hunt.

NEPA provides a tool for assessing the potential impacts of federal land management decisions – including potential impacts to hunting, fishing and other recreational activities. Truncating or abandoning the NEPA process, to allow unrestricted energy development for example, makes it more likely that harmful impacts – including those to hunting and fishing – will not be considered or even evaluated.

Finally, attacks on wilderness are attacks on hunting. If all areas of federal land are open to roads, off-road vehicles, oil and gas production and timber cutting, there will be nowhere left for wildlife populations to flourish and, as a result, nowhere left to hunt.

Despite the critical role wilderness plays in supporting wildlife populations, less than 3% of the Continental United States is designated wilderness – and opportunities to preserve new wilderness grow more scarce by the day.

Congress is already failing to adequately manage and invest in wildlife populations on federal land. The two bills before us today claim to be pro-hunting and fishing but contain provisions that would only make a bad situation worse. Further attacks on NEPA, on wilderness and on funding for land acquisition are not the answer.

We appreciate the witnesses for being here today and I look forward to their thoughts on these proposals.