

Representative Herger Statement
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 689
House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public
Lands
10:00 a.m., March 24, 2009
1334 Longworth

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Bishop for allowing me to testify on my legislation, H.R. 689, to interchange the administrative jurisdiction of certain Federal lands between the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. My legislation is a simple land exchange between federal agencies to allow for more consolidated and efficient management of the Chappie-Shasta Off-Highway Vehicle area in the Northern California congressional district I represent.

The Chappie-Shasta OHV area encompasses approximately 56,000 acres, and is currently under the jurisdiction of both the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service. For several years, many of my constituents have raised their concerns over difficulties in dealing with two federal agencies. For example, two permits are required from two agencies in order to conduct a single special event, such as a race. Additionally, the two agencies sometimes have different opening dates for the area. Two different agencies managing sections of the same racing trail has often resulted in frustration by the thousands of users, from across California and elsewhere, who try to cope with this redundant bureaucracy.

Therefore, this legislation is a straightforward exchange that allows the BLM to exchange some of its scattered holdings for the Forest Service parcel within the OHV area. The total acreage both agencies would surrender and obtain is approximately equal. The Forest Service would benefit by receiving small tracts of Wilderness Area, already contiguous to Forest Service land, that are currently under the jurisdiction of the BLM but receive little actual management from that agency because the Wilderness is so removed from the primary land base of the BLM.

This noncontroversial exchange was developed collaboratively at the local level by the Forest Service and the BLM and enjoys strong support from the OHV community. The mapping was performed by the local offices of the BLM and Forest Service, and represents a far more rational land management plan. Enactment of this bill would consolidate the BLM's management of this area, allowing the BLM to be more efficient and streamlined in its administration of the area and provide a better experience for its users. While there are a few technical issues that need to be worked out before H.R. 689 is brought to the floor, passage of this legislation would result in a win-win for taxpayers as well as the two agencies involved.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Bishop, I appreciate your consideration of my legislation today and I look forward to working with you and the Committee to ensure its passage.