

NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS GRAZING CAMPAIGN

The Use of Domestic Livestock for Fire Fuel Reduction and Ecological Restoration under the Voluntary Grazing Permit Buyout Act (H.R. 3324)

Non-Commercial Grazing is Allowed under H.R. 3324

The Voluntary Grazing Permit Buyout Act (H.R. 3324) does not prohibit the use of domestic livestock to affect fire fuel reduction or aid ecological restoration on retired allotments after grazing permits/leases have been bought out. The purpose of H.R. 3324 is to permanently retire *commercial* livestock grazing on federal public lands wherever a permittee/lessee opts for voluntary grazing permit/lease buyout.

It should be noted that, while there are certain cases where judicious and careful use of domestic livestock grazing can achieve specific ecological or fire fuel reduction objectives, for the vast majority of restoration projects, other methods, such as grazing by native ungulates or prescribed fire, are superior to domestic livestock.

H.R. 3324 would Convert Domestic Livestock Grazing from a Primary Use to a Potential Management Scheme on Retired Allotments

Domestic livestock grazing would end as a mandated commercial use on allotments retired under H.R. 3324, but could still be used in limited situations to achieve a desirable public purpose such as ecological restoration or fire fuel reduction on those lands. Under current authorities, federal land management agencies can already offer service contracts for bid by livestock operators to graze domestic livestock on public lands to achieve a specified management objective as determined under the normal planning process. These same service contracts could be used to graze for management goals on allotments retired under H.R. 3324.

Contract Grazing is Environmentally Preferable over the Current Grazing Program

The dynamics of a limited service contract grazing system are markedly different from those of the current federal grazing program. The current system essentially requires that grazing occur on 257 million acres of federal public lands at the highest levels possible, wherever and whenever possible — and federal managers are usually pressured by local livestock associations, their own superiors and Congressional offices to maintain high grazing levels to prevent economic harm to permittees/lessees (often their friends and neighbors). H.R. 3324 would replace mandated perennial, persistent livestock grazing on retired allotments, but leave in place the current option of federal land managers to use service contract grazing to precisely specify where, when, and what type of livestock will be used for how long to achieve management goals.

As H.R. 3324 is "marked-up" in the legislative process, technical amendments can be added to remove any potential ambiguities about using non-commercial grazing by domestic livestock as a tool for fire fuel reduction and ecological restoration purposes.