Mar. 4, 2026

The Honorable Mike Lee
Chair
U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
363 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: S. 2787 "Grasslands Grazing Act of 2025" erodes public accountability and responsible management of National Grasslands

Dear Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Heinrich:

On behalf of our collective millions of members and supporters, the undersigned organizations oppose S. 2787, the "Grasslands Grazing Act of 2025, introduced by Senator Barrasso. This bill would extend automatic grazing permit renewals and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) exemptions to National Grasslands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, effectively eliminating site-specific environmental review and public participation for most grazing decisions on these lands.

National Grasslands are among the most ecologically vulnerable public lands in the United States. North American grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems globally, with approximately 62 percent already lost. The 4 million acres of National Grasslands were acquired under the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act specifically because of severe erosion, land failure, and ecological degradation, and were intended to prioritize recovery, watershed protection and long-term conservation.

Despite these purposes, nearly all National Grassland acres are grazed under 10-year permits. While federal law requires environmental review for permit renewals, most grazing permits across federal lands are already being renewed without NEPA analysis due to the inclusion of the "Grazing Improvement Act" in a must pass National Defense Authorization Bill in 2014, which mandates automatic renewals when agencies fail to complete NEPA on time and tolls other applicable laws. Importantly, National Grasslands are not governed by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and have not been included in those automatic provisions.

S. 2787 would selectively extend FLPMA's automatic renewal loophole and categorical exclusions to National Grasslands, while exempting those lands from FLPMA's broader safeguards and accountability mechanisms. In practice, the bill would allow grazing permits to be renewed indefinitely without site-specific review, Tribal consultation, or public involvement, regardless of land condition, impacts to threatened or endangered species, or effects on cultural and historic resources. It would also expand categorical exclusions to permits for crossing and trailing livestock.

This approach rewards agency noncompliance rather than addressing its causes. Records of permit renewals show increased reliance on NEPA exemptions following the Grazing Improvement Act, coinciding with declining agency staffing and rangeland health analysis. By further entrenching automatic renewals, S. 2787 institutionalizes under-staffing, removes incentives to restore agency capacity, and prevents agencies from reassessing grazing impacts in light of drought, climate change, invasive species, and evolving conservation needs.

The solution is not to expand exemptions from environmental law. Congress should instead require agencies to comply with NEPA through enforceable schedules, provide adequate funding and staffing for grazing management, and reduce grazing where necessary to match agency capacity and protect public lands.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose S. 2787.

Sincerely,

Arizona Grazing Clearinghouse
Caldera Action
Californians for Western Wilderness
CalWild
Center for Biological Diversity
Defenders of Wildlife
Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends of the Clearwater
Friends of the Sonoran Desert
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Klamath Forest Alliance
Methow Forest Forum
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)
Sage Steppe Wild
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Upper Gila Watershed Alliance
Western Watersheds Project
Western Wildlife Conservancy
White Mountain Conservation League
WildEarth Guardians
Wilderness Watch
Wildlife for All