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April 1, 2015

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro,

I am writing to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examine the efforts of the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to detect and deter unauthorized livestock grazing on public range lands.

In 1990, the GAO published a report entitled, "Rangeland Management: BLM Efforts to Prevent Unauthorized Livestock Grazing Need Strengthening." In that report, the GAO concluded, "(b)ecause many grazing areas are inspected infrequently or not at all during the year, offenders are not likely to be detected. When offenders are detected, BLM frequently exacts no penalties' and, for the more serious violations, seldom assesses the minimum penalties its own regulations require. As a result, grazing trespass is not adequately deterred, which can lead to degradation of public rangelands, among other things." The GAO went on the make numerous recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior for how to improve the effectiveness of BLM's grazing trespass detection and deterrence efforts.

In the nearly 25 years since the GAO first reported on this problem, it seems little has changed and the situation may in fact be getting worse. Given the recent high profile incidents involving trespass livestock including the ongoing Cliven Bundy situation, it is clear that the BLM efforts to prevent and deter unauthorized livestock grazing still need serious consideration.

Not only is this issue vitally important for the health and benefit of wildlife, aquatic species and their habitat, but also in light of the fact that there is a now a significant issue of human safety after the armed confrontation involving supporters of Cliven Bundy and the federal government as well as numerous other threats to the BLM employees.

Therefore, I am requesting that the GAO re-examine the issues identified in the 1990 report. Please also include the policies and practices of the United States Forest Service (USFS) in your review. Specifically, do the BLM and USFS currently have in place effective polices to detect and deter unauthorized livestock grazing? Have the recommended changes proposed by the GAO in the 1990 report been effectively implemented by the BLM? What are the impacts of unauthorized livestock grazing on wildlife populations, aquatic species and their habitat?

Given the high profile nature of the Cliven Bundy case and the public safety issues that arose, it is important to ascertain a broader picture of the rate of trespass grazing on Federal land. How many known instances of trespass grazing are there? How many individual operators are conducting unauthorized grazing? How many acres are impacted by this unauthorized activity? How much revenue is owed to the BLM and USFS in unpaid grazing fees associated with trespass grazing?

Sincerely,



Raúl Grijalva  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Natural Resources