

Bill Will Also Help Create Jobs in Rural Communities

Thursday, July 21, 2011

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico’s Third District introduced legislation to help protect national forests from wildfires while creating jobs in local communities. The Forest Stewardship and Fire Fuels Reduction Act would reauthorize a federal program that funds efforts to reduce overgrown vegetation from forests that contributes to the intensity and devastation of wildfires.

“During this extreme fire season New Mexico has suffered from a number of wildfires across the state. It is critical that we make every effort to prevent these devastating fires and minimize the impact future fires could have on our community,” Congressman Luján said. “Reducing the vegetation that fuels these fires is an important step that improves the health of our forests, reduces the threat of wildfires, and puts people to work.”

For the last 10 years, the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have been authorized to enter into Stewardship End Result Contracting Projects to improve land management and remove overgrown vegetation from national forests. The authorization allowing USFS and BLM to enter into these projects is set to expire in 2013. The loss of these agreements will limit the ability of the USFS and BLM to carry out fire fuel reduction projects, resulting in increased fire danger and loss of jobs in the local economy. Luján’s legislation permanently re-authorizes Stewardship End Result Contracting Projects to ensure that efforts to manage forest resources and reduce fuel for wildfires will continue.

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