

**Resiliency for Ranching and Natural Conservation Health Act (RANCH Act)
Section-By-Section**

Section 1. Short Title

This section states the short title of the bill as “Resiliency for Ranching and Natural Conservation Health Act (RANCH Act).

Section 2. Temporary Use of Vacant Grazing Allotments for Holders of Grazing permits or Leases During Extreme Natural Events and Disasters.

This section provides that, to the maximum extent practicable, the temporary use of vacant grazing allotments shall be available to grazing permit or lease holders. Such use may be granted when grazing permit or lease holder’s allotments are unavailable because of resource conditions from unforeseen natural events or disasters, including extreme weather events, drought, wildfire or infestations. Terms and conditions for the temporary use of vacant allotments shall take into consideration ecological conditions and other factors including conflict related to wildlife. The duration of a temporary use of a vacant grazing allotment shall not extend beyond three consecutive grazing seasons. The Secretary concerned shall develop guidelines to carry out the provision, including consideration of disease, local ecological conditions, wildlife conflicts, etc.

Section 3. Public Rangeland Resiliency Funds.

This section provides for an *investment* provision of the Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) in a public debt security to bear interest, necessary to generate \$15 million of investment revenues. The LWCF program and project dollars would not be impacted; and only new investment income would be utilized. Of the investment funds, \$10 million would be directed to rangeland health and resiliency projects for all forms of rangeland betterment and improvements, including fence construction, temporary structures, invasive plant and weed control and treatments and other activities that advance healthy habitat and resiliency. In addition, \$5 million would be directed to enhance, expand or improve access opportunities through public access agreements with willing landowners. Voluntary public access agreements would allow for either permanent, temporary or seasonal access and would prioritize agreements for access to large blocks of inaccessible public lands. If landowner elects not to enter into a public access agreement, such election shall not affect a grazing permit or lease held by the landowner.

Section 4. Renewal Term of Grazing Permits or Leases.

This section would change the current ten-year renewal term and allow for renewing grazing permits and leases for up to 20 years, when certain criteria and conditions are met.

Section 5. NEPA Review in Renewal of Grazing Permits and Leases and Certain Actions During Extreme Natural Events and Disasters.

This section allows for the use of a categorical exclusion, in conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), for renewal of grazing permits under certain conditions, including if the applicable permittee or lease is in compliance with terms and conditions, and if the permit or lease is consistent or substantially consistent with the use authorized. In addition, this section would allow for the use of a categorical exclusion for the temporary use of vacant allotments or other minor adjustments in terms and conditions of a permit or lease necessary to respond and adapt to resource

conditions during unforeseen events. The use of a categorical exclusion in these instances would be considered under certain considerations and factors including whether the permit holder is in compliance with terms and conditions of an original permit.