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Capps Re-Introduces Carrizo Plain National Conservation Area Act

Washington, DC -- Congresswoman Lois Capps today announced her re-introduction of the Carrizo Plain National Conservation Area Act of 1999 -- legislation to preserve the majestic Carrizo Plain.

The Carrizo Plain National Conservation Area Act designates San Luis Obispo County's Carrizo Plain a National Conservation Area -- a designation that protects and conserves significant natural and cultural resources, while allowing compatible land uses such as limited grazing to continue. The bipartisan legislation was formulated in cooperation with state and federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, the California Department of Fish and Game, private entities such as the Nature Conservancy, and local ranchers and environmentalists.

"This is an example of how people from different segments of the agricultural and environmental community can come together in partnership to protect this historic area," said Capps. "Because of this bipartisan legislation, the Carrizo Plain will be safeguarded in a balanced way, enabling local ranchers to continue necessary grazing while taking environmental considerations into account."

Last Congress, Capps introduced this bipartisan bill with neighboring Republican Rep. Bill Thomas (Bakersfield). Building on Thomas's continued support, now Capps's legislation also has the backing of Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-Redlands).

"For legislation to work it needs to address local concerns and be put forth in a bipartisan way. Since Bill Thomas and I both represent the Carrizo Plain we share the responsibility for its conservation." Capps continued, "This landmark agreement will give the unique landscape of San Luis Obispo county as well as the successful federal and local cooperation the recognition they rightfully deserve, while keeping important agricultural concerns in tact."

In addition to the bipartisan boost, Capps's initiative now has the crucial backing of Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. In March, Capps and Babbitt led a delegation tour of the area, after which the Interior Secretary pledged his support for the measure.

"When Bruce Babbitt came to Carrizo he was mesmerized," said Capps. "From members of the Administration to local ranchers, Republican and Democrat alike, everyone recognizes that we must preserve the past to enrich the future. This is one area in which we are all in agreement. With this valuable support, we are one step closer to ensuring the heritage of Carrizo is preserved for generations to come," said Capps.

The Capps bill is currently pending in the House Resources Committee.

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