



United States Department of Agriculture

**STATEMENT OF  
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BEFORE THE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND MINERALS  
CONCERNING  
H.R. 3881: THE COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF MINERAL RIGHTS ACT OF  
2015**

**APRIL 19, 2016**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding H.R. 3881, the Cooperative Management of Mineral Rights Act of 2015.

H.R. 3881 would repeal subsection (o) of section 17 of the Mineral Leasing Act (30 U.S.C. 226) and section 2508 of the Energy Policy Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-486; 106 Stat. 3108). These provisions apply only to federal lands within the Allegheny National Forest for which the United States does not own the subsurface rights to oil and gas. These provisions provide general terms and conditions that must be followed before commencing surface-disturbing activities to develop oil and gas deposits.

The USDA believes the terms and conditions in the Mineral Leasing Act and in the Energy Policy Act allow national forests to prudently manage surface resources, while ensuring that subsurface owners do not have unreasonable requirements to access their privately held mineral rights. We would like to continue to work with the sponsor to address issues of concern, however we cannot support H.R. 3881.

This concludes my remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.