

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPUBLICANS

CONGRESSMAN DOC HASTINGS, RANKING MEMBER

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Hastings Statement on Secretary Vilsack's Speech on U.S. Forest Service Vision

*"Our economy can't afford a vision that is blind to timber jobs and
timber communities"*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *House Natural Resources Ranking Member Doc Hastings (WA-04) released the following statement today in response to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's speech on the Obama Administration's vision for the U.S. Forest Service:*

"In announcing a 'new direction and vision,' the Administration must not lose sight of the vital role our forests play in our nation's economy and the thousands of Americans whose jobs depend on responsible forest management.

"America's national forests were created to help ensure a sustainable supply of timber for our nation's economic growth. Over the years, scientifically-improved management techniques have helped to protect our environment while continuing to keep working forests that employ thousands of Americans in small communities across the West.

"Our economy can't afford a vision that is blind to timber jobs and timber communities, and our planet's environment will suffer if America's national forests are turned into nature preserves and we become more dependent on timber and wood products from third-world countries without our high environmental standards and practices.

"We must also be honest about why many forests are in the poor health they are today, and it's not climate change, but rather lawsuits and policies that shutdown active, environmentally-beneficial management of forests that protect trees' health and prevent forest fires. Healthy management of our forests through thinning and selective harvest both creates jobs and prevents forest fires that emit massive amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, and yet these healthy practices are routinely fought and opposed.

"The result has been several years of newspaper headlines in the West announcing sawmill closures and more Americans losing their jobs. While our nation suffers from nearly 10% unemployment, that number is much higher in timber-dependent communities that are slowly being turned into ghost towns. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the logging, wood, paper and cabinetry industries have lost 242,000 jobs, or roughly 23 percent of its workforce, since 2006.

“Secretary Vilsack failed to address how the Administration will confront these agenda-driven lawsuits that are killing our forests and the rural communities whose livelihoods depend on timber-related jobs. Stopping these frivolous lawsuits is the best way to ensure that our forests remain healthy and that more American forests jobs are not lost.”

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