



TO THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

This letter is to express support for H.R. 1526, also known as the "Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act." The legislation renews the federal government's commitment to managing federal forests for the benefit of rural communities. In addition to putting people back to work and increasing economic activity for small businesses, the legislation assures stable funding to county governments, schools, roads and emergency services. As Oregon experiences its worst fire season in over 10 years, H.R. 1526 will also improve forest health and promote local involvement in fire prevention efforts on nearby federal lands.

We would like to call special attention to the bipartisan "O&C Trust, Conservation and Jobs" title in H.R. 1526. Proposed by Congressmen Peter DeFazio, Kurt Schrader and Greg Walden, the legislation addresses the unique Oregon & California Revested timberlands that are currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management across Western Oregon. The O&C Trust, Conservation and Jobs legislation puts half of the O&C lands into a trust for sustainable timber harvests, with net revenues after management costs distributed to O&C counties, and substantial revenues set aside to fund stream restoration projects on intermingled private lands. To conserve land, their proposal designates appropriate O&C lands as Wilderness or Wild & Scenic, and transfers the rest of the O&C lands to the U.S. Forest Service to be managed for old growth.

It's just the kind of sensible, balanced and bipartisan solution Oregon needs Congress to pass. By allowing for permanent timber production primarily on lands that have been previously harvested, and ensuring a sustainable level of timber and forest products from federal lands, the O&C Trust, Conservation and Jobs would create and support thousands of jobs in rural communities.

H.R. 1526 also includes an extension of Secure Rural Schools program to support local governments and enable them to transition back to payments that have been traditionally generated by active forest management. Not only will K-12 schools benefit from an immediate extension, they will also benefit from additional tax revenues generated as a result of increased employment and business activity. It will also help slow the decline in enrollment in rural schools, which will allow school districts to retain money they'd otherwise lose.

We hope the U.S. Senate will give serious consideration to H.R. 1526 and the O&C Trust, Conservation and Jobs title. As congressional negotiations on these issues continue, we urge our delegation to pass legislation that provides real certainty that the increased O&C timber harvests will occur, and that harvests occur across all O&C BLM districts- not just a few.

In closing, we support congressional action on a permanent and comprehensive solution that assures active forest management, stable revenues for counties and schools, and job creation in our rural communities. After 20 years of endless gridlock in our national forests, it's time for Congress to act and restore the economic and environmental benefits that active management provides.

Respectfully yours,

Jerry Law, Chairman