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Dear Congressman Ribble,

September 17, 2013

The Great lakes Timber Professionals Association (GLTPA) would like to offer the following comments in support of The Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act.(H.R.1526) GLTPA represents nearly 1000 members and their employee's including loggers, truckers, foresters, pulp and paper mills, OSB mills, sawmills, landowners, and equipment sales and manufacturers.

The federal government made a promise over a century ago to actively manage our forests and return 25% of revenues to counties containing National Forest land. Because the federal government doesn't pay local taxes, this revenue was used to help fund essential services such as schools and roads.

Over the last two decades, federal regulations and environmental lawsuits have caused a rapid decline in timber sales. This lack of active federal forest management has destroyed tens of thousands of jobs, deprived rural counties of revenue, and has had a negative effect on the rural quality of life.

H.R. 1526 reestablishes the priority of actively managing our forests and promotes responsible timber production on Forest Service commercial timber lands – areas that were specifically identified by the Forest Service for timber harvests. While the forest service should be required to meet one hundred percent of its sustainable yeild, H.R. 1526 requires the Forest Service to produce at least half of the sustainable yield of timber each year and, as required by law since 1908, share 25% of receipts with the counties to help fund schools and infrastructure projects.

The Forest Service once averaged over \$1 billion in revenues annually. It now spends \$2 for every \$1 it produces. This is a trend that can easily be changed if sustainable yield harvests are implemented.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, 65-82 million acres of Forest Service lands are at high risk of wildfires. Last year, wildfires burned 9.3 million acres, while the U.S. Forest Service harvested approximately 200,000 acres. This means that 44 times as many acres burned as were responsibility harvested.

THIS ???

A managed, healthy county forest in Ashland county and Taylor county, Wisconsin



OR THIS ???

Due to the lack of management to remove excess growth, our forests are highly susceptible to catastrophic wildfires that threaten public safety, the economic livelihood of communities, water supply, water quality, air quality and forest health. H.R. 1526 will help improve forest health and prevent catastrophic wildfires by allowing greater state and local involvement in wildfire prevention on federal lands. Recognizing that states and counties are often able to better manage forest lands than the federal government, H.R. 1526 would improve local forest management by allowing counties to actively manage portions of National Forest land through the creation of "Community Forest Demonstration Areas."

An unmanaged, burned forest in Idaho, September 2012



H.R. 1526 also tells courts to prioritize action over delay, but preserves the public's right to litigation. Although the public still retains its right to litigation there are times when litigation is not warranted, and the suing entities stopping forest management should be held accountable for fire caused by such actions.

Wisconsin's County Forest Program is "Unique to the Nation". Twenty-nine counties in Wisconsin have nearly 2.4 million acres of public forests enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (State Statutes §28.10 and 28.11). These county forest lands generated over \$37 million in revenue through sustainable forest management practices in 2012. This revenue serves to directly offset local tax levies enabling counties to provide essential services.

H.R. 1526, Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act, renews the federal government's commitment to manage federal forests for the benefit of rural schools and counties and to improve forest health. It is estimated H.R. 1526 would create over 68,000 direct jobs and nearly 140,000 indirect jobs. If passed H.R. 1526 will also provide stable funding for counties to use for education and infrastructure; improve local management of our federal forests; and help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

Since many GLTPA members live in and depend on the forest to support their rural way of life that has existed for several generations, we ask and strongly encourage your support of H.R.1526.

Sincerely,



Mark Huempfner
GLTPA Board President



Henry Schienebeck
GLTPA Executive Director