



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, September 20, 2013
[Permalink](#)

CONTACT: [Press Office](#)
202-226-9019

House Approves Legislation to Create Jobs, Strengthen Rural Communities, Schools and Prevent Wildfires

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1526, *Restoring Healthy Forest for Healthy Communities Act*, by a bipartisan vote of 244-173. This legislation, sponsored by House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings, renews the federal government’s commitment to manage federal forests for the benefit of rural schools and counties.

H.R. 1526 will create over 200,000 direct and indirect jobs; provide stable funding for counties to use for education and infrastructure; provide nearly \$400 million in savings over 10 years; improve local management of our federal forests; and help reduce the risk of wildfires.

“Over a hundred years ago, the federal government made a promise to rural schools and counties to actively manage our forests. Our federal forests were designed to be multiple-use but over the years, due to federal regulations and litigation, forest management has dramatically declined. As a result, thousands of people have lost their jobs, counties lack the resources to pay for basic services and our forest became increasingly susceptible to disease and wildfire. Communities depend on the forest for their livelihoods and they cannot afford the status quo,” **said Chairman Doc Hastings.** *“This legislation is necessary to reestablish the priority of active forest management, create jobs, promote responsible timber production, and prevent wildfires. This is a long-term solution that will put Americans back to work and restore the commitment our government made to these communities.”*

Specifically, H.R. 1526:

- Requires responsible timber production on at least half of the Forest Service’s commercial timber lands – areas that were specifically identified by the Forest Service for timber harvest.
- Shares 25 percent of receipts with the counties to help fund schools and infrastructure projects, as required by law since 1908.
- Improves forest health and prevent catastrophic wildfires by allowing greater state and local involvement in wildfire prevention on federal lands.

- Supports local forest management by allowing counties to actively manage portions of National Forest land through the creation of “Community Forest Demonstration Areas.”
- Addresses the federal forest lands currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management in Western Oregon, known as “O&C Lands” by establishing a Board of Trustees to manage a majority of O&C lands and distributing revenues from timber harvests to O&C counties.
- Allows a short-term extension of Secure Rural Schools payments to provide funding to counties as the Forest Service transitions back to active management.
- Extends and expands two popular forest management authorities currently in use by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management – Good Neighbor and Stewardship Contracting.

###

NaturalResources.house.gov

