



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

PUBLIC SERVICES BUILDING

2051 KAEN ROAD | OREGON CITY, OR 97045

August 27, 2013

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Representatives Hastings and DeFazio:

The Clackamas County Board of Commissioners wishes to express our support for the Secure Rural Schools and the Oregon and California (O&C) Lands provisions contained within H.R. 1526, the Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act. We believe these provisions are a common sense and balanced approach to federal forest management that will support family wage jobs and provide counties with certain and predictable revenue streams for critical county services.

Clackamas County is a western Oregon county with considerable urban and rural populations spread across a diverse landscape of more than 1.2 million acres. Approximately 52% of this land is federally owned and managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, with roughly 75,000 acres designated as O&C Lands. The responsible management of these federal forestlands is critical to providing predictable, long-term revenue for the county road and general funds that enhances the quality of life of county residents. Responsible federal management also would greatly enhance the economic wellbeing of our local wood products industry.

Regrettably, the impasse to meet federal forest management and timber sale volume goals, as prescribed by the Northwest Forest Plan and the O&C Act of 1937, has substantially reduced timber revenue and forced the County to reduce vital services for public safety, education, health, and other programs. At the same time, we have seen devastating economic losses in our rural communities and wood products industry – going from 12 operating mills in the County to just two. In light of this fiscal crisis, we urgently require a new approach to federal forest management that creates jobs, stabilizes Oregon's rural communities, and restores forest function and health. Absent a long-term solution, vital county services and our vast natural resource systems will be severely impacted or disappear altogether.

From our perspective, three major themes hinder sustainable forest management – funding to prepare timber sales, environmental analysis and review time for management activities, and litigation that stalls or completely stops harvest. H.R. 1526 correctly addresses these issues by allowing planned harvests to occur on forestlands prescribed for timber production, with

reasonable time for environmental review and protection from unreasonable litigation. The bill also temporarily extends the Secure Rural Schools Act, which will help to sustain vital county services until the law begins to generate new revenues.

Thank you for your work on this critical issue. We support your continued efforts to bring this important legislation to the House floor for a vote.

Sincerely,



John Ludlow
Chair



Jim Bernard
Commissioner



Paul Savas
Commissioner



Martha Schrader
Commissioner



Tootie Smith
Commissioner

cc: Oregon Congressional Delegation
Association of Oregon Counties
Association of O&C Counties