Inyo County Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Terence K. McAteer

Mt. Whitney
Highest Mountain
in the Contiguous U.S.
14,497 ft.

August 26, 2013

Congressman Doc Hastings
Chairman
Natural Resources Committee
United States House, Washington DC

Congressman Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Natural Resources Committee
United States House, Washington DC

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member DeFazio:

I write to you expressing support for H.R. 1526 and intend to ask my Congressperson to support the bill when it comes to the floor for a vote. As an educator in a community where the National Forests dominate the land base, I am very aware that the current management approach is not acceptable. When such a large percentage of the land base is federal and not subject to taxation job creation and retention is critical.

Today, our Federal Forests are, in many cases, a burden to the taxpayers. Too often, valuable Federal timber lands are neglected to the point where they are destroyed by bugs and insects. Or, they are consumed by catastrophic wildfires that destroy everything in their path. Instead, we need to adopt an approach that allows our Federal Forests to truly be multiple use. Clearly this is not the case now and we are all paying for the lack of management.

Our schools are responsible for providing the best possible education to our children. That is a real challenge when the Federal Forest produces little to no timber sales, the mills close and the family wage jobs vital to support a communities tax base disappear. I am not suggesting the harvesting of timber is the only value of our Federal forest. However, we can certainly have a sustainable harvest level that will absolutely provide the forest products industry with an adequate supply of timber to keep the mills open and badly needed family wage jobs in our community. The current condition is providing virtually no employment which has led to what we should all consider as an unacceptable rate of unemployment, free and reduced lunches in our schools and a number of other social problems.

H.R 1526 makes common sense changes to current law that will allow for acceptable harvest levels and at the same time make our Federal Forests much safer for recreation and wild life we all enjoy. We do appreciate the temporary extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. It is important to the basic educational services we need to provide. However, the real solution is a healthy Forest Products Industry which provides the family wage jobs that create a healthy tax base which is the real solution to providing a quality education to our children.

Sincerely,

Terence K. McAteer

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