

Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on Forests & Forest Health

[forests](#) - - Rep. Scott McInnis, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6205 - - (202) 225-0691

Witness Statement

**Statement of
Michael Rosenberger
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City of Portland, Oregon
On
H.R. 427
Little Sandy River Watershed Protections
Before the
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health
Resources Committee
United States House of Representatives
April 25, 2001**

Mr. Chair, and members of the Subcommittee, I am Michael Rosenberger, Administrator of the Bureau of Water Works of the City of Portland, Oregon. I also serve as President of the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, an organization of water utilities serving 110 million people in the United States.

The mission of the Portland Water Bureau includes water supply and distribution as well as being a leader on watershed protection issues such as water quality, habitat and species protection in the Bull Run Management Unit.

I am here today on behalf of Commissioner Erik Sten who regrets his inability to attend due to pressing matters before the City Council today. As you may know, under our Portland commission system, elected city council members such as Commissioner Sten are given executive responsibilities for administering the City's Departments. The Little Sandy protection has been a very high priority for Commissioner Sten and the rest of our City Council.

On behalf of the citizens of Portland and the surrounding region, I thank you for taking the time to conduct this very important hearing so early this year. I know this is a very busy period in the Congress and many priorities are competing for your attention. We appreciate your consideration.

I also want to acknowledge the Oregon delegation for their strong leadership on this issue over the years. We were pleased that this legislation received unanimous bi-partisan support in the other body last year and look forward to working with this Committee this year to earn its support and work towards final enactment as soon as possible. I would also like to thank Congressman Earl Blumenauer for being with us today and for being a sponsor of this bill, along with Representatives Peter DeFazio, David Wu and Darlene Hooley. I am very pleased to be here today to lend Portland's strongest possible support to H.R. 427 at this important

stage in the legislative process.

Portland's Legacy of Leadership and Watershed Protection

Mr. Chairman, more than 100 years ago, Portland citizens and elected officials took steps to protect the Bull Run Watershed, the source of Portland's drinking water supply. Their efforts led to:

- President Harrison's proclamation establishing the Bull Run Reserve in 1892;
- the adoption by Congress of the Trespass Act in 1904.
- the passage by Congress on the last day of the session in 1977, of the Bull Run Act (Public Law 95-200) which focused on the development of a new partnership between the City and the Forest Service for managing the watershed; and
- the 1996 passage of the Oregon Resource Conservation Act protecting the largest portion of the Bull Run management unit from timber harvest.

These last two measures were very significant accomplishments begun by one of Oregon's greatest civic leaders, Senator Mark Hatfield, and enjoyed full bipartisan support of our congressional delegation in both Houses.

Regarding that measure, it is important for you to know that since the passage of the *Oregon Resource Conservation Act*, the working relationship between the City of Portland and the United States Forest Service has never been better. The law provides a strong basis for us to work cooperatively together to address the watershed's needs. The Act has provided much needed clarity and direction to our efforts. We have had tremendous success in working together to address floods, mudslides and other natural occurrences and have just begun a strong partnership to address the needs of endangered species. In fact, three weeks ago today, Mt. Hood National Forest Supervisor Gary Larsen joined the Water Bureau and the Bull Run Heritage Foundation before the Portland City Council. Our purpose was to recommend adoption of a Council Resolution (Resolution 35981, attached) reaffirming the City's long-standing commitment to protecting the land and water resources of the Bull Run Management Unit. The Council unanimously approved the resolution, noting that only a few short years ago, such an action would have been the subject of considerable debate instead of a model of community consensus and collaborative problem solving.

Little Sandy Watershed Protections in H.R.427

The Portland region has been blessed with visionary leaders who have always done what is necessary to protect our precious water heritage. I am here to support taking the final step to complete the job of ensuring that the entire Bull Run Management Unit receives the highest level of protection we can provide. That next step is H.R.427.

The Bull Run Management Unit provides water to a quarter of Oregon's population. Today, we ask for protection of the Little Sandy watershed portion of the watershed so that all of the lands in the historically significant Bull Run Management Unit can be managed together to meet our community's water supply needs and support recovery of threatened fishery resources. Mr. Chair, the map attached to my written testimony provides an overview of how the Little Sandy Watershed relates to the larger picture and why it must be protected for future generations.

Here's what H.R. 427 does:

- Protects about 25,000 acres of land. The Oregon Resource Conservation Act provided protection to more than 65,000 acres of federal lands that drain to the Bull Run drainage. The provisions of H.R. 427 extends consistent land management protections to the remaining 22,000 acres of federal land already in the Bull Run Management Unit and adds nearly 2,600 acres of public lands in the Little Sandy watershed to the Management Unit.
- Provides a basis for consistent management throughout the Management Unit. We are striving to provide a consistent and conservative approach to managing these important lands for the long-term benefits of water users and threatened fish. Presently, the management activities under the Oregon Resource Conservation Act are limited to activities needed to protect water quality and water quantity, to maintain existing facilities, and to provide for any future power transmission route should additional storage and generating capacity be developed in the Bull Run.

It is important that we have our management agreement secured by law so that we have the utmost certainty we need in order to do proper planning for fish recovery and potential future water supply. The law will not constitute a loss of privilege for any entity; instead it will give land managers clearer direction.

The protection H.R.427 provides consistency across the entire Bull Run Management Unit. Land managers will manage this important watershed for both water supply and threatened and endangered species including salmon and steelhead. This bill will help protect the quality and quantity of water supply because protected forests provide cooler, higher quality water and a more natural release of water through snowmelt and local groundwater inflow.

This law will be one of the foundations of the City of Portland's major initiative to assist in the recovery of threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead in an area that is rapidly growing and developing. The Sandy River basin, of which the lands and waters of the Bull Run Management Unit are a part, represents some of the best habitat in the entire Lower Columbia River system.

There is a tremendous amount of effort being made in this watershed. For example, as a key element of our species recovery efforts, an agreement was reached in 1999 between the City and Portland General Electric (PGE), for the removal of the Bull Run Hydroelectric Project on the Little Sandy. It is estimated that Portland General Electric will spend more that \$15 million to voluntarily remove 2 dams: the Marmot and the Little Sandy. It is important that as they make these enormous investments for fish, that they know that the rest of the watershed is vigorously protected. In addition to this effort, the City of Portland, PGE, and federal, state, and local interests are working cooperatively in the basin on a broad number of issues to recover threatened species.

These local actions and initiatives place the protections contemplated by Congress in this legislation in a broader context and will be a critical addition to our overall plans.

In working with our delegation to develop this legislation, we have endeavored to involve all of the public and private elements of the community that share an interest in the future of water quality and the Little Sandy River watershed.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, because Congress has consistently been willing to help, the Bull Run Management Unit is the envy of water systems all over the country. Few actions are seen as being so clearly beneficial in providing high quality drinking water and supporting viable populations of fish and wildlife as lands and waters protected from development and unsupervised human access.

We hope Congress will continue to build on history and our unique partnership through swift passage of H.R.427. We can protect the Little Sandy watershed for the shared benefit of the communities of people, fish and wildlife, which depend on the lands and waters of the Bull Run Management Unit.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you again for your time, consideration and leadership. I look forward to working with you towards the goals we share and would be pleased to take any questions.

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