



Sevier County

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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 Congressman Hastings and Defazio

America's national forest generated money and jobs are unfortunately disappearing due to a failed federal forest management system. This has led to the loss of hundreds of family wage jobs in Sevier County Utah alone. This mismanagement has left our rural forested counties with a myriad of social and economic problems as well as an unsafe living situation due to the threat of catastrophic fires in these dying forest lands. These situations need to be addresses now. The only solution is returning to a sustainable harvest level that will provide family wage jobs, put money back into the federal treasury and establish healthy forests. This will also allow for the removal of the forest fire hazards, and create a solid tax base to support rural schools and badly needed county services.

From Sevier County Commissions perspective there are at least three reoccurring themes hindering sustainable forest management; First, the lack of funding to prepare timber sales agreements, second is the time required to complete the environmental analysis and reviews required by such contracts, and third is litigation that stalls or totally stops much of the harvest that so badly needs to occur. This third theme is the primary reason for the lack of funds to deal with the contract preparation (first theme) and the time and cost of completing the required environmental analysis and reviews.(second theme) because the USFS is spending so much time and money to prepare and fight litigation.

Sustainable forest management is essential if we are to ever provide the healthy forests that we once enjoyed. The Forest mortality we are now facing is destroying habitat for wildlife, creating a catastrophic wildfire situation that could explode destroy everything in its path including the precious and critical watershed. This lack of harvest is leaving millions of acres of forests susceptible to massive insect infestation and disease.

H.R 1526 addresses all of these issues. It provides a common sense approach for returning to sustainable forest management where the planned harvest can occur in a reasonable amount

of time. We do appreciate that the legislation allows for a temporary extension of the critically needed funds for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. The long term health of our treasured national forests and social and financial health of our rural forested communities depend on the family wage jobs that are provided by a healthy forest products industry. We will fully support H.R. 1526 when it comes to the House floor and will certainly contact our House members to speak in support and vote for the bill.

Thank you for your commitment to the wise management of our public lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Topham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gordon Topham, Sevier County Commissioner, Director on the Utah Association of Counties Board and Director on the National Association of Counties Board of Directors.

Cc; Utah Congressman Rob Bishop
Utah Congressman Jason Chaffetz
Utah Congressman Chris Stewart
Utah Congressman Jim Mathason
Utah Senator Orrin Hatch
Utah Senator Mike Lee