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WESTERN STATES SHERIFF'S ASSOCIATION

474 ROGERS CANYON ROAD
Laramie, WY 82072
Telephone: 307-760-4075
www.westernsheriffs.org

August 29, 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,

A phrase such as "money does not grow on trees" is quite often overused. However in America's National forests money and jobs do grow on trees. Unfortunately a failed Federal Forest management system has led to the loss of thousands of family wage jobs and has left our rural forested counties with a myriad of social and economic problems we do not deserve. These problems need to be addressed. For most of our counties, that can only be done by returning to a sustainable harvest level that absolutely will provide family wage jobs and allow for a solid tax base to support badly needed services.

There are at least three reoccurring themes hindering sustainable forest management; First is of funding to prepare sales, second is the environmental analysis and review time for management activities, and third is litigation that stalls or totally stops much of the harvest that badly needs to be done.

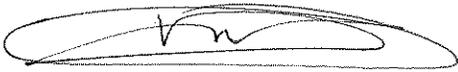
A result of the lack of active management of our National Forests has been felt by Sheriffs across the Western United States. The lack of adequate and sustainable revenues has resulted in a reduction in public safety. Service levels have been reduced due to the layoff of deputy sheriffs. Inmates are being released prior to completing their sentence and jails are closing. Public safety equipment is being utilized well past its life cycle thereby jeopardizing the safety of officers.

An increase in sustainable forest management is essential if we are to ever provide the healthy forests that were envisioned by President Theodore Roosevelt. The Forest mortality we are facing now is destroying habitat for wildlife, creating a catastrophic situation for massive wildfire's that destroy everything in their path and leaving millions of acres of forests susceptible to massive bug and insect infestation. The increase in sustainable forest management not only provides for healthy forest but it re-creates the economic engine that sustained the health of our communities throughout the Western United States.

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 Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. However for long term social and financial health of rural forested communities we must have 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.

In March of this year, the membership of the Western States Sheriff's Association unanimously passed Resolution 2013-1 supporting reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act. While we continue to stand in support of this resolution, we also will stand with you in support of H.R. 1526. I have attached a copy of the WSSA Resolution along with this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Valdez', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval border.

Sheriff Johnny Valdez
Cibola County, New Mexico
President, Western States Sheriff's Association
515 West High Street
Grants, NM 87020