



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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Committee Approves Legislation to Strengthen Rural Communities and Schools, Help Prevent Catastrophic Wildfires

WASHINGTON, D.C. –Today, the House Natural Resources Committee passed H.R. 1526, the “*Restoring Healthy Forest for Healthy Communities Act.*” This legislation renews the federal government’s commitment to manage federal forests for the benefit of rural schools and counties, improves forest health and helps prevent catastrophic wildfires.

“Across our country, rural forest communities are struggling for survival. These communities have depended on the forest for their livelihoods. Yet in the last three decades, federal forest lands have essentially been shut down due to bureaucratic red tape and lawsuits and these rural communities are paying the price. The federal government made a commitment over 100 years ago to actively manage our national forests and provide a percentage of revenue from that management to counties containing national forest land. Yet the federal government has failed to uphold that promise,” **said Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04).** *“These communities cannot afford the status quo. Police units don’t have the resources to respond to emergency calls, schools districts are laying teachers off, and communities are being left to crumble without funds to pay for infrastructure. A new approach is needed now. This bill is a long-term solution to put hard-working Americans back to work and to restore the economies of these rural communities.”*

At the markup, the Committee approved an amendment in the nature of substitute to H.R. 1526 offered by Chairman Hastings that combined several proposals to address the forest management stalemate on public lands and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildlife.

“This amendment is a coordinated effort to combine these proposals in the interest of moving forward with a cohesive piece of legislation. My colleagues on this Committee have put forth a lot of time and effort to develop pieces of legislation to help cut red tape and allow for increased management, and I am pleased that we were able to bring these bills together to restore the health of all our federal forest lands,” **said Chairman Hastings.**

Specifically, H.R. 1526, as amended, would reestablish the priority of actively managing our forests and promotes responsible timber production on Forest Service commercial timber land; improve forest health and prevent catastrophic wildfires by allowing great state and local involvement; improve forest management by allowing counties to actively manage

portions of National Forest land; addresses the forest lands currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management in Western Oregon, known as “O&C Lands;” and allows for a short-term extension of Secure Rural Schools payments as counties transition back to active forest management.

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