



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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Chairman Hastings: Committee Stands Ready to Work With the Senate on Solution to Improve Federal Forest Management

Stresses need for solution that helps forest communities across the U.S.

WASHINGTON, D.C. –At a Full Committee hearing today on “*Tribal Forest Management: A Model for Promoting Healthy Forests and Rural Jobs*,” House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) in his opening statement stressed the need for the Senate to take action on House-passed legislation to restore active forest management.

Last September, the House passed [H.R. 1526](#), *The Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act*, which renews the federal government’s commitment to manage federal forests for the benefit of rural schools and counties and to improve forest health. This bill, which creates over 200,000 jobs, is still waiting for action in the Democrat-controlled Senate. Meanwhile, our federal forests remain unhealthy and rural counties lack stable funding for services such as education and infrastructure.

Excerpts from Chairman Hastings’ Opening Statement:

“I will remind everyone that last year this Committee heard from a number of witnesses – including tribal governments – about the problems that characterize the federal forests under Forest Service management. This committee continues to take a strong interest in addressing these issues in a comprehensive way.

Over the last two decades, federal regulations and lawsuits have essentially shut down our national forests and have led to a rapid decline in timber sales and loss of associated jobs. Inadequate forest management has stripped rural counties of necessary funds to pay for vital services, including schools and emergency responders.

In addition, this lack of active forest management has caused significant degradation of forest health and left our forests increasingly susceptible to wildfires. As the IFMAT report notes, these poorly managed Forest Service lands often present significant wildfire threats to tribal forests. Congress attempted to address this issue under the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004, which allows tribes to propose hazardous fuels reduction projects on adjacent Forest

Service lands. Yet this authority is rarely used, in part due to the uncertainties that come with the Forest Service's seemingly endless environmental regulatory process.

I must point out that it's been over six months since the House passed comprehensive legislation addressing these issues, and the Senate still has failed to act. H.R. 1526, the Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act, is a bipartisan bill that would create over 200,000 jobs, provide stable funding for counties to use for education and infrastructure, improve local management of our federal forests, and help reduce the risk of wildfire. It's well past time for the Democrat-controlled Senate to get off the sidelines and take action to help our rural communities and save our national forests.

This Committee stands ready to work with the Senate on this issue. What we will not do, however, is accept a piecemeal approach that takes care of a few but leaves everyone else behind. The challenges facing our rural communities due to the neglect of our national forests will only be remedied with a national approach."

[Click here](#) to read the full opening statement.

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