



City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street Sitka, Alaska 99835

Coast Guard City, USA

September 6, 2013

Congressman Doc Hastings, Chair
Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

Congressman Peter DeFazio, Ranking Member
National Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member DeFazio:

The City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska, would like to join with many other Alaska municipalities to support H.R. 1526. The Sitka Borough encompasses 4,710 square miles, and over 95 percent of the lands in the Borough are in the Tongass National Forest. Until 1993, Sitka's largest employer was Alaska Pulp Corporation, which supplied over 400 family wage jobs. Since the mill closed in 1993, Sitka has struggled to diversify and rebuild its economy, but the Forest Service's Transition Framework has not resulted in the active management of the Sitka Ranger District to develop new resources to replace the extinct timber industry in the Central Tongass.

H.R. 1526 could address Sitka's issues as well as others in national forests throughout the nation. An increase in sustainable forest management is essential for our region, which is accessible only by air or water and is entirely surrounded by the National Forest. Returning to sustainable and active forest management will enable cities to utilize the many resources of the National Forests so critical to Sitka's and other isolated communities' economic future. While Sitka will never be able to return to a timber economy, new emphasis on recreation, second growth and small scale timber harvest, stream rehabilitation for fish, and other resource enhancement could enable new long-term economic development and new revenue sources for the Forest Service. This new direction must include funding and personnel to actively manage this critically important sector of Sitka's economy.

City and Borough of Sitka appreciates the inclusion of the temporary extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act, but these funds need to be institutionalized, as rural forested communities are severely limited by an inadequate tax base and the lack of family wage jobs enabled by a healthy forest resources economy. Your support for H.R. 1526 is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,


Mim McConnell, Mayor