

Committee On Natural Resources

Legislative hearing on a discussion draft of the LOCAL Management Act on April 28,2016

Councilmember Hans Dunshee

Snohomish County, District 5

Chairman McClintock, Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I have some areas of concern I would like to share with you, and some areas I want to complement you on.

First I want to address the relationship with the federal workers on the ground in my county. Nearly half of my county is federal land - 46 percent. The district I serve, which is largely rural, is a far greater percentage. From Department Heads to the Sherriff's office we have near daily interactions with federal employees. I can't find an instance, and I talked to folks who work in the departments of my county and they don't remember the federal people not being responsive. At the state level, where I have also worked, I can say the same.

My community greatly benefits from the work they do and the lands they manage. I have submitted for the record a document titled "*Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State*". In it you will find that expenditures and economic contributions resulting from public lands bring between \$500 million to \$1Billion to Snohomish County. My friends to the east, in Spokane County, receive an even great benefit, \$1.24 billion in 2015. Overall, outdoor recreation trip-related expenditures associated with recreation on public lands in Washington amount to about \$10.7 billion per year (excluding equipment).

After accounting for leakages of spending on items not produced in Washington, outdoor recreation accounts for \$20.5 billion in economic contributions, \$4.6 is flowing into the economy from out-of-state.

When I received the invitation to testify on this legislation I happened to be in a meeting with the Director of our Parks Department. We are currently working with the Forrest Service on a proposal that will bring a camping site to the town of Index. Our Parks Department meets quarterly with the Forrest Service, Washington State Department of Natural Resources and a number of local government officials. The collaboration is there and we are very appreciative of it.

I also want to express the importance of LWCF funding to my local community. I have submitted for the record the document titled "*Land & Water Conservation Fund, Fifty Years in Washington State*". In it you will find a list of LWCF funded projects in my county. These range from parks on our saltwater shorelines, which are some of our busiest recreation areas, to little league baseball and softball fields. Limiting these funds, or placing additional barriers to access, would have a negative effect on the community I serve.

I would like to take a moment to address specific sections of this legislation.

Sec 104

This section appears to place unnecessary limitations on an individual's ability to sell their private property. I don't believe a county government should be able to restrict a citizen's right to sell their

property because the buyer happens to be a federal agency. Sometimes the only viable buyer may be the federal government.

Inholdings, which are in my county, cause conflicts when hunters, fishers, and hikers think it's public land. Federal land protection projects can benefit private property owners and public users. I would caution against placing additional barriers on the process.

I would applaud the requirement of a study of the economic impacts of public land. There is no shortage of claims about the positive and negative impacts of the public owning land. There is lack of bipartisan, objective and verifiable facts. In my previous work as a state legislator I worked with my Republican Senate counterpart to have authored a study titled "*JLARC Final Report: State Recreation and Habitat Lands*", which I have submitted for the record.

I have also submitted a letter from Senators Ron Wyden and Amy Klobuchar, calling on the Interior and Commerce Departments to conduct a national report detailing the economic benefits of our country's outdoor economy. I would encourage this committee to also pursue this information.

Sec 105

We have had the debate about roads and value on state lands in my state. Closing roads allows money in a budget to be shifted to things such as fire prevention, where funds are desperately needed. Certainly, as I have dealt with these issues, I wouldn't want to prevent a solution that might save the government money. We all know how tight budgets are.

Sec 201

I agree that constant moving of staff can have negative effects but an employee who needs to move or economic or family reasons should have the ability to take care of their family.

Sec 202

Since this section mentions fire, and tries to do something about it, let me say that any plan has no value without money. My county is a wet costal county, and fire, at least until now, has not been a great concern. But I want to speak a little for my fellow county commissioners on the dry side of the mountains. Nothing they dealt with was as great and tragic as fire this last year. Houses burned, lives lost, families up rooted and business destroyed. It is going to take more resources from the federal, state, private, tribal, and counties to get the ground fuel out of the forest. No amount of fire suppression will solve the problem, it just leaves it for later.

The changes to plans could be helpful but the communities simply need more resources. Hopefully we do not get bogged down in another fight over the big trees, which are not the problem in fires, it is the fuel on the ground, and it should be addressed immediately.

Sec 203 and 401

I am concerned about the restriction on the federal agencies ability to acquire land for public use. I want to take on directly the myth that public and federal land harms local economies. Public land is a job creator in my rural areas. In fact, Federal land is a job creator. While at the state we did a couple of studies on this subject because rural economies and communities need to be healthy and secure. I submitted them as written testimony. They show positive value for rural economies. Public land is of the

people, by the people, for the people. It is a uniquely American idea and we should not let it perish.

The 15 percent restriction hinders our ability to address our community and job creation needs, I would ask you to give my county the same ability as eastern communities.

The 33 percent number seems odd and redundant. The vast majority of this land is accessible to hunters and fishers, I worry that number would become a ceiling in our thinking. I think the existing program does pretty well by people who want to hunt and fish so I would ask caution on limits. I have seen estimates from the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership that as much as 72 percent of sportsmen depend on public land for hunting.

The program works for counties like mine, it creates opportunities and jobs. The economic value is clear, the more people come, the more money they leave in my communities. I would ask you to be cautious in changing a good thing.

Thank you.

Councilmember Hans Dunshee  
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