

Rep. Greg Walden Statement
Before the Subcommittee on National Parks Forests and Public Lands
S. 270 – La Pine Land Conveyance Act
Thursday May 17th 2012
1324 Longworth – 2:00 pm

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. As a former member of this committee and former chairman of the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, I appreciate the work you do on a daily basis to improve management of our public lands. I want to thank Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva for hearing the La Pine Land Conveyance Act S. 270 today – legislation drafted by Senator Wyden and strongly supported by me. It's offered in the spirit of bipartisanship problem solving.

Located in central Oregon's Deschutes County, the city of La Pine is actually Oregon's newest city...having been incorporated in 2006. The city has taken great steps over the last few years to grow its economy, create jobs, and provide essential services to its 1,500 citizens – 15,000 including the surrounding areas. These efforts have been led by people like La Pine resident and current Deschutes County Commissioner Tony DeBone. Tony has worked tirelessly for La Pine and the passage of this legislation, which is important to the economic growth and future of the La Pine.

Chairman Bishop...I know you can sympathize with rural communities that cannot grow because they are surrounded by federal lands. La Pine is a perfect example. It not only is surrounded by both BLM and U.S. Forest Service ground, but also some of the heart of the city is actually owned by those agencies. In fact, La Pine's library sits on 10 acres of BLM land. I think we both can agree, Mr. Chairman, that the BLM shouldn't be in the business of leasing lands to libraries. This bill would fix that.

S. 270 transfers approximately 150 acres to the La Pine Park and Recreation District to establish a more permanent home for the La Pine Rodeo, and the community's largest event of the year—the 4th of July Celebration. Their annual rodeo, dubbed "The Greatest Little Rodeo in Oregon," draws thousands of people into the area. This land allows the city to expand and enhance this venue with newer, larger facilities.

Lastly, the bill would provide the City of La Pine with 750 acres so it can build a new water treatment facility and allow residents to transition from septic systems to municipal water and sewer. Without this land, La Pine will not have the land needed to expand its wastewater system. This provides residents with a reliable water source while improving the water quality of the nearby Deschutes River at the same time.

Thank you again Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva for hearing this bill today. I look forward to working with you to get this legislation considered by full committee and to the floor of the House soon.