

Statement for the Record on S. 270 the La Pine Land Conveyance Act

House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands

Senator Ron Wyden

May 17, 2012

Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva, thank you for holding a hearing on S. 270, the La Pine Land Conveyance Act. I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of this piece of legislation that is so important to the community of La Pine, Oregon. In this Congress, I introduced the La Pine Land Conveyance Act on February 3, 2011, and it was unanimously reported out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on August 30, 2011. On October 18, 2011 the legislation passed the Senate by Unanimous Consent. This bill was previously introduced in the last Congress, where it also received a hearing and was marked-up. I am pleased that today's hearing provides an opportunity to further advance this legislation toward enactment.

This bill is intended to give community leaders in La Pine, Oregon the opportunity to grow their local economy and make much needed improvements to a wastewater treatment plant. As in many rural communities in my state, and across the western United States, the federal government is involved in many of the opportunities to pursue land development projects. That's because the federal government owns much of the land surrounding these small communities. While many of these lands are treasures, this level of federal involvement often limits the ability, and flexibility, of local governments and civic leaders to address local problems. I firmly believe the federal government can and should be an active partner in strengthening communities and improving a region's quality of life.

That's why I introduced the La Pine Land Conveyance Act. This bill has already passed the Senate, and I believe it clearly demonstrates that success is possible when the federal government partners with proactive, innovative communities to help them tackle challenging economic conditions.

The La Pine Land Conveyance Act will transfer land, currently under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, to the City of La Pine. A 150-acre conveyance will be used to by the La Pine Parks and Recreation District to construct equestrian and rodeo grounds. The development of these facilities will serve as a tourist attraction, provide employment, and increase revenue for the city. The conveyance will also allow for future land development of ball fields and parks and recreation facilities.

A separate 750-acre conveyance will be transferred to Deschutes County for better wastewater management by the sewer district. The planned expansion of the city's wastewater treatment plant has been on hold for years due to lack of space. The Bureau of Land Management property, found entirely within the city limits, will allow for that expansion and will mitigate septic systems that are generating elevated levels of nitrate in the groundwater.

A third piece of land, roughly 10-acres in size, will be given to the City of La Pine for development as a library or as city open spaces.

I want to express my thanks to all the citizens and community leaders who have worked to build their communities and develop these projects. They represent the pioneering spirit and vision that defines my state.

I would like to add that I also greatly appreciate the Committee's leadership on holding a hearing on the reauthorization of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act ("FLTFA"), H.R. 3365, today. FLTFA is an important tool that the West needs reinstated. It is good government, fiscally responsible and makes sense. I hope to work together with Members in the House to restore this important "land for land" tool to benefit western businesses, landowners, local economies, sportsmen and others.

Again, thank you Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva for giving me the opportunity to offer testimony before the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands.