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State Forests Management Superior to Federal Forests for Job Creation, Revenue Production, Local Economies and Fire Prevention

WASHINGTON D.C. – Today the House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation held a [hearing](#) examining, “*State Forest Management: A Model for Promoting Healthy Forests, Rural Schools and Jobs.*” The hearing was an opportunity to hear from state leaders, local land managers and timber experts on the inadequacies and burdens of current federal forest management practices that have contributed to poor forest health, underfunded schools, lost jobs, and suppressed economic activities in communities near National Forests. In comparison, state managed forests can often produce hundreds of times more revenue, from just a fraction of the land base while maintaining vibrant, healthy forests to support local communities.

“[Washington state] lands generate an average of \$168 million annually, support construction of public elementary, middle school and high schools statewide, facilities at the state’s universities, and other state facilities and institutions. In comparison, the U.S. Forest Service is responsible for managing over 9 million acres of forest land contained within seven different national forests in the State of Washington, yet harvests just 2 percent of the new growth, yielding a four-year average of only \$589,000 in revenue,” said Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04). “Rather than offering all-too-familiar rhetoric of how complying with one federal law or another ‘costs too much,’ it’s time for the federal government to adjust how it does business, and honor its own statutory responsibilities to manage the forests, including allowing sufficient timber harvests, that benefit forested counties and their schools, as well as improve declining forest health and reduce the threat and soaring costs of catastrophic wildfire.”

“Over the last few decades we’ve seen our National Forest System fall into complete neglect—what was once a valuable asset that deteriorated into a growing liability. I believe our forests and public lands are long overdue for a paradigm shift,” said Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation Chairman Rob Bishop (UT-01). “It’s time for the federal government to cease being the absentee landlord of over 600 million acres of land in this country that it controls and start leveraging those lands in a way that benefits rather than burdens the taxpayers and communities who are forced to play host to the federal estate.”

Forest Management: Success versus Federal Failure						
	Washington		Montana		Idaho	
	Department of Natural Resources	USFS	Department of Natural Resources and Conservation	USFS	Department of Lands	USFS
Total Forest Acres	2.2 million	9.3 million	559,000	17.1 million	971,678	20.5 million
Average Harvested Volume (million board feet)/Year	567.3	79.9	52.1	82.8	232.7	93.7
Average Harvested Volume(million board feet)/Acre	257.9	8.6	93.2	4.8	239.4	4.6
State volume per acre over Forest Service	30X more volume/acre than USFS		19X more volume/acre than USFS		52X more volume/acre than USFS	
Average Revenues/Year	\$169 million	\$589,926	\$8.9 million	\$1.6 million	\$53.8 million	\$1.2 million
Revenues/Acre	\$77	\$0.06	\$16	\$0.09	\$55	\$0.06
State value per acre over Forest Service	1283X more revenue/acre than USFS		178X more revenue/acre than USFS		917X more revenue/acre than USFS	
Average Price Bid for Timber Sale (dollar/thousand board foot)	\$310	\$6	\$172	\$19	\$231	\$16

Witnesses highlighted examples from state forests across the country that significantly outperform neighboring federally manage forests in revenue production and board feet harvested while spending less money on management for healthier forests, less susceptible to catastrophic wildfires.

Idaho Governor, [Butch Otter](#), provided detailed statistics comparing Idaho managed state forests to federally managed forests in Idaho and concluded *“even though the Forest Service is the largest forest land manager in Idaho, the State and private forests provide over 90 percent of the wood milled in our state. Timber harvests on federal lands in Idaho are the lowest they have been since 1952, and less than 1 percent of national forests are logged nationwide each year.”* The Governor said that considering the amount of federal forest land that burn each year, it appears to people in his state *“the federal government would rather see a valuable resource go up in smoke than harvest it and create some much-needed jobs for rural communities.”* Governor Otter said, *“One of the primary problems leading to gridlock in the management of federally administered lands is the complex array of statutes and regulations, some of which conflict,”* and suggested a placing some National Forest lands into a state-modeled *“National Forest Trust,”* where federal lands could be managed with a clear *“‘mission’ and ‘objectives,’”* unlike federally managed lands where the *“mission and objectives for management have been confused and contorted after a century of statutory and regulatory change and an unhealthy dose of judicial activism.”*

[Lee Grose](#), County Commissioner from Lewis County, Washington and a member of the

Washington State Board of Natural Resources told the Committee *“any thought that current federal land management practices could provide levels of harvest which would provide revenue to support local governments or schools and universities is folly.”* Grose underscored the revenue potential from National Forests if the federal government would *“follow the state’s lead in order to help sustain local economies particularly in our rural communities and provide revenues for Secure Rural Schools”* and noted that in 2011 the National Forests contributed *“less than \$1 per acre of revenue to the Federal Treasury—when potentially these forests across America could produce thousands of dollars per acre for taxpayers.”* Grose compared the amount of money being spent to manage lands while producing a fraction of timber, *“Last year the Forest Service budget was \$2.3 billion dollars while it cut a measly 2 billion BF of timber. Twenty years ago the Forest Service budget was roughly half of last year’s and its’ timber sale program produced 14 billion BF of timber.”*

[Matthew Jensen](#), a third generation logger from Wisconsin representing Whitetail Logging and the American Loggers Council, testified that *“we need a vibrant federal timber sale program to encourage investment in those businesses and communities that are dependent on national forest lands as a source of supply,”* but when it comes to National Forests, *“oversight on the federal timber sale program has become an unjustifiable burden...to award a federal timber sale versus the state contracts and the county contracts.”* Jensen spoke about local economic and job creation impacts from poorly managed federal lands, *“Timber harvests from federal lands have declined by more than 80% over the last two decades. These declines have devastated rural communities where sawmills and paper mills provided some of the only stable, year-round employment. Many mills, large and small, have been forced to close their doors resulting in the loss of thousands of family jobs, coupled with tens of thousands of indirect jobs lost, including an estimated 30% reduction in logging businesses.”*

Rep. Raul Labrador (ID-01) asked [Silas Whitman](#), Executive Committee of the Nez Perce Tribe:

“Chairman Whitman, you talk about how the Tribe manages its lands to produce jobs and revenues while also benefiting fish and wild habitat. Why is the Tribe able to achieve this balanced management while the Forest Service cannot?”

Chairman Whitman Responded:

“Simply because we manage.”

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