



## Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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### **Chairman Hastings Supports Passage of Green Mountain Lookout Heritage Protection Act** *Optimistic of other bipartisan, public lands bills becoming law*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) delivered the following statement on the House floor today in support of S. 404, *the Green Mountain Lookout Heritage Protection Act*. This important bipartisan legislation is similar to H.R. 908 that was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on February 20, 2014 as part of *the Public Access and Lands Improvement Act*.

“S. 404 would preserve the Green Mountain Lookout in the Glacier Peak Wilderness Area of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in Washington state.

The Green Mountain Lookout was constructed in 1933 on the summit of Green Mountain for the purposes of fire detection. It was also used to look for enemy aircraft during World War II. While the lookout is no longer used for fire detection, it has become a favorite destination for hikers.

Several years ago, after the lookout was damaged in a snow storm, the Forest Service disassembled and removed the lookout by helicopter with the intent of replacing the foundation and reassembling the lookout. In 2009, the lookout was reassembled, again using helicopters.

In 2010 an environmental group from Montana filed and won a lawsuit claiming that the repairs violated both the Wilderness Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. As a result, a federal judge in Seattle ordered the Forest Service to remove the historic lookout. Elimination of this popular hiking destination by this order would have likely begun this summer. This bill puts a stop to this nonsense and protects the lookout.

But unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. Too often, lawsuits from extreme groups seek to close off public access to the public’s lands and too often federal bureaucracies are happy to comply with eliminating existing recreation from public lands. At times they even take the lead in pushing such restrictions. Credit however, is due to the Forest Service for using common sense in this case. In other cases, such as the subsistence cabin of the Alaska Native veteran addressed in this bill, or the halting the stocking of fish in the North Cascades, common sense hasn’t always prevailed so it falls to Congress to fix the problem.

The House has already acted once, in February, to approve legislation to protect the lookout. By voting on this Senate bill today, the House will send the measure to the President to become law.

The Senate approved the measure by unanimous consent last week at the request of Senator Patty Murray. This action was prompted by a visit by Senator Murray to the Washington state communities affected by the tragic mudslide that has claimed the lives of over two dozen. Senator Murray called me last Saturday morning and said that when asked what she and her congressional colleagues could do to help, the Mayor of Darrington, one of the communities affected, asked for enactment of this bill to save the lookout. It is a small action that cannot undo a tragedy, but it will help protect a recreation and economic asset in this corner of Washington state. It goes without saying to all affected by the mudslide, our hearts go out to you who lost loved ones, and our sincere thanks is owed to all those who have assisted in the rescue, search, recovery and rebuilding.

Lastly, I would like to express my optimism that this is just the first of other bills affecting public lands that will become law this year. There has been bipartisan communication between the House and Senate on finding agreement on a number of bills of local importance to communities across the country -- bills to solve problems, foster economic development and to protect historic and special places. Had not the special circumstance prompted action on this bill today, I am confident it would have become law soon enough. Senator Murray and I, along with Senator Cantwell, have been discussing a number of bills of interest to Washington state. I hope and believe these will be among those that can be accomplished this year.

It takes one step at a time. So I urge all my colleagues to support this bill and send it to the President for his signature.”

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