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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement by**  
**The Honorable Doc Hastings**  
**Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**At the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**  
**Legislative Hearing on**  
**H.R. \_\_\_\_, "National Forest County Revenue, Schools and Jobs Act of 2011"**  
**Thursday, September 22, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on draft legislation to address the expiration of the Secure Rural Schools program. This draft proposal is a starting point as we work towards a long-term solution to provide a stable revenue stream for rural counties and schools.

These forested counties have long depended on revenue from timber sales to help fund vital services such as education and roads. The Secure Rural Schools program was designed as a short-term solution in 2000 to continue providing funding as timber sales dramatically declined due to federal overregulation and harmful lawsuits. But the reality is that we cannot afford to forever finance this program - \$500 million in annual mandatory spending – during these times of growing debts and deficits.

We need a new approach – one that renews the federal government's commitment to manage resources for the benefit of forested counties and their schools.

Restoring active management of our national forests, as this draft proposal does, would provide a stable revenue stream for counties and schools. It would create new jobs, strengthen rural economies, promote healthier forests, reduce the risk of wildfires, and decrease our reliance on foreign countries for timber and related products.

In the State of Washington, the Forest Service is responsible for managing over 9 million acres of forest land contained within seven different national forests. According to the Washington Department of Natural Resources, timber harvests in Washington have declined by *84 percent* over the past decade. The result has been a staggering loss of jobs and economic productivity in rural forest communities.

Washington's national forests each year grow an additional 4.5 billion board feet of timber, while about a third as much—1.3 billion board feet— simply dies.

Yet, the Forest Service harvests only about 2 percent of the amount. In contrast, the State of Washington, which manages in trust about a quarter of the amount of forest lands of those managed by the Forest Service, produces 700% more than that for local governments, universities and state school construction.

As stated earlier, declining federal forest revenues and poor management directly impacts real people and costs real jobs. Just last month, Hampton Lumber announced the layoff of an additional 80 workers and cut operations in Randle Washington, a small town adjacent to the Gifford-Pinchot National Forest, due primarily to a declining supply of timber from the forest.

Mr. Chairman, this draft proposal seeks to stop and reverse this trend. It would require the Forest Service to more actively manage national forests, making them healthier and more economically viable for local governments to use for schools and other needs. The legislation encourages local federal forest managers to work with states, tribes and local governments to identify priority projects, increase revenues, and manage forests in an environmentally sensible and proactive way.