



Hood River Valley Residents Committee  
PO Box 100  
Mt. Hood, OR 97041

**Mr. Christopher Winter**  
Staff Attorney, Cascade Resources Advocacy Group  
On Behalf of **Hood River Valley Residents Committee**

Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Forest and Forest Health  
Committee on Resources

Hearing on HR 5025  
Mt. Hood Stewardship Legacy Act  
April 5, 2006

My name is Chris Winter, and I am here today on behalf of the Hood River Valley Residents' Committee (HRVRC). HRVRC represents approximately 160 families in the Hood River Valley that stretches from the majestic Mt. Hood to the mighty Columbia River. Many of the families represented by HRVRC are second and third generation family farmers working some of 15,000 acres of pear orchards in the Hood River Valley, representing more than half of Oregon's world-famous pear industry. In 2000, a study prepared for Oregon State University estimated that the fruit industry in Hood River County contributed \$80.5 million per year to the State of Oregon along with almost 5,400 jobs throughout the Pacific Northwest. (Radtke 2000). In recent years, the cherry plantings in the valley have grown significantly, and the fruit industry can help sustain the economy of Hood River County for many years to come. Many of HRVRC's members are also woodland owners, managing private forest lands that comprise 50 percent of the private land base in the county.

The family farmers in Hood River County are facing continuing threats to their businesses and way of life. Three of the most pressing problems include: 1) loss of agricultural land and open space, 2) threats to drinking water sources, and 3) threats to water quantity. HRVRC's members are also seeing threats to the long tradition of backcountry recreation and enjoyment of wildlands that has inspired their families and their work for generations. HR 5025 offers the promise of a visionary solution to these problems – wilderness can and will support the agricultural economy of Oregon.

We would like to thank Chairman Walden and Representative Blumenauer for taking a personal interest in Mt. Hood and the communities that depend on the mountain for their livelihood. They have worked across the aisle to listen to the community, to learn the mountain and to consider a wide range of potential solutions to the problems we are facing in Oregon. HRVRC fully supports the provisions in HR 5025 that accomplish the proposed solution for the North side of Mt. Hood and appreciates all the hard work that Oregon's Congressional Delegation has put towards finding a pro-active solution.

As you may know, HRVRC has worked for almost five years with recreation clubs like the Oregon Nordic Club and the Mazamas, historic preservation groups like the Friends of Tilly Jane, and local community groups like the Friends of Mt. Hood and the CRAG Rats. We have also worked collaboratively with local residents within and adjacent to the Crystal Springs Watershed zone of contribution, including the Mountain Shadows Homeowners Association, the Snowshoe Club and many others. We have worked with officials from the Forest Service and with volunteers from local, regional and national conservation organizations like Portland Audubon, Oregon Natural Resources Council and the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club. Working collaboratively, we put forward a shared vision for the North side of Mt. Hood.

With that vision in mind, the HRVRC also worked for almost two years with Mt. Hood Meadows and Hood River County to develop a solution for Mt. Hood that would permanently protect and enhance the tradition of agriculture and backcountry recreation that has been passed down from generation to generation. Over the past two years, we have worked with County officials, the Forest Service and Crystal Springs to hammer out a solution for Cooper Spur. The results of these historic efforts are presented in HR 5025 provisions on the land trade, the protection for the Crystal Springs, and wilderness for the Cooper Spur area. We have taken that solution out to the community and received almost unanimous positive feedback from the people of Hood River County for this solution that provides certainty and permanent protection for these special places. Oregonians want the North side to stay wild and free.

One of the most important provisions of HR 5025 is the protection of the Crystal Springs Watershed. One-third of the people in Oregon get their drinking water from the slopes of Mt. Hood. More than 1 million people drink from the rivers and watersheds of a single mountain. Protecting that water is the single most important issue for HRVRC and family farmers of the Hood River Valley.

Years of collaborative problem solving in our community have resulted in the watershed protection measures included in HR 5025. We have worked with the U.S. Forest Service, Hood River County, the Crystal Spring Water District, Mt. Hood Meadows and the local landowners in the area to develop a plan that will permanently protect this watershed which serves more than 25% of the people in Hood River County. The Crystal Springs Water District retained a professional hydrologist to delineate the zone of contribution for the shallow aquifer that feeds the springs. We have included that map as an Exhibit to our testimony today. The Oregon Department of Health certified that map as the official boundaries of the watershed. The proposed solution supports the

work of the local water district and the state agency in establishing the boundaries of the watershed.

Congressmen Walden and Blumenauer listened to the community's input and the consensus that developed regarding the best way to manage the watershed for this and future generations, and the key concepts from the proposed solution are contained in HR 5025. HRVRC strongly urges the subcommittee to retain and enhance the protections for the Cooper Spur area, the Crystal Springs watershed and the North side of Mt. Hood that are included in HR 5025. Any weakening of the proposed protections threaten the public's faith in a collaborative process that has taken years to complete, and has been hailed as a historic achievement ending over three decades of conflict.

Nonetheless, HRVRC believes that HR 5025 has left out key areas that are eligible for wilderness designation and which serve as critical sources of drinking water and recreation areas for the people of Hood River County. Places like Boulder Lake, Bonney Butte, Fifteen Mile Creek, and Tamanawas Falls have been left out of the current proposal. We should also protect these special places for our children and grandchildren – they provide us with drinking water, wildlife habitat, solitude and adventure. The preservation of wildlands and open spaces can help to sustain the traditional way of life of the family farmers of Hood River County.

Chairman Walden and Representative Blumenauer have shown great leadership and compassion for the people of Oregon. HRVRC looks forward to working with the Congressmen and Senators Smith and Wyden to ensure that we leave a legacy for our children, so they have the same opportunity as previous generations to farm the land and live on Mt. Hood. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with the Subcommittee this morning.

Contact Information:

Chris Winter, Counsel to HRVRC  
Cascade Resources Advocacy Group  
917 SW Oak St., Suite 417  
Portland, OR 97205  
Tel. (503) 525-2725  
Mobile (503) 701-6002

Mike McCarthy  
Pear Farmer  
8085 Clear Creek Road  
Parkdale, Oregon 97045  
Tel. (541) 353-6476  
Mobile (541) 806-6476

Scott Franke  
Hood River Valley Residents' Committee, Chair  
212 Front Street  
Hood River, OR 97031  
(541) 386-9955  
Mobile (541) 399-3149