

July 26th 2013

Senator Ron Wyden
Chairman
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate, Washington DC

Senator Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate, Washington DC

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Murkowski;

On June 25th your committee held a hearing titled "Challenges and opportunities for improving forest management on federal lands." We are heartened by the bipartisan recognition of the fact that the federal government's current approach to managing our federal forests is badly broken and needs to be addressed through legislation now.

Our nation's forests are in crisis. As our Federal forests become more and more overstocked the rate and danger of insect infestation and wildfires continues to grow. Since 2003, the U.S. has faced the six worst fire seasons in modern history. This increase in fire danger and fuel loading can be directly correlated with the reduction in active forest management. Since the late 1980's timber harvests on federal forests have dramatically declined by over 75%.

Congress attempted to fix this problem in 2003, when it passed the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA). HFRA provided the Forest Service with flexibility on NEPA for certain projects. Unfortunately, the Forest Service rarely uses HFRA authorities and limits it to small acreage projects. The Forest Service continues to struggle with forest management because of the constant threat of environmental litigation. Fuel loads on national forests continue to rise. Homes, watersheds, and forests burn while badly needed fuels reduction projects linger in court due to aggressive litigation by some fringe groups.

Maintaining the health of our national forests is vital to maintaining healthy watersheds; retaining abundant and diverse wildlife populations; and providing abundant recreational opportunities. Rural businesses, infrastructure, and employment in counties with national forests must be maintained and enhanced. The resiliency of rural communities near national forests depends on healthy, well-managed forests. Outdoor recreation and active forest management are mutually dependent. Hikers, anglers, and hunters all want to recreate in green, growing forests, not burned or dead forests.

Poor forest health isn't confined to Western States; National Forests in the East and South are experiencing declining growth rates, overstocked unhealthy conditions, and a substantial increase in insect infestations.

Legislation needs to reduce the cost of environmental reviews, reduce the number of lawsuits and appeals after projects have been identified through environmental review, and expedite the process for projects and programs to restore and maintain the health of our federal forests. If we take action resource dependent communities, members of the public that use the national forests, and the forests themselves will be much better served than they are today.

Our organizations stand ready to work with you to move forward on legislation to restore and maintain the health of our federal forests through active forest management.

Respectfully Submitted;

Alabama Forestry Association
Alaska Forestry Association
Alaska Municipal League
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Forest and Paper Association
American Forest Resource Council
Arizona Association of Counties
Arkansas Forestry Association
Associated California Loggers
Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho
Associated Oregon Loggers
Association of Arkansas Counties
Association of Consulting Foresters
Association of County Commissioners of Alabama
Association of Minnesota Counties
Association of Minnesota Loggers
Association of Nevada Counties
Association of O&C Counties
Association of Oregon Counties
Black Hills Forest Resource Association
Boone & Crockett Club
California Forest Counties Schools
California Forestry Association

California State Association of Counties
Campfire Club of America
Catch a Dream Foundation
Colorado Counties, Inc.
Colorado Rural Schools Caucus
Colorado Timber Industry Association
Communities For Healthy Forests
Conservation Force
County Supervisors Association of Arizona
Dallas Safari Club
Evergreen Forest Counties Group
Federal Forest Resource Coalition
Forest Industry National Labor Management Committee
Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
Hardwood Federation
Hawaii Forest Industry Association
Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities
Idaho Association of Counties
Intermountain Forest Association
Kentucky Association of Counties
Kentucky Forest Industry Association
Klawock School District
Louisiana Forestry Association

Masters of Foxhounds Association
Michigan Association of Counties
Michigan Association of Timbermen
Minnesota Forest Industries
Mississippi Association of Supervisors
Mississippi Forestry Association
Missouri Association of Counties
Montana Association of Counties
Montana Logging Association
Montana Wood Products Association
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of Counties
National Association of Home Builders
National Forest Counties & Schools Coalition
National Hardwood Lumber Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
Nevada Association of Counties
New Mexico Association of Counties
New Mexico Forest Industry Association
North American Grouse Partnership
North Carolina Association of Professional Loggers
North Dakota Association of Counties
Oregon Forest Industries Council
Oregon Women in Timber
Partnership For Rural America
Pope and Young Club
Professional Logging Contractors of Maine
Public Lands Foundation
Quality Deer Management Association
Ruffed Grouse Society
Rural County Representatives of California
Rural Public Lands County Council
Safari Club International
Society of Range Management
South Carolina Forestry Association
South Dakota Association of County Commissioners
Sustainable Forest Action Coalition
Texas Association of Counties
Texas Forestry Association
Treated Wood Council
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Utah Association of Counties
Washington Contract Loggers Association
Washington Forest Protection Association

Washington State Association of Counties

West Virginia Association of Counties

Western Wood Preservers Institute

Wyoming County Commissioners
Association