

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 9, 2009

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee
On Interior and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
On Interior and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Dicks and Ranking Member Simpson:

We are writing to ask for your continued support in meeting the funding needs for federal forest management and restoration activities in the Pacific Northwest. This funding is essential to meeting the goals and objectives of the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP), as well as accomplishing needed forest thinning and restoration activities to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and improve the health of the federal forests throughout our region.

As you may know, the Northwest Forest Plan emerged from a Forest Summit convened in Portland, Oregon, on April 2, 1993, by President Bill Clinton and members of his Cabinet, and sought to resolve the controversy surrounding forest management and protection of the Northern Spotted Owl. The Northwest Forest Plan dictates how over 20 million acres of federal forests in Oregon, Washington, and Northern California are managed.

Despite the support of both the Clinton and Bush Administrations, the habitat restoration and timber harvest promised under the NWFP have gone unfulfilled. In fact, during the plan's first 12 years, the cumulative harvest level fell approximately 70 percent short of the 1 billion board foot annual volume anticipated under the plan. Meanwhile, catastrophic wildfire has consumed 15 percent of the Northern Spotted Owl's habitat *annually* in overstocked dry forests between 1994 and 2003.

Significant commitments have been made to local communities and many opportunities exist to substantially increase common-sense timber harvests in the Northwest essential to sustaining local industry, communities and forest health. In forests west of the Cascades, there are an estimated 1 million acres of overstocked second-growth stands that require management activities to increase the variety of age and structure across the forest to improve habitat conditions for the owl and other species.

In drier forest types, management is needed to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Across Oregon and Washington, mechanical thinning is urgently needed to treat more than 14 million acres of National Forest land at moderate and high risk of catastrophic wildfire. Unfortunately, federal agencies are treating just a small fraction of the acres most in need. The corresponding lack of timber volume from our federal forests threatens the very milling and skilled logging infrastructure required to restore forest health.

Inadequate funding for forest management activities in the Pacific Northwest has been a leading factor in this failure. For example, between 1998 and 2006, the National Forests in Oregon, Washington and northern California witnessed significant reductions in their allocation of timber management funding. During this same time period, funding of national forest timber management actually increased by nearly 30 percent. Over the past three years Congress has provided additional funds to begin reversing this trend and we are starting to see the results of this investment on the ground. We ask for your continued support for providing the Forest Service additional forest management and hazardous fuels reduction funding.

Your continued investment in these important activities represents a real opportunity to deliver the timber volume needed to sustain rural communities throughout Washington, Oregon, and northern California, while improving forest health conditions throughout federal forests in our region. It also comes as at critical time, as many timbered communities in our region struggle with unemployment rates approaching 20 percent and local governments begin preparing for the sunset of the latest reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act in 2012.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further with you and appreciate the opportunity to provide this information.

Sincerely,



Brian Baird
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Greg Walden
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress



Doc Hastings
Member of Congress