



August 26, 2014

Senator Ron Wyden
United States Senate
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Wyden:

Our organizations represent hundreds of forest products companies that comprise a key segment of Oregon's \$12.7 billion, 76,000-employee forest sector economy and play a crucial role in the economic and social fabric of small communities in rural Oregon. We are writing to express our opposition to your O&C legislation and our disappointment with the manner in which it has been developed, including recent comments by you and your staff describing our industry and local elected officials as being "extreme" and needing to be "isolated" in the legislative negotiations over the future of the O&C lands.

We believe this type of rhetoric is unfortunate, especially coming from a senior U.S. Senator representing us as Oregonians and the many Oregonians employed in the forestry sector. Our industry has come to the table time and time again seeking to find a compromise solution for the management of the O&C lands. We engaged in good faith in Governor Kitzhaber's O&C Task Force. We supported the bipartisan House O&C plan that would set aside 55 percent of the O&C lands for conservation purposes and resulted in harvest levels of 550 million board feet, which is less than half of both the historic harvest levels and the annual growth of these lands. Instead of addressing this proposed level of harvest on the merits, you have resorted to straw man arguments and are inaccurately describing our industry as unwilling to compromise below a "fantasy" return to historical annual harvest levels of over 1 billion board feet.

We are disheartened that our industry's numerous offers to work with your office to constructively craft legislation that works for Oregon's rural communities and our O&C forests have been ignored. Similar offers from O&C county commissioners were met with the same silence. The result has been legislation that forestry experts believe would actually reduce the current, inadequate harvest levels, perhaps taking them to zero over time. This is due to the inclusion of overly prescriptive regulations, ambiguities and undefined terms, and a legal framework that fails to adequately address the current lawsuits and even creates avenues for new litigation. It is no surprise that senior BLM officials have described it as unimplementable.

Make no mistake Senator, if signed into law, the current version of your O&C legislation would directly threaten Western Oregon's remaining mills, logging infrastructure and secondary wood products manufacturers, not to mention many family wage jobs and small businesses that depend on Western Oregon's forestry sector. Not only would it reduce harvests on BLM lands, but also impact the

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management of private forestland and make them more vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire. We are unaware of a single Oregon forest products company that supports the legislation.

In the months since you released your O&C proposal last November, we held out hope that the discussions between you and Congressman DeFazio would yield compromise legislation to provide adequate sustained timber harvests, generate sufficient timber receipt revenue for the O&C counties, and provide real legal certainty so harvests are protected from relentless litigation. After months of discussions with Congressman DeFazio and his staff, the most recent version of your O&C bill fails to meet any of these goals. Now it appears you intend to move this bill through the Congress by any and all means necessary, including by bringing it before the Senate Finance Committee that you chair.

Concerns with your legislation aren't isolated to our industry, but are shared by elected county officials, the House delegation, and the Governor's office, all of which have requested that the bill undergo an objective, independent analysis to determine likely harvest levels, the geographic distribution of those harvests, and projected county timber revenues. The House O&C proposal was subjected to that type of an analysis by the Governor's O&C Task Force. These reasonable requests have been rejected for over eight months. Instead of embracing transparency and objectively showing that your O&C plan will work for rural Oregon, the response has been obfuscation, empty rhetoric, and name-calling.

We remain committed to working constructively with you and your office; however, we will not be "isolated" as our industry remains important to the future health of Oregon's economy, rural communities, and our forests. We also refuse to be inaccurately labeled as being "extreme" or "hardliners" when the facts don't match the rhetoric.

Sincerely,



Tom Partin
American Forest Resource Council
www.amforest.org



Jim Geisinger
Associated Oregon Loggers
www.oregonloggers.org



Bob Ragon
Douglas Timber Operators
www.dougtimber.org

cc: Senator Jeff Merkley
Representative Peter DeFazio
Representative Greg Walden
Representative Kurt Schrader
Governor John Kitzhaber