

17 July 2013

The Honorable Doc Hastings, Chair
Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden, Chair
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Hastings and Chair Wyden:

National forest health conditions are bad and getting worse. If they were humans they would be in hospice. I make this statement as a professional forester and a Fellow of the Society of American Foresters... My Forest Service career of 36 years includes, serving on six national forests, three Forest Service regions and the Forest Service headquarters. Since retirement I have spent 21 years as a volunteer with conservation organizations, such as the National Association of Forest Service Retirees, actively supporting a return to science based forest management for these priceless lands.

The danger to the forests is very real. The 190 million acres of land in the National Forest System is being radically, and generally negatively, changed by fire, insects, disease and human abuse. The Forest Service's best guess is that around 80 million national forest acres in the West are dead or dying. That's an area larger than 46 of our 50 states. Some 60 million acres, which includes the insect killed forest acres, are classified as high risk for catastrophic wildfires, an increasingly common event. Human abuse is increasing and damaging large acreage of forest and cultural resources.

This degradation of the public's forests is affecting the ability of the forests to provide natural and recreational resources needed by a population growing beyond 300 million people. National forest lands are the source of 70% of the western state's water, a significant storage area for carbon, the habitat for wildlife, including many endangered species, a potential positive supplier of wood fiber, a major provider of outdoor recreation opportunities, including most of the downhill skiing opportunities in the United States. They provide many other direct benefits such as economic opportunities for over 500 rural communities and clean air for all of us. They are a legacy for our grand children and generations beyond.

However, these national treasures can not fill our needs and wants or those of future generations without the understanding and support of Congress. It is not a matter of more money as much as it is of enabling Forest Service people to do their jobs. To truly care for the forests, Congress must understand the forest's importance to all citizens, update and modernize the laws governing their management to reflect this multiple use importance. It must encourage science based forestry practices, reaffirm the mission established for them in the 1897 Organic Act. and reject the very selfish and narrow views of those who see the forests as their personal domain.

Sincerely:



John F. Marker, Forester (ret.)

Sentinel Orchards

6681 Highway 35

Mt. Hood, OR 97041

E mail: jf37m@aol.com