



Court Boice, Commissioner

94235 Moore Street, Ste. 122
Gold Beach, OR 97444
Ph.: (541) 247.3229
boicec@co.curry.or.us
www.co.curry.or.us

October 23, 2017

RE: Support Letter to the Environment and Public Works Committee, U.S. Senate, Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

My name is Court Boice, and I'm a Curry County Commissioner on the southwest Oregon coast. As you know, we experienced a catastrophic wildfire event this past summer called the 'Chetco Bar Fire'. For three weeks it was the No.1 priority fire in the U.S. It started in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness of the Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest from a lightning strike July 12th. Over 191,000 acres burned threading our coastal town of Brookings. This Fire roared out of the wilderness on August 18th, burning in its path homes and thousands of acres of private timber. For over a month, our communities were subjected to unhealthy living conditions with the air filled with toxic smoke. We came close to losing a community of 7,000 citizens, plus nearby neighborhoods. We need Congress to reform the federal forest management and wildland firefighting policies that are a key cause of the worsening wildfire seasons and deteriorating forest health. Future fire prevention is crucial for our entire country.

We are a small County that has been dependent on shared receipts from timber harvested from the National Forest that covers more than half of our land base. To see this valuable resource burn and then learn that perhaps less than 2% will be salvaged is criminal. As a county we are forced to provide access and emergency services to an absent-tee landlord with little to nothing currently in return. Shared receipts from salvage in a timely manner, while there is still value in the burned timber resource can not only help offset the cost of rehabilitation but also provide funding for County services and education.

Curry County commends you for taking steps towards a meaningful policy to address the lack of federal forest management on Public Lands demonstrated by your drafts under consideration at this week's hearings. We grow some of the fastest growing, highest quality timber anywhere. The provisions in the proposal and aggressively salvaging that resource in the Chetco Bare Fire will aid our economic recovery and landscape rehabilitation. Included along with an understanding of the impacts on counties and school revenues, it will further provide for endangered species protection, recover damaged watersheds - riparian areas for fish habitat, improved air quality as well as future recreation opportunities for our beautiful area.

Thank you for taking this opportunity to do the right thing for the benefit of our National Forest and Public Lands. Wanton waste is a crime! We urge Congress to rapidly enact new National Forest wildfire fighting policies and funding for meaningful forest management reform legislation as found in this staff draft. Thank You.

Sincerely,

