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Republicans Committee Members Highlight Need for U.S. Forest Service to Restore Active Forest Management

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today at the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation legislative hearing, Republican Members stressed the need for the U.S. Forest Service to resume active forest management and discussed several proposals to improve forest health. A lack of forest management has deprived rural counties of revenue needed to fund schools, emergency services and infrastructure projects; caused a decline in timber production costing tens of thousands of jobs; and created unhealthy forests susceptible to deadly wildfires and bug infestation.

“Forested counties, including many in the Northwest, have long depended on a federal promise of revenue from timber sales to help fund vital services such as education and roads. Over a century ago the federal government pledged to actively manage our forests and provide 25 percent of revenues for counties containing National Forest Lands. The federal government has failed to uphold this commitment.” – **Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04).**

“Alaska is home to the two largest national forests, yet we only have one medium sized saw mill left and industry employment has been reduced over the last few decades by over 90% directly as a result of Forest Service mismanagement. The Forest Service meets less than 20% of their annual timber sale target in Alaska, and things aren’t getting better,” Rep. Young said. *“In anyone’s book, that’s a failing grade, and if the Forest Service cannot provide the active management that keeps our forests and communities healthy, its beyond time to try something new.”* - **Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Subcommittee Chairman Don Young (AK-At Large).**

“I want to thank all the panelists today, including U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell, for their testimony and for engaging the committee. Active, multiple-use management – including timber harvesting – is the basic mission of the Forest Service and remains fundamental to achieving healthy national forests and robust local economies. I look forward to continuing to work with the Forest Service and local community stakeholders to improve both the ecological and economic health of our forests.” – **Congressman Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson (PA-05), Chairman of House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Energy & Forestry.**

“While the bark beetle outbreak and other hazardous forest health conditions have affected state and private lands, hazardous conditions are often most heavily concentrated on federal

*lands where a lack of active forest management has allowed the epidemic to spread to catastrophic levels. Of the 6.6 million acres infested by the mountain pine beetle in Colorado, over 4 million acres – an area larger than Connecticut – are on federal forest lands. Federal efforts to responsibly manage our forests and prevent the conditions for the fires that have raged across Colorado and other Western states have been hampered by an unwieldy regulatory framework that systemically prevents progress toward healthy forests.”- **Congressman Tipton (CO-03).***

*“This spring, we must prepare for the beginning of wildfire season. Unfortunately, the way our forests are currently mismanaged has led to tragic consequences for our nation’s economy, natural resources, and wildlife. It doesn’t have to remain this way if we address our forest maintenance crisis with solutions such as my Catastrophic Wildfire Prevention Act.” - **Congressman Paul Gosar (AZ-04).***

*“Forestry communities across America are being crushed by the heavy boot of Washington overregulation. In North Florida’s Apalachicola National Forest, loggers have seen their access to timber restricted further and further, to the point that just seven-percent of its total growth and 27-percent of its allowable cut is being harvested. This type of sinful mismanagement is putting hardworking Americans out of work, crippling rural economies and increasing the risk of deadly forest fires. It’s time for the federal government to get out of the way and allow our timber producers to responsibly access a God-given resource that belongs to the people, not the Beltway bureaucrats.” – **Congressman Southerland (FL-02).***

*“The U.S. Forest Service was designed to protect our forests for the next generation and preserve it for our kids to enjoy. Instead what they continue to do is hold our forests hostage and now they’re starting to hold our communities hostage by demanding repayment of the S.R.S. Our communities are already strangled enough and in these hard economic times it seems as though the U.S. forest service has completely thrown that out of the window and now is demanding our schools to repay something that they are already using.”- **Congressman Mullin (OK-02).***

*“States like Montana once boasted a strong timber industry that helped maintain healthy forests and support local jobs, as well as provide a steady revenue stream for our counties. But in recent decades, unrelenting appeals and lawsuits have imposed a huge administrative burden on federal agencies and resulted in the mismanagement of our forests. Today’s hearing reaffirmed the need for responsible and active management of our National Forests, which is critical for the health of Montana’s economy, as well as the health of our forests themselves. We need real solutions that will cut the red tape that has held up responsible forest management and timber production and ensure that the federal government keeps its commitment to our rural schools and counties.” – **Congressman Daines (MT – At Large).***

“Our nation's forests are being devastated by fire due to negligent management, and it's high time that we take a responsible approach that improves forest health, creates jobs and protects our communities. Managing forests properly will decrease firefighting costs while generating revenue for the Forest Service, local governments and schools. It's simply common sense to ensure that our public forests are maintained in a way that prevents the build-up of debris, dead trees and undergrowth that has fueled fires across the West. Current mismanagement means that our forests just waiting for a spark, and excessive red tape even

prevents the salvage and clean-up of public lands after fires occur. The time to act is now, while we still have forests to save, and I commend Chairman Hastings for taking the lead on this important issue." - Congressman LaMalfa (CA-01).

Click [here](#) to watch the hearing and learn more about the bills discussed today.

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