



February 11, 2014

To: Oregon Senate Rural Communities and Economic Development Committee  
From: Nick Smith, Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities  
Re: Submitted testimony in favor of SJM 201

Chair Roblan and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering Senate Joint Memorial 201 urging the President and Congress to pursue O&C land management reforms. This memorial comes to you at a very critical time.

Our Congressional delegation has been working for years on solutions to create jobs in rural communities near the 2.4 million acres of O&C forestland in Western Oregon. As you know, the Governor and the Legislature have been engaged in this effort as well. Previous memorials relating to O&C management have enjoyed strong bipartisan support. Oregon's business community, chambers of commerce, trade unions, public employee unions, law enforcement and other organizations have also expressed support for a solution.

There is a unique focus on O&C lands because the economic and social problems in rural communities cannot be easily solved without addressing federal forest policies. In forested areas with high federal land ownership, our communities typically suffer from high unemployment, poverty, and poor health outcomes. Large majorities of children in these communities are eligible for free and reduced priced lunches. As federal timber harvests have declined and uncertain federal payments have dwindled, funding for critical services such as public safety has been decimated.

Active forest management of these federal lands will help create more family-wage jobs in the woods, in the mills and in the small businesses that benefit from a strong forest sector. More jobs will also help generate more tax revenue to support law enforcement and public education.

Fortunately, we are starting to see action in Washington, DC. The U.S. House passed a bipartisan O&C solution last September, and just last week Sen. Ron Wyden held a hearing on his plan. Though there are differences between the House and Senate measures, our federal officials have expressed confidence they can achieve a balanced solution that increases sustainable timber harvests while protecting sensitive lands. SJM 201 encourages our delegation to get the job done.

The consensus is we have a unique opportunity to pass a bill in this congress. Rural Oregonians can't afford to wait for another election and a new congress to address this issue. Approving SJM 201 this month will send a strong message that it's time for our federal representatives to achieve a solution that helps put rural Oregonians back to work.

Please support SJM 201. With your help, we can improve rural economies, help Oregon middle-class families, and provide adequate funding to support essential government services.