



April 13, 2017

To: House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Re: Support for House Joint Memorial 11

Dear Chair Clem and Members of the Committee

I'm writing on behalf of the American Forest Resource Council, an association of Pacific Northwest logging and milling operations advocating for the active management of Oregon's federally-owned forest lands.

This letter is to express our support for House Joint Memorial 11, a bipartisan resolution urging the President and U.S. Congress to pursue Oregon and California Railroad grant land management reforms.

Specifically HJM 11 encourages our congressional delegation to continue to pursue and support balanced solutions when it comes to the long-term management of the 2.2 million acres of "O&C" forestlands in Western Oregon. The O&C lands are the only federally-owned forests in the nation that are required-under federal law- to be managed for sustained yield timber production for the benefit of host counties.

The federal O&C Act recognizes the unique history and connection between these public forests and their host counties, which receive a portion of timber-related revenue to support essential public services. Because much of the forests in Western Oregon are publicly-owned, management of these lands are also critical to our state's forest infrastructure and the many public- and private-sector jobs that are supported by timber-related activities and revenues.

As you know, timber harvests on O&C lands have dropped 90 percent over the past twenty years, contributing to the loss of Oregon businesses and thousands of jobs. Today our counties and communities continue to grapple with the consequences of this decline. The situation is made worse by the expiration of Secure Rural Schools, a federal program that was intended to temporarily help counties cope with the loss of timber-receipt revenues.

Several counties are now facing a "fiscal cliff" and being forced to cut important programs and services including law enforcement, roads and public health. Some of these services are mandated under law, meaning some services could become the responsibility of state government if no long-term solution is found.

A few examples of these impacts can be found in recent news headlines:

- *On April 3, the Josephine County Sheriff's Office announced 17 layoffs in its patrol division due to the reduction in federal revenue.*
- *On April 1, Douglas County initiated the process of closing its entire library system, and laying off 52 employees.*

- *On April 5, the Rough & Ready mill, formally a major employer in Cave Junction, was dismantled. The company was forced to close the mill and layoff its workers due to the company's inability to secure a reliable wood supply.*

The sustained yield of the O&C lands- or the amount of wood that grows naturally- is estimated to be more than 1.2 billion board feet. Today only around 200 million board feet is harvested per year. Though it is unlikely we will ever return to historic timber harvest levels, an increase to the current meager level would go far to protect vital public services while restoring family-wage jobs where they are desperately needed.

Though O&C land management is a federal issue requiring congressional action, the State of Oregon and the Legislature has a profound interest in the management of the O&C lands. In 2012, Gov. John Kitzhaber convened a panel of conservationists, O&C County Commissioners and timber industry representatives to advise him on issues related to management of these lands. The Governor's O&C Task Force produced a report analyzing several options that suggested how timber harvests can be sustainably increased while protecting important conservation values.

In 2012, the Oregon Legislature approved Senate Joint Memorial 201 that urged the President and Congress to allow Oregon counties to manage O&C lands. SJM 201 specifically endorsed the O&C Trust, Conservation and Jobs Act, introduced by Congressmen Peter DeFazio, Kurt Schrader and Greg Walden. Passage of SJM 201 was followed by substantive action on O&C lands in Congress. The bipartisan O&C Trust was approved by the U.S. House twice, in 2013 and 2014, and U.S. Senator Ron Wyden introduced his own O&C legislation in the U.S. Senate. Unfortunately, a compromise between the House and Senate measures could not be achieved in 112th Congress.

Unlike the 2012 resolution, HJM 11 does not endorse specific congressional legislation. The purpose of this resolution is to remind our federal leaders of the perilous situation in our O&C counties, and to remind them that bipartisan action on O&C land management is needed to sustain public services and jobs in the future.

Many AFRC members have logging and milling operations near O&C lands, and many of our members' employees live in these rural communities. Our members participated in the Governor's O&C Task Force, and have consistently demonstrated a willingness to work with diverse interests and compromise to help achieve an O&C solution. Many of our companies are currently operating under capacity due to the lack of reliable wood supplies, and are in a position to add shifts, add workers and produce more Oregon-made products if such a solution is reached.

Thank you for your consideration of HJM 11. Please support this resolution and urge the President and our Congressional delegation to continue working toward a solution that our Western Oregon communities need.

Sincerely,



Nick Smith