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AFRC Names Next President

AFRC's Executive Committee has selected Travis Joseph as the next president of our association. Travis will begin on September 1, and will spend several months working with outgoing President Tom Partin.

Travis grew up in Springfield, Oregon and attended public schools. He helped his father manage the family business in Eugene and Creswell, working his way up from janitor to Assistant Manager. He is the first in his family to graduate from college by earning a degree from the University of Oregon, *summa cum laude*. He later earned his master's degree in economic and environmental policy from the London School of Economics.

Travis spent the last eight years in Washington D.C. working for Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR), the House Natural Resources Committee, and most recently the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. In all of his roles on the Hill, Travis focused on Pacific Northwest policy generally and forest policy specifically. He helped write the bipartisan "O&C Trust, Conservation, and Jobs Act" that twice passed the House of Representatives.

We are excited to begin working with Travis and look forward to introducing him to our membership and to our friends and allies in the drive to build a better future for our industry and those who depend on our federal forests for their way of life.

"I am proud of what AFRC has achieved over the 15 years I have been President. With its strong membership, tremendously talented staff and Travis's enthusiastic leadership, I am confident AFRC will continue to be an effective voice for the industry well into the future." /Tom Partin

Forestry Bills Moving

On July 9, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2647, the "Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015," sponsored by Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR). The vote on final passage was 262-167, with 19 Democrats voting in favor of the bill which represents passage by a substantial margin with strong bipartisan support.

The bill in part provides for expedited procedures to the Forest Service and BLM where there is backing from collaboratives, Resource Advisory Committees, or Community Wildfire Protection Plans; requires that plaintiffs post a bond to litigate a project; allows for stewardship retained receipts to be utilized on forests to help fund planning costs; and would do away with the eastside screens in Region 6. During floor consideration, three amendments were adopted and added to the bill by voice vote:

- A Scott Tipton (R-CO) amendment which extended the Farm Bill’s fire liability limitations to IRSC Stewardship Service Contracts signed prior to the enactment of the 2014 Farm Bill.
- A Derek Kilmer (D-WA) amendment encouraging collaborative projects targeted at creating “advanced wood products.”
- A Michelle Lujan-Grisham (D-NM) amendment allowing the Forest Service to enter more easily into contracts with Indian tribes.

The “Manager’s Amendment” included key provisions authored by Oregon Representatives Greg Walden (R), Peter DeFazio, and Kurt Schrader (D) which are important to federal forests in the Pacific Northwest, including:

- An end to the application of the Survey and Manage requirement on BLM and Forest Service lands in the Northwest Forest Plan area.
- The designation of about 200,000 acres of BLM Public Domain lands in Western Oregon to be managed as BLM O&C lands.
- A requirement for the BLM to prepare a reference analysis and two additional alternatives for public comment as part of the revisions of the Resource Management Plans (RMPs) for six BLM districts in Western Oregon. Required alternatives include a sustained yield alternative that produces the greatest of 500 mmbf or the annual net growth of all timberlands not congressionally reserved from harvest, and an alternative to achieve maximum carbon sequestration benefits from forest storage and wood product storage. Mandates an additional 180 days of public comment before the BLM can issue a final RMP.

The Manager’s Amendment also included a legislative fix to “fire borrowing” by allowing the Forest Service and Department of the Interior to request funds from FEMA within 30 days of the appropriated ten-year average of suppression funds being exhausted. FEMA would then transfer additional suppression funds to the agencies to fight fires.

Amendments offered on the floor that failed included one by Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO) that would have stripped the bill’s judicial reform provisions, including requiring a bond for those filing suit against collaborative projects. The vote on that amendment was 247 to 181.

The strong support for the bill was in part due to the support from the coalition formed by the Timber Industry Labor Management Committee, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, the National Association of Counties, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the forest products industry through AFRC and the Federal Forest Resource Coalition. / *Tom Partin*

Hearing on Barrasso and Wyden Bills

On July 16, the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Public Lands, Forests and Mining Subcommittee held a hearing on a number of forestry bills, including S. 1691, the “National Forest Ecosystem Improvement Act” sponsored by John Barrasso (R-WY) and S. 132 the “Oregon and California Grant Lands Act of 2015” sponsored by Ron Wyden (D-OR). Steve Swanson, President and CEO of the Swanson Group testified on both bills while Jim Neiman, Vice President and CEO of Neiman Enterprises testified on the Barrasso bill. The Committee also received testimony from Forest Service

Chief Tom Tidwell, BLM Deputy Director Steve Ellis, and Pew's Director of U.S. Public Lands, Mike Matz.

Swanson's O&C testimony focused on several familiar themes, including the need for equal levels of legal certainty for meeting the conservation, harvest, and revenue goals of any O&C solution. He also discussed the need for harvest levels that are adequate, sustainable, economical to operate, and geographically distributed to meet the needs of industry and counties across Western Oregon. Swanson outlined how the Wyden proposal fell short of meeting these critical tests while also reminding the committee about the importance of not harming the management of the private lands, which are heavily interspersed with O&C lands and a key source of timber for local mills.

Neiman focused on key provisions in the Barrasso legislation to streamline project planning and judicial review of ecosystem restoration projects, collaborative projects, and projects in response to critical threats and catastrophes. The Barrasso legislation shares a number of provisions with the House bill, including Categorical Exclusions and bonding requirements. The Pew Trust's Mike Matz criticized those provisions, as well as the acreage targets for mechanical treatments. Chief Tidwell sounded familiar themes, but offered a bit of praise for the changes made by Senator Barrasso from last year's bill.

Senator Ron Wyden, in his opening comments as the subcommittee's Ranking Member, described his O&C bill as a product of compromise, maintained that it would generate 400 mmbf annually, and invoked the lyrics of Mick Jagger to again declare that "you can't always get what you want, but you might just get what you need." After other witnesses and Senators invoked the same theme, Chairman Barrasso quipped that Jagger clearly sent mixed messages with his "I can't get no satisfaction" lyrics. It is doubtful that any more action will be taken on these two bills until after the August recess. */Heath Heikkila*

Interior Appropriations

For the first time in six years the House and Senate were making good progress with their respective Interior, Environment and Related Agencies spending bills. However, the House hit a bit of a speed bump on July 9 when the bill was pulled from the House floor due to controversial amendments related to the confederate flag. Prior to the bill being pulled, the House had waded through a litany of amendments, including an amendment successfully offered by Rep. Greg Walden to block funding for finalizing the BLM's draft Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon. Other amendments offered included directing additional funding into Hazardous Fuels work and to prevent the "uplisting" of the Northern Long-Eared Bat from its current, "Threatened" status to "Endangered" status.

On the whole, both the House and Senate bills provide generous funding levels for the Forest Service's Forest Products and Hazardous Fuels programs. Both also seek to restore some funding to the Forest Service Roads budget. The Forest Products line item is currently \$338 million, and would increase by \$20 million under the Senate bill and \$16 million under the House proposal. The House and Senate Committees also included very favorable report language related to volume targets, the need to focus on merchantable timber not personal use firewood in measuring achievements, and raising questions about accomplishment levels under the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act projects.

Unfortunately, both bills outline cuts for the management of the BLM O&C lands. The House bill would reduce the BLM O&C budget by \$3 million below the FY15 enacted level of \$113.8 million. The Senate bill would cut the O&C funding by \$8 million. The Obama Administration had proposed a \$6 million reduction in FY16, partly due to a ramp down in activity on the RMPs for Western Oregon. Nonetheless, these reduction levels would have a major impact on the BLM's timber program in Western Oregon and AFRC will be working to restore as much as possible. /Tom Partin

Fremont-Winema Volume Pulled

On July 21, the Klamath Tribes sent a press release outlining their opposition to the Forest Service's plan to sell timber through the Ridge project, a 13 million board foot (mmbf) timber sale that is part of the landscape-scale Blue Jay planning area. Less than a week later Oregon Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley sent a letter to Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell and Regional Six Regional Forester Jim Pena requesting that the Forest Service pull the Ridge Timber Sale on the Fremont-Winema National Forest due to the Tribes' concerns. It appears that the Forest Service has agreed to suspend the sale.

The Ridge project and the Blue Jay planning area are located within 90,000 acres of the Fremont-Winema that have been identified for possible transfer to the Klamath Tribes as part of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement, which Wyden and Merkley hope to enact through legislation. The Klamath Tribes have also requested that the Forest Service place the 10 mmbf Kirk Timber Sale under an existing Master Stewardship Agreement it has with the agency. The Kirk sale was also included in the Blue Jay planning area and there are serious doubts about whether the Tribes will sell the Kirk volume to local purchasers if the transfer of the 90,000 acres appears likely.

While the Senators' letter requested that the Forest Service find replacement volume, the reality is that no replacement volume exists in Southern Oregon. Instead, the Forest Service is looking for potential increased outputs in Western Oregon and Southwest Washington, which is far from the mills in Southern Oregon that were counting on this volume this year. The Forest Service invested significant effort and funding into the landscape-scale Blue Jay project area, which was set generate upward of 70 mmbf and comprise much of the Fremont-Winema's timber sale program for this year and next. It is unclear if this was considered when the Senators, the Tribes and the Forest Service identified the 90,000 acres for possible transfer or where they expect local mills to turn to make up this volume.

/Heath Heikkila

Intimidation Trumps Science

The mere threat of a protest and perhaps a lawsuit lead the Medford BLM District to enter into a negotiated agreement with the Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center (KS Wild) to set-aside 40% of the "high quality black-backed woodpecker habitat" on an Oregon Gulch Fire Salvage project, even though their scientific review found that this was not backed by science nor necessary. The black-backed woodpecker (BBW) occupies boreal forest across Canada (from coast to coast), Alaska and the northwestern United States and populations in the green forest are stable or increasing. Local populations of BBW can temporarily increase after a wildfire during the period when wood-boring beetles feed on insects found in recently burnt trees. After this brief period, the local BBW population will decline again to its previous sustainable level.

The BBW is not an ESA listed species but is being reviewed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, a result of a 2012 petition from four conservation organizations requesting that the Oregon Cascades-California population and the Black Hills population (which are at the extreme southern portions of the BBW range) be listed. The Lakeview and Medford BLM Districts each conducted an environmental analysis to salvage some of the burned timber arising from the Oregon Gulch Fire and took measures to ensure the BBW had sufficient habitat to support a temporary local population flux. The Medford District went so far as to survey all of the potential harvest areas and set buffers around all BBW nesting areas.

The only place the 40% standard is recommended is in an unpublished, non-peer reviewed publication written by Bob Altman with the American Bird Conservancy, and that recommendation only pertained to “old growth lodge pole pine” which he considered a “unique habitat” that does not exist in the burned areas in question. Altman gives absolutely no justification for the 40% recommendation and provides no scientific literature to back it.

Despite the fact that both Districts used the best available science to support their decisions, they still entered into negotiated agreements with KS Wild to set-aside 40% of the high quality BBW habitat, even though the environmental analysis by each District found that there is absolutely no scientific basis that this is needed or that this habitat will even be used by the black-backed woodpecker. Intimidation beats science yet again. /*Ross Mickey*

Oregon Coast Coho 5-Year Review

On July 23, AFRC joined Oregon Forest Industries Council, Douglas Timber Operators, Associated Oregon Loggers, and Oregon Small Woodlands Association in submitting comments to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the 5-year review of the [Oregon Coast coho salmon](#) (OCC), which is currently listed as a threatened evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) of Pacific salmon. NMFS announced the review in the [Federal Register February 6, 2015](#). The stated purpose of the review is to ensure the accuracy of the listing classification of the species.

The industry comments included a report prepared by Cramer Fish Sciences which documents the significant variability in historical abundance estimation methodologies and concludes that the methodology NMFS has been relying on may significantly overestimate the historical abundance of the ESU. The report shows that OCC populations have rebounded to a level comparable to the 1950-1980 population level, which would warrant de-listing the species.

The comments also point out that the agency’s reliance on historical abundance figures is not valid under the Endangered Species Act and court cases which have interpreted the statute. This would open the agency to legal challenge should it chose to continue using these methods.

A de-listing of the OCC could have significant benefits to Oregon’s private and public forest lands by increasing management flexibility in the riparian zone. /*Ann Forest Burns*

2014 Oregon Timber Harvest Report

According to a [report](#) published this month by the Oregon Department of Forestry, timber harvest in the State of Oregon remained about 4 billion board feet (bbf) for the second year in a row. Total harvest for all lands stood at 4.126 bbf, a 1.74% decline from 2013 levels and somewhat below the 2006 level of 4.328 bbf.

Harvest in 2014 from Forest Service lands in Oregon was 387 mmbf, a decrease of 1.28% from 2013. However, the statewide number masks a significant decrease on westside forests which was offset by a 32% increase on eastside forests.

Harvest in 2014 from BLM managed lands was 209 mmbf, up from 165 mmbf, although the increase was not consistent across BLM districts.

Timber harvest from Oregon State lands decreased 9%, from 252 mmbf in 2013 to 230 mmbf in 2014.

[Oregon Department of Forestry forecasters](#) expect harvest statewide to remain around 4 billion board feet for 2015. /*Ann Forest Burns*

States Invest in Forest Health

The final budgets passed by the Oregon and Washington legislatures included significant investments in forest health and resiliency on public lands.

The Oregon legislature funded the Oregon Department of Forestry Federal Forest Health Program at \$5 million for the 2015-2017 biennium. This is an increase from \$2.88 million in the previous biennium. Funding in this year's package allocates \$3.375 million to state/federal partnerships aimed at expediting on-the-ground work and \$1.3 million to collaborative group support. The remaining \$325,000 will go for program management and administration.

The capital budget passed by Washington's legislature included \$10 million for forest fire hazard reduction by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The appropriation, which is half of the amount requested by DNR, includes \$9 million for forest hazard reduction work on state timberlands and, in certain circumstances, private non-industrial timber lands, to reduce the risk of fire, insect and disease to state lands, and \$1 million for grants to local communities for the [Firewise program](#), which helps communities take action to increase public safety, and reduce wildfire risk and losses.

With wildfire season upon us, it is too late for these funds to benefit our forests and communities this year. We hope that the agencies responsible for their expenditure move quickly to assure that their impact is evident in the next two fire seasons and beyond. Our forests and our communities need action. /*Ann Forest Burns*

Francis D. Engle

Francis D. Engle, founder of Starfire Lumber Company, passed away July 13. He would have turned 92 on November 26.

Francis and his three orphaned brothers began working together as loggers in the late 1920's. He married his wife of 66 years, Patricia DuCharme, in 1944. Francis enlisted in the Army during World War II and saw duty on Okinawa. After the War, he and his brothers again worked together, first as a logging company and later as the owners of a small sawmill on Hubbard Creek. He and his brother Ed operated as Engle Construction Co. which built logging roads for the Forest Service, BLM and private landowners in the 1970's and early 1980's. His businesses also included land development in the Roseburg area.

In 1982, Francis purchased an old cedar mill in Cottage Grove, Oregon and set about renovating it to mill high-quality Douglas fir lumber. Starfire Lumber Company was incorporated in February, 1983; it continues to produce custom high-quality Douglas fir cuttings for a worldwide market. Francis served as its President until April, 2001. His grandson, Sean Smith, a member of AFRC's Board of Directors, has served as President and CEO since 2013.

Francis Engle was one of a special breed of men who founded the independent mills that AFRC is proud to continue to have as its members. He will be missed. */Tom Partin*