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Secretary Salazar's Failed Timber Policies Bad for Rural Oregon

Portland, OR – Ken Salazar, President Obama's Secretary of the Interior, was in Medford, Oregon today to tour the ["Pilot Joe" demonstration project](#) and hold a Town Hall meeting where he sought to downplay the impact of a new Northern Spotted Owl critical habitat designation and announced yet another lengthy administrative forest planning process for 2.5 million acres of western Oregon forests managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), including the Oregon & California (O&C) Grant lands. This latest announcement comes nearly 2 ½ years after Secretary Salazar [illegally withdrew](#) the 2008 [Western Oregon Plan Revisions](#). Ever since, Oregonians have heard a host of unfulfilled promises.

"This latest bunch of PR is just another example of this Administration's inability to grasp the realities facing the forests and rural communities of western Oregon," said Tom Partin, President of the [American Forest Resource Council](#) (AFRC). "Instead of taking concrete steps to implement a meaningful timber program based on sound science, Secretary Salazar has outlined a flawed strategy based on one failed pilot project."

When the Secretary came to Roseburg in [October, 2010](#), he talked about two pilot projects spanning 20,000 to 30,000 acres that would be both ecologically and economically viable. The Pilot Joe project was narrowed from the potential 50,000 acre scope of the Applegate Watershed to a mere 245 acres.

"AFRC and our member companies had hoped that the Johnson-Franklin pilot projects would help highlight and address the multiple factors limiting timber management in southwest Oregon," continued Partin. "Unfortunately, the final project was rendered trivial when it was severely scaled back in size, needed forest health treatments were dropped and the size and species of trees that could be harvested were reduced to avoid controversy and objections from the environmental community."

"Ultimately, Pilot Joe provided just one week's worth of timber to a local mill, cost significantly more to prepare and appraised at values so low that the project would provide little-to-no revenue for county governments facing the end of Secure Rural Schools payments," said Partin. "We agree that the current timber management system is broken. Unfortunately, more projects like Pilot Joe aren't the answer."

In October, 2009 Secretary Salazar “withdrew” the Western Oregon Plan Revisions and committed the BLM to providing 230 million board feet of timber in “non-controversial” timber sales, including over 20 million in the Medford District. These promises were never fulfilled. In 2011, the BLM awarded only 137 million board feet in western Oregon and only 6.3 million in the Medford District. A large number of timber sales have been blocked by administrative protests from environmentalists, which this Administration refuses to resolve. The lack of timber volume offered by the BLM is threatening the remaining timber industry infrastructure throughout rural western Oregon.

“We wish we could believe the promises of Secretary Salazar and this Administration when it comes to providing a sustainable level of timber, but their track record over the past three years has been abysmal,” said Partin. “Instead, we are offered nothing more than more planning, process and empty promises while the forests of Oregon and the communities that depend on them suffer.”

"When Secretary Salazar announced the pilot projects the Oregon Congressional delegation indicated that they were committed to passing legislation to resolve the paralysis. With bipartisan legislation released last week by Reps. DeFazio, Walden and Schrader we believe it is high time to focus on these types of meaningful solutions, rather than empty promises and failed policies."

Additional information on Pilot Joe is at
http://www.amforest.org/images/pdfs/Pilot_Joe_Failure.pdf

The American Forest Resource Council represents forest product manufacturers and landowners throughout the west and is based in Portland, Oregon. www.amforest.org