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### **U.S. House Passes Bipartisan Legislation to Restore Federal Forest Health, Provide Hope to Rural Communities**

Tom Partin, President of the [American Forest Resource Council](#), issued the following statement regarding House passage of H.R. 1526, *the Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act*:

We commend the House of Representatives, including Natural Resources Chairman Doc Hastings (R-WA), for its leadership in passing the *Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act* (H.R. 1526). H.R. 1526 represents a long-term, balanced solution to the failed federal forest policies and constant litigation harming the social, economic and ecological fabric of our rural, forested communities.

H.R. 1526 requires the Forest Service to restore active timber management on National Forest lands identified as suitable for timber harvest so they can once again contribute to the economies of our rural communities. The legislation will provide the residents of our rural, forested communities jobs in the woods and renewed hope that their children and grandchildren won't be forced to leave home to find work.

*The Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act* will improve the health of our federal forests, which continues to decline. The Forest Service now spends over \$2 billion each year – half of its budget – fighting catastrophic wildfires that destroy standing timber and scorch vast acres of watersheds, recreation lands and wildlife habitat. The legislation provides the Forest Service new authorities to treat overstocked and insect-infested forests through responsible forest management. Thanks to the work of Rep. Raul Labrador (R-ID), the bill will improve local forest management by allowing counties to actively manage portions of National Forest land as Community Forest Demonstration Areas.

H.R. 1526 also includes the bipartisan *O&C Trust, Conservation and Jobs Act*. This bipartisan O&C plan, by Representatives DeFazio (D-OR), Walden (R-OR), and Schrader (D-OR), represents true compromise. While it falls short of harvesting the full sustained yield of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) O&C lands, as required under federal law, it represents our best opportunity to provide certainty to rural communities, local governments and environmental advocates. We remain committed to working with Oregon's delegation to find a solution that meets the needs of our forests and communities, but our industry will also continue our legal efforts to force the BLM to fully comply with the timber harvest requirements of the O&C Act.

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Now that the House has passed a sustainable, long-term way to restore the health of our federal forests and rural communities, the focus turns to the United States Senate. Oregon Senator Ron Wyden is in a key position to fix the current, broken system and put forth a lasting solution to over 20 years of neglect of rural, forested communities in Oregon and across America. Senator Wyden has acknowledged that misused environmental laws and litigation are hampering responsible management by the Forest Service and has committed to resolving this problem. Senator Wyden has also acknowledged that the status quo is killing communities and bankrupting counties in Western Oregon and is drafting his own solution for the O&C lands.

For over 20 years, Congress has largely ignored the plight of our rural communities and forests, focusing on debilitating short-term handouts to county governments, rather than restoring vitality to these communities. We hope that today's vote by the House signals that the era of merely kicking the can down the road, while rural America withers away and our forests die from wildfire, insects and disease, is at an end.

We appreciate the efforts of the U.S. House and look forward to seeing Senator Wyden's proposal for meeting the needs of rural communities and federal forests in Oregon and throughout our nation.