



**July 2016**

## **Energy Bill Goes to Conference, Congress Recesses**

On July 12, the U.S. Senate voted to go to conference with the House of Representatives in the hopes of coming to agreement on comprehensive energy legislation. As previously reported in AFRC's [May Newsletter](#), the House effectively expanded the potential scope of the energy bill conference by attaching dozens of House-passed bills to the Senate's own energy bill, S. 2012. H.R. 2647, the Resilient Federal Forests Act (Rep. Westerman), was one of the bills attached and includes a package of federal forest management reforms, including a legislative fix to end "fire borrowing."

The agreement to meet the House in conference took weeks to hammer out while Democrats sought assurances that the House wouldn't insist on the inclusion of controversial measures – particularly since conference reports only require a simple majority Senate vote for passage, not the 60-customary vote threshold. The Senate vote was agreed to after Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT), Chair of the Natural Resources Committee, and Representative Fred Upton (R-MI), Chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee, signaled their desire to work towards legislation that could ultimately be signed by President Obama.

On July 14, both the House and Senate adjourned for a seven-week summer recess, so any formal conference committee meeting on the energy bill will likely wait until September. However, it is likely that committee leaders and staff may start informal discussions during the recess. We understand that there is bicameral support from conference committee leadership seeking to find consensus on a package of federal forest management and fire funding reforms to be included within the energy bill.

The conference committee includes a number of strong proponents of forestry reform legislation, including:

### **Senate:**

John Barrasso (R-WY)  
Maria Cantwell (D-WA)  
Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)  
James Risch (R-ID)  
Ron Wyden (D-OR)

### **House:**

Rob Bishop (R-UT)  
Peter DeFazio (D-OR)  
Cynthia Lummis (R-WY)  
Collin Peterson (D-MN)  
Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)  
G.T. Thompson (R-PA)  
Bruce Westerman (R-AR)  
Don Young (R-AK)

AFRC encourages its members and allies to reach out to these and other Members of Congress to urge action on federal forest reforms when Congress returns in September. /Heath Heikkila

## **Federal Forest Management Issues and National Politics**

The 2016 Republican National Convention wrapped up on July 21 and the Democrats convened this week for the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia. While AFRC does not expect federal forest management issues to make it to the top of the most pressing national issues, the plight of federal forests is receiving political attention. The [2016 GOP Platform](#) included the following plank urging reform:

*“The U. S. Forest Service, within the Department of Agriculture, controls around 200 million acres of land with enormous natural resources, especially timber, a renewable resource providing jobs for thousands of workers that should be used to the best economic potential for the nation. Many of our national forests are in worsening health with the threat of invasive species, insect mortality, and the severe risk of wildfire.*

*The increase in catastrophic wildfires has been needlessly killing millions of animals and destroying homes and watersheds for decades in the western states. The expense to suppress wildfires related to failed federal forest policies continues to increase. When timber is managed properly, the renewable crops will result in fewer wildfires and, at the same time, produce jobs in the timber industry for countless families. We believe in promoting active, sustainable management of our forests and that states can best manage our forests to improve forest health and keep communities safe.”*

This compares to the following statement in the [2012 Republican Platform](#): *“Timber is a renewable natural resource, which provides jobs to thousands of Americans. All efforts should be made to make federal lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service available for harvesting.”*

The 2016 Democratic Platform only speaks broadly to public land management and recreation, but Hillary Clinton’s campaign released a [campaign plan](#) that does address federal forest issues:

*“Hillary Clinton believes that restoring and protecting the health of America’s forests requires managing them for the full scope of benefits they provide. Clinton will work with the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to set clear management goals that not only recognize the value of forests and public lands for sustainable timber, but for the carbon they absorb, the wildlife habitat they furnish, and the recreation opportunities and clean drinking water they supply. Clinton will build on the success of the Roadless Rule by working to protect and restore old growth and large landscapes that are essential to the health of fish and wildlife. Recognizing that climate change is increasing the dangers and costs of large wildfires in many areas, Clinton will also work to reform the wildfire budget to ensure that firefighters, states, and communities have the resources they need to fight fires every year, and to end the damaging practice of transferring resources away from initiatives that help reduce fire risk and restore the health of forests.” /Heath Heikkila*

## **AFRC Weighs in on O&C Plans, Funding**

In the [June Newsletter](#) AFRC reported how the management of the BLM's O&C lands would see another \$5 million reduction under the proposed Senate Interior Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2017. If enacted, this would come on top of a \$6 million reduction that was enacted in the current fiscal year. AFRC recently sent a [letter](#) to the leadership of the Senate and House Interior Appropriations Subcommittees urging increased appropriations for BLM timber planning activities and the inclusion of legislative language to set a minimum harvest level from the BLM O&C lands.

Report language accompanying both the House and Senate Interior Appropriations bills criticized the BLM's pending resource management plan for Western Oregon. In AFRC's letter to appropriators, AFRC President Travis Joseph wrote: *"Your subcommittees have rightly questioned the BLM's management of these lands through bill report language. But the proposed funding levels fall well short of providing the resources needed to increase timber harvests."*

As the BLM nears issuing a formal Record of Decision adopting this new plan, the letter urged legislative action: *"In light of the BLM's refusal to modify its flawed plan, we respectfully request that the Committee work with members of the Oregon Congressional Delegation to include a minimum timber sale volume in any final FY17 Appropriations bill. There is a surprising consensus around the appropriate level of harvest from the BLM O&C lands. Senator Ron Wyden's goal for his O&C legislation was 450 mmbf of timber harvests per year. Legislation championed by Democrats and Republicans and passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in the 113th Congress would have led to annual harvests of 550 mmbf per year. The federal O&C Act included an initial minimum volume requirement of 500 mmbf. We ask that the Congress provide clear legislative direction to the BLM on expected timber volume outcomes that reflect the final appropriation."*

While Congress is unlikely to take action on a final Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations measure until after the November election, AFRC is working hard to secure the funding and direction needed to honor the commitments of the O&C Act. /Heath Heikkila

## **Court Win – East Reservoir Project Approved**

On July 19, Judge Dana Christensen of the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana ruled in favor of the East Reservoir Project on northwest Montana's Kootenai National Forest. The court's opinion found the project complied with environmental laws. In particular, the judge found the project-specific analysis of lynx critical habitat offset the ongoing issues regarding plan-level consultation on lynx habitat. The opinion also deferred to the Forest Service on trout and grizzly bear issues. Alliance for the Wild Rockies challenged the project for failure to adequately analyze effects on endangered species including grizzly bear, bull trout, and lynx.

The project involves a planning area of approximately 90,000 acres and commercial treatment of over 8,500 acres. AFRC intervened on behalf of the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition and Lincoln County. AFRC member Idaho Forest Group participated as part of the Coalition to help influence the design of the project. Other Coalition members include Lincoln County, Montana Wilderness Association, Yaak Valley Forest Council, The Lands Council, and F.H. Stoltze. The

Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and the Montana Attorney General's Office filed amicus briefs in support of the project. The Court held a hearing on summary judgment on April 19, hearing arguments from attorneys for plaintiffs, the government, and AFRC. A coalition of groups opposed to collaboratives also presented at the hearing.

AFRC appreciates the support of our members and coalition partners in this effort. */Lawson Fite*

## **AFRC Supports Loafer Project in Court**

On July 15, AFRC was granted intervenor status in a lawsuit against the Loafer Project on the Umpqua National Forest, Diamond Lake Ranger District. Cascadia Wildlands and Oregon Wild filed suit in mid-June. The case is assigned to Judge Russo in the Eugene Division of U.S. District Court.

The Loafer Timber Sale Project is a series of commercial treatments on 1,400 acres in need of restoration due to Douglas-fir growth crowding out historically dominant species such as ponderosa and white pine. The treatment areas include some stands with older and larger trees. The complaint focuses on impacts to areas claimed to be "roadless" by plaintiffs, including Oregon Wild's unpopular wilderness proposals around Crater Lake National Park, and the alleged need for an environmental impact statement instead of an environmental assessment.

An earlier version of the project was proposed in 2013. The Forest Service withdrew the project to conduct additional red tree vole and great grey owl surveys.

Total volume on the project is estimated at 30 million board feet, a substantial component of the Umpqua's sale program, with sales to occur throughout 2016 and early 2017. AFRC is joined in the legal work by attorneys from the Western Resources Legal Center. */Lawson Fite*

## **Public Lands Commissioner Candidates**

Washington's Commissioner of Public Lands is a statewide elected official who serves a four-year term on the same cycle as the governor. The Commissioner is the head of the Department of Natural Resources, which manages 2.1 million acres of forest lands in trust for specific beneficiaries. DNR also manages significant aquatic resources and agricultural lands, oversees enforcement of forest practices rules applicable to both state and private lands, and fights wildfire. The Commissioner's job is both complex and vital to the economy of Washington State.

There are seven candidates vying for the office in the August 2 primary. The top two, regardless of party, will move on to the November 8 general election. The candidates are:

[Hilary Franz](#) (D), an environmental attorney on leave of absence from Futurewise where she has been Executive Director since 2011. She served on the Bainbridge Island city council and is a former board member of the Washington Environmental Council and Conservation Northwest. She is running to restore healthy forests, promote clean energy jobs, and preserve working forests and farm lands. She believes that the legislature should fully fund education so that it is independent of state land revenues.

[Steve McLaughlin](#) (R), a retired Navy commander with experience training firefighters and public service personnel in incident management. He believes that careful management of the state's trust lands will provide a steady stream of revenue for schools and provide jobs in rural communities. In public appearances, he emphasizes his proven leadership skills and ability to manage organizations to solve complex problems. He states he would provide leadership, balance, and accountability.

[Steven Nielson](#) (L), an aerospace engineer. His stated first priority if elected would be to reduce fire hazards, provide job opportunities, and help fund education by thinning unhealthy forests. He believes that removing restrictions and prohibitions will lead to innovation and a healthier economy for the state. In public appearances, he emphasizes the importance of innovation and risk taking in solving problems. He is concerned that we are using outdated technology in fire detection and suppression.

[Karen Porterfield](#) (D), a business consultant and adjunct faculty at Seattle University. She was formerly Vice President, United Way of King County. She believes DNR must change how it does business in order to balance the need for preserving the environment while generating revenue for schools. At public appearances, she characterizes timber harvesting as “a 19<sup>th</sup> Century revenue source” and promises to diversify the ways in which DNR generates revenue from state lands.

[John Stillings](#) (D), a general contractor and 1984 Olympic Silver Medalist coxswain. He is concerned with the need to adequately fund DNR's firefighting efforts and improve interagency responsiveness. He is concerned with the impact of wildfire on carbon sequestration. In public appearances, he emphasizes the need to protect our timber resources and improve forest health.

[Dave Uptegrove](#) (D), a King County Councilmember. He served in the Washington legislature from 2001-2013 where he was chair of the House Environment Committee. He is endorsed by the League of Conservation Voters. He states that he will manage public lands to protect wildlife habitat and clean water, while harvesting timber to support public schools. He is committed to wildfire prevention. He opposes leasing state lands to facilitate fossil fuel production.

[Mary Verner](#) (D), on leave from the Department of Natural Resources where she has been Deputy Supervisor for Resource Protection and Administration since 2013. She served as mayor of Spokane and was the Executive Director of the Upper Columbia United Tribes. She promises to provide collaborative leadership and to bring skills to manage a complex organization. In public appearances, she emphasizes her longtime dedication to the mission of the agency and to natural resource protection.

The Washington League of Women Voters and others (including AFRC) sponsored two forums in which the candidates responded to questions and had the opportunity to challenge one another's responses. The July 11 forum in Olympia is available for download from TVW at [here](#), and the July 18 forum in Bellingham can be viewed at [here](#).

If you are a Washington voter, please vote in the Washington primary. Washington’s timber program is of vital importance to our members throughout the region. /Ann Forest Burns

## Colville Forest Plan Revision Update

The 135-day comment period on the draft Colville National Forest plan revision ended on July 5. Several groups requested the comment period be further extended. However, that request was denied by the Regional Office and the Colville. The Forest received a total of 921 comment letters of which 361 were unique letters and 560 were form letters. The public comments received will be used to help the Forest modify alternatives, develop new alternatives for consideration, improve the analysis of effects, or to make factual corrections as they work to finalize the final plan.

AFRC submitted detailed [comments](#) on behalf of its members with the hope that the comments will be used to help craft an additional alternative and/or supply new information that more accurately reflects the needs of the Forest, and better emphasizes the importance of forest management to the forest products industry, the local communities, and other forest resources.

Specifically, AFRC commented on the level of forest treatment per year and how that falls short of the pace and scale of restoration needed to create a healthy forest. Under the proposed preferred alternative, it would take over 70 years to treat the acres currently in poor forest health. AFRC urged the Forest to develop a new alternative which produces more than the 62 million board feet (mmbf) proposed annually. The local collaborative supports an 80 mmbf production level and the long-term sustained yield for the Colville Forest is 97 mmbf.

AFRC commented on several additional issues, including the desired low road density standard (only two miles of road per square mile of forestland) and a request for a more realistic socio-economic analysis that accurately portrays the contribution that the forest products industry makes to the three counties in Northeast Washington. AFRC further suggested modifications to the plan standards and guidelines, particularly the draft’s surprising proposal to institute “Survey and Manage” like provisions.

The Forest has outlined a tentative timeframe for finalizing the Plan (below) which currently has the final Record of Decision being signed in Spring 2018. Steps over the next couple of months, according to Forest personnel, will include reviewing and sorting comments, assessing alternatives, and providing public notices and meetings if needed. AFRC will closely monitor the plan as it evolves with the hopes of making the final product more responsive for the needs of the Forest and our members. /Tom Partin

<b>Milestones For Colville Forest Plan Revision</b>	<b>End Date</b>
Finalize Modified Alt (Spatial Data and Text)	Fall, 2016
RO Review Draft LMP, FEIS	
Finalize EIS/Draft ROD/Plan/Response to Comments	Spring, 2017

<b>Milestones For Colville Forest Plan Revision</b>	<b>End Date</b>
WO Briefing	Spring, 2017
Distribute Draft RODs/LMPs, FEIS Roll out	Summer, 2017
NOA published in the Federal Register	Summer, 2017
60-days Objection Period, Notice of Objection published	Fall, 2017
Prep. and transmit to Chief/Chief Rev Objections and Instruct/Respond to Objections	Fall, 2017
219.58 (2012 Rule) Final revised LMP and ROD. Incorporating the reviewing officer's instructions into the FEIS/ROD/LMP	Winter 2018
RO Final Review RODs and RF sign	Spring, 2018

## **Regeneration Harvest on the Willamette**

Over the past 20 years the Forest Service’s vegetation management program in western Oregon has been largely dominated by partial harvesting practices, essentially thinning. This management paradigm has served the agency fairly well in that it has permitted a *short-term* supply of timber products to their customers, the forest products industry. However, there is a finite amount of forests that can be thinned. No professional forester who practices their trade in the Pacific Northwest would refute the notion that Douglas-fir trees need openings in the forest in order to regenerate.

The failures of thinning-only practices have recently been validated by other federal land managers. The Umpqua National Forest, the Willamette National Forest’s neighbor to the south, realized in recent years that they will run out of forest stands to thin over the next eight years. In a recent environmental assessment, the Cascades Resource Area of the Salem BLM District calculated that only 10 years of thinning remain before they deplete their supply of “thin-able” stands.

Last month the McKenzie River Ranger District on the Willamette took a big step towards addressing the shortcomings of this strategy and began the process of incorporating treatments that will ensure a sustainable supply of timber products in the long-term. The District is proposing regeneration harvest on over 300 acres of lands designated for sustainable timber management on the Green Mountain project. Ideally, Green Mountain will serve as an example for other National Forests in western Oregon as a feasible and balanced approach to move beyond the unsustainable path of thinning only.

The Green Mountain project may provoke claims from special interest groups that the McKenzie River District is being regressive in their management approach. However, based on the status of the Umpqua’s recent timber supply, as well as similar results from the Salem BLM, the Green Mountain project is defiantly progressive. /Andy Geissler

## **PNW Research Station Update**

On July 18, the Forest Service named Dr. Felipe Sanchez to be acting Station Director for the [Pacific Northwest Research Station](#) (PNW Station). Sanchez, who replaces retiring Robert Mangold, is expected to be in the position through November, 2016.

The PNW Station, headquartered in Portland, has 11 laboratories and centers in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington. Its scientists are currently compiling a [science synthesis](#) for the revisions within the Northwest Forest Plan (see, [AFRC April 2015 Newsletter](#)). At a meeting of the 2012 Forest Planning Rule Federal Advisory Committee in Portland, Assistant Station Director Borys Tkacz reported that the synthesis is on track for completion later this fall prior to the beginning of the assessments required by the new planning rule. */Ann Forest Burns*

## **Member Profile: Freres Lumber Company**

This month, AFRC recognizes Freres Lumber Company, who, on July 20, hosted Congressman Kurt Schrader (D-OR) as he toured the company's facilities in Lyons, Oregon. Schrader has championed active Federal forest management and has advocated on behalf of Oregon's rural communities and supporting timber infrastructure during his tenure in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Congressman Schrader noted on his Facebook page how he was especially impressed by the company's approach to sustainability, notably Freres Lumber's on-site biomass-to-electric plant, which allows for the recycling of forest byproducts into steam which powers the mill's production (and also provides enough electricity for 5,000 local households).

During the Congressional recess, as congressmen and women return to their home districts, AFRC encourages other member companies to reach out to those who represent them in Washington D.C., inviting them to tour the forests they work in and the mills they operate. Educating our elected officials on what we do, how we do it, and why we do it empowers them to be informed champions of forest health and rural communities when they return to Congress.