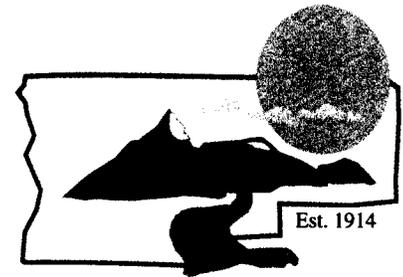


JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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December 14, 2005

Congressman Greg Walden
1210 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Brian Baird
1421 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Walden and Baird:

Natural catastrophes impact our nation's treasured forests on a regular basis. Wildfires, tornadoes, ice storms, bug infestation and windstorms are frequent occurrences which often leave our federal forests dead and in need of recovery and restoration. In fact, as a result of these events, there are now more than one million acres of national forest in need of reforestation – and the number is growing. It is critical to the future of these forests that federal land managers are able to rapidly assess damage, determine environmentally sound action plans and get to work recovering damaged forests. The Jefferson County Commission supports the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act (HR4200), your bipartisan legislation to help accomplish the goal of recovering catastrophically damaged federal forests.

The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act would provide our federal land managers the tools and resources necessary to complete a swift and thorough evaluation of forest conditions after an ice storm, wildfire or other catastrophic event and allow for expeditious plans to recover the health of these lands. It encourages public participation, follows an overwhelmingly bipartisan (and congressionally approved) appeals and litigation process, and requires collaboration with states, local governments, tribes, colleges and universities, and other interested parties. We appreciate your attention to ensuring that the public has the right to participate in the recovery planning process, appeal these plans if they disagree and, if needed, take concerns to the courts. Further, we also commend you for your strict adherence to all environmental laws and specificity prohibiting action in Wilderness areas, National Parks or National Monuments.

When it comes to the health of our national forests for generations to come, we have a responsibility to get to work restoring lands damaged by catastrophe. The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act would help do just that.

Sincerely,



Bill Bellamy, Commissioner