Congressmen Walden and Blumenauer's Mt. Hood Bill

FOREST STEWARDSHIP AND WATERSHED HEALTH

- The average fire regime on the Mt. Hood National Forest varies greatly. There are low elevation, dry, east side areas considered Level 1, a 0-35 year burn cycle; and higher, wetter, west side stands at Level 5, with a 200-400 year burn cycle. At the turn of the 20th century, there were several large, stand-replacing fires that burned throughout the forest. In 1973, the Rocky fire consumed 7300 acres on the east side.

- Currently, there are approximately 87,000 acres with significant amounts of dead trees from recent bark beetle outbreaks. According to the Forest Service the forest is heavily overstocked in many areas and large tracts of land are experiencing insect and disease damage at epidemic levels. The overall growth rate of trees in the forest is more than 13 times that of harvest or fuels reduction activity. The natural yearly tree death rate exceeds all stewardship activities on the forest by an eight-to-one margin.

- The bill addresses these problems by requiring the Forest Service to prepare a 10 year plan in coordination with the public and the local Resource Advisory Council, to address areas with a high incidence of insect or disease infestation, overstocked tree stands, or moderate to high risk of catastrophic wildfire to improve overall condition class. The purpose of the plan is to improve overall the forest health and water quality, and promote landscapes that are resilient to catastrophic fire, insects and disease, and protect homes and communities from property damage.

- The excess small diameter trees and understory vegetation removed from these heavily overstocked areas during forest restoration efforts can be used by local communities for a variety of purposes. The bill's Sustainable Biomass Utilization Study section requires the Forest Service to assess the amount of sustainable biomass available for energy production, dimensional lumber, fencing, framing material, poles, firewood, furniture, chips, pulp for paper, or other commercial purposes.

- Municipal water is one of the primary uses of the Mt. Hood National Forest, and it can be the foundation of successful partnerships between the Forest and surrounding communities. The forest provides clean drinking and irrigation water for over 1.1 million Oregonians – almost one third of the State's population. To foster this important relationship, the bill also contains a Watershed Memorandums of Understanding section, encouraging municipalities and irrigators to enter cooperative agreements with the Forest Service that outline stewardship goals to manage their watersheds for both water quantity and quality.

- The Mt. Hood National Forest consists of 1,024,000 acres (excluding private land).
  This total currently includes:
  - Late-successional Reserve 360,000 (35% of total acreage)
  - Riparian Reserve 328,862 (32% of total acreage)
  - Wilderness 186,200 (17% of total acreage)
    - **With our proposal: 263,700 (25% of total acreage)**
  - Roadless 118,350 (11.5% of total acreage)
  - Lands specified for timber production: 99,000 (9.6% of total acreage)

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