

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

May 18, 2012

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

We are writing to you concerning the designation of critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl, and the ability for the public to weigh in on a decision that will have a major impact on Oregon and other states in the West.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is currently accepting public comments to the revised designation of critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl. We also understand the FWS will soon release a much anticipated economic analysis that evaluates the economic impacts of the critical habitat designation.

It is essential that the public has ample time to fully evaluate the draft rule and forthcoming analysis and have the opportunity to provide input to the FWS. Our understanding is that the economic analysis will be published in early June, and that the FWS will keep the public comment period on both the rule and economic analysis open until July 6, 2012. We believe this is not an adequate amount of time for stakeholders to fully evaluate the draft rule and the economic analysis, and prepare responses to submit to the FWS. We respectfully request that you extend the public comment period by an additional 60 days for a final deadline of September 6, 2012. This should still provide the FWS with enough time to finalize the rule by the court-ordered deadline of November 15, 2012.

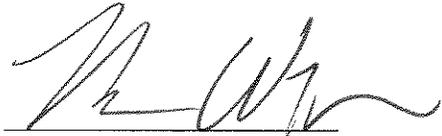
The critical habitat designation of the Northern Spotted Owl will have a major impact on our rural communities. Many communities across Oregon have economies that depend heavily on forestry and forest-based work. Allowing the public ample time to review and meaningfully comment will be an important gesture of good will, indicating that the FWS takes seriously the concerns of the communities that will be most impacted by the critical habitat designation.

We appreciate your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress



Greg Walden  
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader  
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress