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**DEPUTY WHIP**

**ENERGY AND COMMERCE**

SUBCOMMITTEES:  
COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY  
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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

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Mr. James Peña  
Regional Forester  
United States Forest Service, Region 6  
P.O. Box 3623  
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Regional Forester Peña:

Thank you for joining me in La Grande last month to discuss the issues facing our federally forested communities in eastern Oregon. During that meeting several timely issues were raised that I'd like to reiterate and I ask that you take steps to address them.

Since access to federal forests is a way of life for area residents, many have expressed concern with the timeline for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest's (WWNF) Existing Condition Road Maps. Assessing and correcting 19 maps covering 2.3 million acres is a complex and slow enough process by itself, but it is further exacerbated by logistical issues of limited high speed internet in some rural areas and limited supplies of hard copy maps. I ask that you extend the public review period for this process by at least 90 days to ease these challenges.

The process under Subpart A of the Travel Management Rule to identify the minimum administrative road system on the WWNF has also been raised with me as an issue of concern. As I am sure you are aware, past Travel Management actions have eroded the local communities' trust of the Forest Service. Even where process does not mandate it, I encourage you to be open and transparent with the public in all parts of the Travel Management process.

Cattle grazing has long been an important piece for rural economies and reducing fine fuel loads across eastern Oregon. As you heard, there are several vacant allotments that await review, while fuel loads build and producers wait for opportunities to build their businesses and help manage that resource. Recognizing the role ranching plays in many of Oregon's rural communities, I ask that you work to ensure reviews for vacant and active allotments on the WWNF and other forests across Oregon are promptly completed.

The decline in timber harvests on federal land has significantly harmed these communities as well, while our forests become overgrown, disease infested and subject to catastrophic fires. Certainty in timber supply is integral to local job creation and maintaining the mill infrastructure needed to effectively treat our forests. Yet as we heard from county commissioners and others in attendance last month, the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision falls far short of what's needed. We should be planning for success, not failure. I hope that you will not just push forward with the plan as written, but rather work with the local communities to find a path forward on the forest plan that can help bring healthy forests and healthy communities back to northeast Oregon.

Thank you again for joining me and local residents to discuss these important issues regarding our federal forests in eastern Oregon. I hope the Forest Service will work to maintain engagement with local residents and work towards management practices that reflect the needs of our rural communities.

Best regards,

Greg Walden  
U.S. Representative  
Oregon's Second District