

June 18, 2008

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senator
223 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

For three decades, management of our federal forests has suffered from the failure of community leaders, environmental groups and industry to agree on appropriate forest management. The resulting gridlock has harmed both forest health and the economies of resource-dependent rural communities. As we have often discussed, the longer we wait the worse the problem gets. Forest restoration becomes more challenging and expensive while the risks of uncharacteristically severe fire, disease and pests accelerate. We have, on the advent of a proposal by Senator Ron Wyden, an opportunity to change the course of this discussion, and potentially carve through the gridlock.

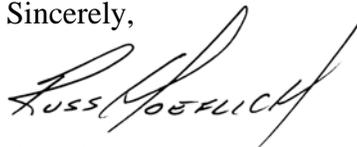
Fortunately, Oregonians are beginning to find common ground. Collaborative efforts from the Siuslaw National Forest to the Malheur National Forest hold promise for landscape-scale restoration initiatives that will improve forest health while expanding economic opportunities in local communities.

For these efforts to be successful, Congress must provide federal forest managers and stakeholders with clear guidelines to forest management, effective tools to help communities achieve consensus, and sufficient funding to implement restoration on the ground at the pace and scale needed to solve the problem. We applaud your tackling the problem of forest health restoration at the requisite scale, and we appreciate the opportunity to work with you as you continue developing your legislative initiative.

While we understand you have not yet developed legislative language, we are particularly pleased to see that your proposal embraces the concepts of landscape-scale planning, community collaboration, conservation of old growth and other important habitat values, and opportunities afforded by a restoration economy. We have questions about proposed management prescriptions and collaborative processes, but we are confident of being able to address these questions in future stakeholder discussions.

For too long Oregon's forests have suffered from inadequate management. We commend your efforts to break through the gridlock to restore health to Oregon's forests and rural communities, and we commit to continue working with you to achieve this critical goal.

Sincerely,



Russell Hoeflich
Vice President and Oregon Director
The Nature Conservancy

cc: Will Neuhauser, Chair, The Nature Conservancy in Oregon