

**Cascadia Wildlands \* Coast Range Association \* Geos Institute \* Klamath  
Siskiyou Wildlands Center \* The Larch Company \* Oregon Wild \* Sierra  
Club**

Rep. Peter DeFazio  
2134 Rayburn Office Building •  
Washington, DC • 2051

Rep. Kurt Schrader  
314 Cannon Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Rep. Greg Walden  
2182 Rayburn Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2012

Dear Representatives DeFazio, Schrader, and Walden,

On behalf of our tens of thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, we are writing you today to request that you conduct an open and public process—including public hearings in Oregon and Washington, DC—before attempting to move any legislation regarding the disposition of Bureau of Land Management lands in Western Oregon.

The fate of 2.6 million acres of BLM land in Western Oregon is very important to Oregonians, and all Americans have an interest in these public lands. Over 40,000 Oregonians live within a quarter mile of Western Oregon BLM lands, and many more rely upon them for activities like hunting, hiking, fishing, and camping. When the BLM opened a comment period on the Western Oregon Plan Revisions, an effort to weaken environmental safeguards and expand logging on these lands, the agency received over 30,000 public comments, demonstrating overwhelming opposition to such a plan.

You are all on the record advocating that very significant acreages of these public lands be transferred into a logging “trust,” to be governed under weakened environmental safeguards. This would be an enormous change in public forest policy, and have severe implications for the rest of America’s public lands system. Yet, we have not heard of any public hearing or other process whereby you are planning to allow the interested public to relay their ideas or concerns, or suggest improvements in or alternatives to your legislation. We are similarly unaware of any plans for engaging the scientific community in an analysis of your proposal and its likely effects.

We have heard that your offices have already developed legislative language to enact your proposal. It would be a breach of public trust to allow such language to become attached to “must pass” legislation that would move in the US House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee, or to make it law through other means, without an open and regular public process.

We are also concerned that your offices have not worked to advance H.R. 3599, the House companion bill to the Senate County Payments Reauthorization Act of 2011. It is vital that Oregon House members from districts most affected by the end of county payments show solidarity with Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley in their work to secure an extension of this important legislation.

As you know, former President Bill Clinton adopted the Northwest Forest Plan in 1993 to resolve years of bitter conflict over reckless logging levels on public lands, including Western Oregon BLM lands. The plan was the product of comprehensive scientific analysis, astute legal scrutiny, careful balancing of interests, and an extensive public process. While some remain unhappy with the plan, the majority of residents in the Pacific Northwest strongly support its balanced, science-based approach. Where the plan has been fully implemented, such as the

Siuslaw and Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forests, it has provided a framework for both a high-level of timber production and for environmental restoration.

Removing BLM lands in Western Oregon from the Northwest Forest Plan is not something that should be done lightly, nor should exempting those lands from strict federal protections for clean water and endangered species. Doing so would have serious consequences for the environment on the ground, for the continuation of the Northwest Forest Plan in the rest of the Pacific Northwest region, and for the management of federal public lands across America. It is imperative that any legislation that would enact should drastic changes in how public lands are managed be carefully vetted with the public, legal scholars, and with the scientific community. It is also imperative that Congress accept criticism or concerns regarding such legislation, and be willing to make changes to address them.

Representatives DeFazio, Schrader, and Walden, we strongly urge you to:

1. Publicly commit to an open and transparent process before attempting to move any legislation that would alter the management of Western Oregon BLM lands—including scientific review and sharing of legislative language. You should also commit to giving Americans a meaningful opportunity to suggest improvements to the legislation, and be willing to address them.
2. Co-sponsor and work to advance H.R. 3599, and show solidarity with Senators Wyden and Merkley and the bi-partisan Senate coalition working to secure an extension of county payments legislation.

Representatives, we all share a common interest in seeing the political impasse over important county payments legislation resolved, and in sustainable, science-based management for America's public lands. We believe that legislation enacting dramatic changes in the management of Western Oregon BLM lands should not be enacted in haste, or without an opportunity for meaningful public input and scientific scrutiny. Please commit to conducting such an open public process before attempting to move logging "trust" legislation for these lands, and to sharing legislative language with the public before it is introduced in Congress.

Sincerely,

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Cascadia Wildlands

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