

**Opening Statement
Chairman Ron Wyden
Committee Business Meeting
December 19, 2013**

Opening remarks

- The Committee meets this morning to consider 10 bills on the agenda that were circulated last Friday.
- Three of the bills on today's agenda are forestry bills: Senator Tester's Forest Jobs Act (#1); Senator Flake's Stewardship Contracting bill (#5); and my Forest bill involving the Eastside Forests of Oregon(#6).
- Before turning to those bills, I want to take a few minutes to describe the larger state of play for forestry bills and how these bills fit into today's picture.
- And after extensive discussions with the ranking member Senator Murkowski, my colleague and friend, I'd like to make very clear that today's markup is just the beginning, just the beginning colleagues of the Committee's consideration of forestry legislation. It's very clear that members on both sides can find common ground when it comes to forest management that in effect business as usual is not working.
- So Senator Murkowski and I plan to develop and pass national forestry legislation working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle. And we are going to do that after a bipartisan discussion that Senator Murkowski and I feel has always been this Committee's tradition and frankly it's one of the reasons we're so proud to serve on the Committee.

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- Today's bills take more targeted approaches. Senator Flake's bill focuses on one truly essential tool for managing forests – that's stewardship contracting. The legislation that Senator Tester's and I are proposing are pilot projects – let me emphasize pilot projects – for managing forests in our states.
- These are bills that have been under development for years and have already had hearings in the Committee. That's why they are being considered by the Committee now.
- With these bills, the committee is encouraging the Forest Service to try out different approaches to improve management of our forests.
- And having talked to a number of colleagues here and off the Committee, Senator Murkowski and I want to be clear that we are open to considering additional pilot programs for other parts of the country.
- With that backdrop, I want to recognize Senator Murkowski for her opening statement, before proceeding to consider the bills on the agenda.