

Opening Statement
Chairman Ron Wyden
Full Committee Hearing on S. 1784 and S. 1966
February 6, 2014

- The Committee will come to order.
- We have a busy forestry agenda this morning, but with Sen. Murkowski's leave, I have just a few comments to make on another matter. I think we both know it is always a challenge to definitively predict the schedule here in the United States Senate, but it does appear that this morning is going to be my last hearing as the Chair of this committee. And I just want to offer up a couple of big thank yous and make a couple of comments about the last year.
- On the thank you front, Sen. Murkowski, I just want you to know that you are the gold standard on how you go about trying to promote principled bipartisanship, particularly bipartisanship on difficult issues. Everybody knows you can be bipartisan if you just want to stand around and issue press releases. But to take core principles, principles that I think in our discussions both of us have, and find common ground, that is something of a lost art. I just want to say thank you for that this morning.
- When Oregonians honored me with the opportunity to represent them in the senate, I made a beeline for this committee. I did so because I believe getting natural resources policy right represents what is best about our country. Wise use of our treasured, lands, air and water so there are sustainable good paying jobs for our people, and protections for the environment.
- Without delivering a filibuster I just want to mention a few things that happened on our watch. First is we gave a big boost to renewable energy with a hydropower law projected to generate 60,000 megawatts of clean, renewable power. We actually moved government toward that sweet spot in terms of natural gas, and take this energy source, 50 percent cleaner than the other fossil fuels, and make sure that it is available to boost our key industries and at the same time help the environment, particularly in getting renewables into base load power.
- We also together funded rural schools, police and parks. We wrote a bipartisan plan for dealing with nuclear waste. After years of gridlock on that issue. As you and I have talked about, after five congresses and three presidents failed to figure out what to do about the government's enormous stockpile of helium, we produced a law that works for our vital American industries and for taxpayers.
- All told, based on what our staffs are telling us, no other committee on our watch has passed out more bipartisan legislation.
- Now for everybody who's listening in I want it understood that it is my view that Sen. Landrieu and Sen. Murkowski are going to do an outstanding job of building on the common sense that I see from the members of this committee every time that I'm in this

room. It's going to be an honor, Sen. Murkowski, to continue sit next to you and Sen. Landrieu as we deal with these important issues.

- By way of wrapping up, it's a thank you for a great ride. An exciting ride I think we did what we were sent here to do, which is try to make good policy in a polarizing time.
- I think people also know that you and I swap ideas on subjects we don't take up in this room and we're going to continue that as well.
- As I'm going to hear this weekend in town hall meetings this weekend in Oregon, it always get backs to forestry.

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- Let's go now to the O&C bill we're also going to be taking up Sen. Barrasso's bill. The O&C bill is S. 1784. Later we'll hear from Sen. Barrasso bill, S. 1966, the National Forest Jobs and Management Act.
- I think it is fair to say with respect to the O&C lands Act of 2013, Oregonians feel these lands are truly unique, both in their legal status and history. It really goes back to the 1930s and the 1937 O&C Act.
- That act established a checkerboard of public lands mixed in with private land. The Bureau of Land Management now oversees O&C lands with a unique mandate for forest management that exists nowhere else in our country.
- I think it is fair to say folks in these 18 Oregon counties feel like they've been hit by a wrecking ball. Unemployment is high. Newspapers are full of stories about crimes going unpunished because law enforcement doesn't have the manpower to respond. These counties need jobs in the woods, in the mills and for plumbers and restaurants and small businesses that are so vital to the rural Oregon economy. Instead, folks in these communities feel like they have nowhere to turn.
- I want to spend just a moment talking about how we actually got to this point. My own take is a big part of it is the conversation about managing these lands has now been monopolized by ideological extremes who seem allergic to the idea of a compromise. The answer always seems to be clear cutting away the old growth, or blocking even responsible timber harvests.
- It is my view neither of these extremes are a long-term winner for our state. That's why leaders from the forest products sector, recreation, conservation groups and local officials stood up with me and Governor Kitzhaber in our state capital when I rolled out recently a fresh vision for the O&C lands.

- Our legislation ends the ‘stop everything’ approach that has paralyzed forest management and, at the same time it acknowledges that the days of billion-board-foot clear cuts are not coming back.
- This approach substantially increases the timber going to our mills. It creates certainty for our working families, certainty for our counties, and certainty for every employer who will invest in the future of our rural communities.
- By doubling the harvest compared to the average harvest of the last decade these communities can save the jobs that they’ve got now and create more. Assuring future decades of reliable harvests that average 300-350 million board feet per year will give employers confidence they can grow their businesses and provide more good-paying jobs.
- In working with the best scientists in the Northwest – including Dr. Jerry Franklin, who is going to testify today on behalf of himself and Dr. Norm Johnson – the priority was to make timber harvesting as ecologically friendly as possible. Ironclad protections for clean drinking water, wildlife and Oregon’s salmon in this bill stem from the discussions that were held with many conservation groups.
- This is legislation that I believe can pass both houses of Congress and actually be signed into law by the President.
- Our forests, our counties and our mills cannot keep waiting while lawyers for both sides litigate away. Forest management has been stalled so thoroughly, it’s virtually fossilized.
- My bill amends the law that established these unique federal lands to make clear how O&C lands are to be managed in the future.
- First, this bill puts approximately half of the O&C land into a “forestry emphasis” area and the other half into a “conservation emphasis” area, so there is no question about where sustainable timber harvests are the priority, and which areas will be permanently conserved.
- In timber emphasis areas, this bill rules out the controversial sales that are most likely to end up in court. It creates the first ever legislative ban on harvesting old growth on the O&C lands. And critically, this bill tells natural resources agencies to offer timber sales according to harvests that mimic natural processes.
- In addition, the bill streamlines an environmental review process that in many cases has bogged down timber harvesting to the point of stagnation. It does that while maintaining carefully our country’s bedrock environmental laws.
- The point of this bill is to bring together all of the stakeholders at the outset, and come up with a plan for 10 years of timber harvests that will be approved at the start. So instead of dealing with dozens of individual studies, foresters will have the certainty

that the harvests can proceed without some group parachuting in out of nowhere and throwing up last-second roadblocks.

- I want it understood that Oregonians have the right to be heard when they disagree with forestry policy, but every tree should not get its own lawsuit.
- Advocates for this bill are especially proud of its conservation gains. This bill creates 87,000 acres of wilderness, and 160 miles of wild and scenic rivers. In all, it will permanently conserve over a million acres of O&C lands.
- An essential element of this bill is strong protections for streams and watersheds. We were able to have the good fortune of working with one of our region's foremost water resources expert, Dr. Gordon Reeves, to establish the first ever legislative protections for O&C streams.
- And it includes special areas protected for recreation, which is an especially important part of our rural economies, and is responsible for 141,000 jobs in our state alone. Make no mistake about it, in Oregon and many other parts of the country, recreation is going to be a powerful economic engine for the future.
- Logging by itself does not address all of the economic challenges facing O&C counties. We have made the judgment that there are two parts of the equation. For one, there is the safety net. In this room, back in 2000, Sen. Larry Craig and I wrote the bipartisan Secure Rural Schools bill and got that extended for one additional year with the helium legislation. Then there is this bill, which gets people back to work in the woods. Together, these approaches can get rural counties off of the roller coaster that has produced so much uncertainty for counties trying to fund police, roads and other basic services.
- The bottom line is this bill means more jobs for loggers, for millwrights and sawyers making lumber for our houses, and work for plumbers, hardware stores and other small businesses needed to meet the demands for more goods and services in our rural communities. Most importantly these are full time, good paying jobs that offer an alternative to grinding underemployment in rural Oregon.
- It's fair to say that not everybody gets what they want here. Not everybody gets what they believe they ought to get. But this is going to deliver what Oregon needs. It does so because it is designed to end the tyranny of these extremes. It ought to be a new day for the brave who are willing to try something new and the committee is especially pleased to hear from some of those brave souls today.
- I want to make it clear I am going to work in a bipartisan way with Senator Murkowski and my colleagues on our committee to quickly mark up this bill and bring it to the Senate floor.
- Hundreds of hours went into working on this bill and while I'm always open to suggestions, I want it understood I am going to move forward with this bill.

- I want to thank Governor Kitzhaber, who has invested an enormous amount of time and effort into this issue, as well as Congressman DeFazio, who represents most of the O&C counties who will testify here today, and our colleagues in the House of Representatives. I'm looking forward to continuing to work with them to pass an O&C solution into law. I'll have more to say about Congressman DeFazio's good work in a moment.
- I next want to turn to S. 1966, before recognizing Sen. Murkowski for her comments.
- This is the Forest Jobs and Management Act, has a number of striking similarities to Title 1 of H.R. 1526. The Administration issued a veto threat against H.R. 1526 when it passed the House last fall. I'm anxious to hear from Sen. Barrasso and others on it.
- My concern is, as it has always been with those kinds of approaches, is they would reignite the timber wars in our part of the United States.
- Finally, as Sen. Murkowski and I have indicated in past meetings, she and I are going to be working very closely together to find bipartisan, collaborative approaches to addressing these issues on a national level. Sen. Heinrich has some very good ideas on this topic as well and suffice it to say there are a lot of us on this committee who share Sen. Murkowski's view that we have to work on these issues on a national level as well.
- Last point I'll make is we're going to be spending a lot of time in addition dealing with the greatest threat to National Forest Management, which is the absolutely untenable situation with fire funding.
- That is why Senator Crapo and I, along with Representatives Simpson and Schrader in the House, have introduced bipartisan legislation to dealing with funding these fires. This idea that we would neglect preventive efforts in the forests and you have these massive infernos in the forests, and the bureaucracy then raids the prevention funds to put out the fire, that seems foolish even by Washington, D.C., standards. So we are committed to changing that as well.
- Finally, I'm very appreciative of the good work that was done by Sen. Senator Stabenow on the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill includes provisions on National Forest Management to promote Stewardship Contracting, we have the chief here who has been an eloquent advocate of that. I'm also pleased that the bill includes Senator Barrasso's Good Neighbor Authority that we dealt with here.