



Testimony To The Governor's Federal Forest Advisory Committee

Submitted by Tom Partin

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It is my pleasure to again be in front of this very important Advisory Committee providing testimony relating to a new vision of future management on Oregon's Federal forests. Today I would like to retrace history and base my testimony on previous efforts that I have been involved with dating back 12 years when I was sitting on a very similar panel looking for solutions to the same problems that you are. It all started in 1995 when then Governor John Kitzhaber appointed a diverse group of highly respected scientist from throughout the Northwest to make recommendations on ways to restore ecosystem health and provide wood to communities in an environmentally sound manner in Eastern Oregon. One year later in 1996 Governor Kitzhaber appointed an eastside forest advisory panel to make recommendations on ways the U.S. Forest Service might implement the finding of the scientific panel. I have included a copy of this 35-page report in my testimony package. From this original panel came an 11-point strategy for restoring Eastern Oregon Forests, Watersheds and Communities which I have included a copy of as well.

In the spring of 1999, the Panel decided to move from a specific project focus to a landscape focus to test and learn in context of larger areas. The panel worked with the Governor and federal agencies to create the 2.6 million-acre Blue Mountains Demonstration Area (BMDA) on the Malheur, Wallowa-Whitman, and Umatilla national forests. In April, 2002 at the Western Governors Association conference the BMDA and Panel's work were held up as collaborative models for resolving forest health and governance problems. I have included the final report of our 2002 report entitled "Working to Restore Eastside forest Ecosystems and Community health: Oregon's Experience."

I am retracing this history for you because I don't want to have your work setting on a shelf someplace not being implemented similar to our Panel's work which included the very same issues you are talking about today. I hope today that I can resurrect part of those old reports and help your Panel gain some momentum to finally get our federal forests managed and communities stabilized.

Question 1) what is the most important goal for the federal lands in Oregon?

Answer:

- As I reviewed each of the reports from the 7-years of history from the previous Governors Panel there is a very clear theme that comes through in each report. We need to manage our federal forests in a balanced and sustained manner to provide for **Healthy Forests, Healthy Watersheds and Healthy Communities**. I think that is true today. We need to actively manage our national forests to prevent the current forest health crisis that we are facing today including catastrophic wildfire, insect infestations and large disease outbreaks. This will provide us with clean water, clean air and wildlife. Active management will also ensure a healthy forest products infrastructure that in most cases is located in rural communities. For these communities to be healthy they need a healthy forest products industry.

Question 2) what is the most pressing issue concerning the federal forestlands in Oregon?

Answer:

- A clear theme is present for this question as well as I reviewed the documents from the previous panel, and I believe they are still true today. **Federal Forests are lacking needed active management because:**
 1. A decade and a half of little active management has left our forests with a huge buildup of fuels and fire risk.
 2. Funding is inadequate to achieve land management objectives
 3. Legal Challenges can stop any active management project

4. Communities have not been considered as needing to be sustained as a by-product for managing surrounding federal forests