



THEODORE R. KULONGOSKI
Governor

August 27, 2007

The Honorable Judge Steve Grasty
450 North Buena Vista
Burns, OR 97720

The Honorable Judge Mark Webb
201 S. Humbolt
Canyon City, OR 97820

The Honorable Commissioner Mike Hayward
101 South River Street, Room 202
Enterprise, OR 97828

Dear Judge Grasty, Judge Webb and Commissioner Hayward:

Recent news reports of the mill closures in Harney, Grant and Wallowa counties are deeply troubling to me. Indeed, any Oregonian who values the diversity and independent spirit of our state should be equally troubled. The wood products industry has and continues to be a major industry in Oregon and we must do more to ensure that the raw material with which we have been naturally blessed continues to be harvested in a predictable, competitively priced, sustainable and ecologically sensitive fashion.

The loss of nearly 200 jobs in a region that 22,000 people call home is unacceptable. The social fabric and health of rural Oregon communities must be protected and I am committed to working with you to preserve the fundamental economic infrastructure that has served as a cornerstone of your region for decades. Oregon has a long and rich tradition of placing great value on the work ethic and independence of our rural areas and I am equally committed to preserving your right to enjoy economic self-sufficiency. Toward that end, I want you to know of activities that are currently in progress and other actions that will take place:

- Staff from my office and the Department of Forestry will continue to be available to assist in the development and implementation of strategies designed to ensure more dependable and sustainable harvest of timber from our federal lands.
- I will continue my personal work and meetings with representatives of the timber industry and explore mechanisms through which we can ensure our remaining mills of a dependable supply of timber from our federal lands.
- Per my 2004 directive to the Board of Forestry to advise me on how Oregon's interests should be asserted in federal land management, the Board has created a federal lands advisory committee that is developing specific strategies for assuring increased, predictable and sustainable supplies of fiber from public lands.

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- Two years ago, I signed a cooperative agency agreement with the Bureau of Land Management. This year, I signed a cooperating agency agreement with the Forest Service in which Oregon and its state agencies will play an important role in revising national forest plans. Guided by the Board of Forestry, the agencies will seek to ensure that plans address the opportunities and challenges associated with timber production as well as generation of biomass for renewable energy.
- I will continue my work with our Congressional Delegation as we seek to work in closer partnership with federal agencies vested with the responsibility of managing these lands. I am well aware that Oregon, with 800,000 acres of state forest land, has a sustainable harvest level greater than our federal lands in the state with over 20 times the acreage. If we can manage our forest lands in an ecologically sensitive and dependable fashion, I do not see why we cannot do the same with our federal land base.
- While I recognize that re-training of displaced workers is not a solution for sustaining the timber industry in Oregon, I also recognize the importance of this effort to affected workers and their communities. I am committed to maximizing the resources available from the federal and state agencies, including our Employment Department and Community Colleges and Workforce Development Department, for assisting workers affected by plant closures to secure extended benefits for retraining and finding new employment. To that end, I have asked all pertinent state agencies to engage with any community or individual who is seeking workforce training or assistance.

There is much to be done and I simply want to reassure you of my commitment to rural Oregon and the good people who reside there. Communication and open dialogue are critical to our success and I pledge my cooperation in working with you in the coming months and years.

Sincerely,



THEODORE R. KULONCOSKI

Governor

TRK:m:lj

c: Linda Goodman, Regional Forester Pacific Northwest Region, USDA, Forest Service
Ed Shepherd, State Director, USDOJ Bureau of Land Management