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Wyden Bill - Next Step in O&C Land Discussions

Today, Oregon Senator Ron Wyden released his long-awaited legislative proposal for reforming the management of Western Oregon's O&C forest lands. It follows the recent passage of the bipartisan O&C Trust, Conservation and Jobs Act resulting from a compromise forged by Congressmen Peter DeFazio, Greg Walden, and Kurt Schrader.

The [American Forest Resource Council](#), [Associated Oregon Loggers](#), [Douglas Timber Operators](#) and Southern Oregon Timber Industries Association, whose members include an overwhelming majority of the Oregon forest products industry who purchase, harvest and process BLM timber to the benefit of our rural economies and communities released the following statement in response to the Senator's announcement:

"Now that Senator Wyden has released his legislative proposal, we can have an open, informed debate about the differences between his proposal and the bipartisan, compromise legislation recently passed by the House," said Tom Partin, AFRC President. "We are now getting a first look at Senator Wyden's legislation and will need additional time to review what is being proposed before responding with more specific comments and recommendations."

The 2.4 million acres of O&C forest lands are of critical importance to the health of communities across 18 Western Oregon counties. Since 1937, the O&C Act has required that these lands are dedicated to timber production to benefit our rural communities. The lands are capable of sustainably producing over 1.2 billion board feet of timber, every year, forever. In recent years, less than a quarter of what the forest grows each year has been harvested, resulting in economic turmoil across many O&C communities and declining forest health as fuel loads continue to increase. Last summer, over 94,000 acres of Southwest Oregon timber was lost to forest fires. The status quo is unsustainable for the forests and Oregon's rural communities.

"At first glance, it appears that Senator Wyden's proposal falls short of providing our communities the level of legal certainty, jobs, and county revenues they deserve and have been promised," said Partin. "While it won't be easy, we look forward to working with Senator Wyden and the entire Oregon delegation to find a comprehensive and permanent solution. Our communities absolutely need meaningful reforms to eliminate the broken policies that have resulted in endless paralysis and failed both Oregon and our federal forests for the past twenty years."

“Oregonians want balanced forest policies that provide jobs, certainty and self-sufficiency to our rural communities, while improving the health of our forests, and maintaining our environment and unique quality of life,” continued Partin. “A real solution will end the continuous parade of litigation that has crippled our communities and must provide for harvest levels sufficient to meet the needs of rural western Oregon’s economy, the counties, and the health of the forests, which is exactly what the O&C Act requires today. Without such a solution, the industry will continue to push its case, in court, for full implementation of the O&C Act.”