

PETER A. DEFAZIO
4TH DISTRICT, OREGON

TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
CHAIRMAN



Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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Roger Worthington
Worthy Garden Club
495 NE Bellevue Drive
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July 27, 2022

Dear Roger,

Thanks for contacting me about my views on forest management in Central and Eastern Oregon. It's always good to hear from you.

As you know, I am committed to the responsible, sustainable management of our nation's natural resources. I believe that proper forest management can preserve our treasured old growth, protect critical watersheds, and maintain healthy wildlife habitat. Protecting these areas is more vital than ever as the effects of climate change are becoming more numerous and severe.

Throughout my career, one of my highest priorities has been protecting Oregon's critical ecosystems and old growth forests. My work has created more than 390,000 acres of wilderness in the state of Oregon – an area half the size of Rhode Island. In 2019, three of my forest and water protection bills became law. The Devil's Staircase Wilderness Act designates over 30,000 acres of remote, unspoiled mature and old growth forest in the Coast Range as wilderness. The Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area Act protects over 100,000 acres in the North Umpqua watershed which contains some of the best remaining wild steelhead spawning areas in the Pacific Northwest. The Chetco River Protection Act prevents future mining from occurring in one of the most biologically diverse areas in Southwestern Oregon. I look forward to enjoying these areas in my retirement.

When considering legislation, the protection of old growth forests has always been my priority, which is why in April I [publicly commended](#) the Biden Administration's executive order to protect old growth and mature forests. I frequently consult with renowned ecological forest experts Norm Johnson and Jerry Franklin about the importance of preserving mature and old growth forests. I express my concerns directly to the relevant agency if a planned timber sale would be detrimental to older stands.

For example, I strongly oppose the Flat Country timber sale located in my district in the Willamette National Forest. I have contacted the U.S. Forest Service twice on the issue. Last week, I met with U.S. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore to discuss this sale. I urged him to embrace Drs. Johnson and Franklin's recommendations to protect critical mature forests by removing parcels that contain older stands.

Additionally, I worked hard to stop the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) from completing the Thurston Hills (Pedal Power) timber sale in my district. The sale as originally proposed would have clear-cut over 150-acres of mature forest adjacent to a local natural area and recreation site, with no shade for recreation, walking, or biking paths. I raised strong concerns and the BLM scaled back the project to approximately 109 acres, leaving a few strips of trees along the trails. That was not satisfactory enough. Working closely with local stakeholders and conservation groups, we built enough of an outcry that a conservation group filed a lawsuit over the sale. After several years in court and losing twice on appeal, the BLM wisely cancelled the sale.

I continue my work to protect old and mature forests in my district as my Congressional tenure comes to an end. Most recently, the House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on my Wild Rogue Conservation and Recreation Enhancement Act, H.R. 7509. It would add about 60,000 acres of old and mature forest to the Wild Rogue Wilderness. It would also establish a 98,000-acre recreation area on the banks of the Rogue River adjacent to the wilderness that would extend protections to those old and critically important trees.

I have also re-introduced my Southwestern Oregon Salmon Protection Act, which would permanently protect from mining the watersheds of Rough and Ready Creek, a tributary of the Wild and Scenic Illinois River; the watershed of the Wild and Scenic North Fork Smith River in Oregon; and the headwaters of Hunter Creek and the North Fork of the Pistol River, which flow into the Pacific Ocean along the Wild Rivers Coast. These two important pieces of legislation are my conservation priorities for the remaining six months as a Member of Congress. You can be sure I am working diligently to get them passed into law.

As an Oregonian, I am aware of the longstanding Eastside Screens and the 21-inch rule. I have expressed concerns in the past that such a one-size-fits-all-approach could imperil the health of stands of old growth ponderosa pines by allowing large diameter fir tree encroachments to choke out native species. While my expertise is with Westside forests, I have spent time in the southern part of my congressional district with Drs. Johnson and Franklin, where I have seen large firs encroaching on native pines. These firs become ladder fuels and are prominent because of long-standing, misguided fire suppression policy. Large firs can out-compete pines for water, which is especially scarce given the consistent drought and warmer, drier conditions as climate changes takes its toll. As the West Bend Project is not in my congressional district, I am unfamiliar with the details of that specific project.

Thanks again for reaching out about an issue that you and I both care passionately about. I wish you a successful symposium, and, as always, I commend your efforts to protect large and old growth trees and healthy ecosystems east of the Cascades.

Sincerely,



U.S. Representative Peter A. DeFazio