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November 10, 2014

The Honorable Mary Landrieu, Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Landrieu:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to S. 1966, the “National Forest Jobs and Management Act of 2014,” and H.R. 1526, the “Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act.” These bills pose a serious threat to environmental stewardship, public involvement, wildlife conservation, and the rule of law in our National Forests.

Both S. 1966 and H.R. 1526 mandate unsustainable logging levels in our National Forests, while waiving or severely undermining compliance with bedrock federal environmental laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA). S. 1966 goes a step further and essentially renders all federal laws unenforceable by eliminating the public’s ability to seek judicial review of harmful logging projects that impact their communities.

Legislative timber harvest prescriptions are in direct contravention of the multiple use mandate of the Forest Service, whose land managers must set out – pursuant to locally and collaboratively-developed management plans – how best to manage each individual forest for not only timber production, but also the many vital benefits these lands provide, such as clean drinking water, fish and wildlife habitat, and hunting, fishing, hiking, and other recreational opportunities that support a multi-billion dollar outdoor economy critically important to rural communities and regional economies.

Both bills also reinstate the discredited system of linking logging to revenue for counties. This volatile and unreliable resource extraction model was eliminated over a decade ago with the bipartisan passage of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (otherwise known as “Secure Rural Schools” or “SRS”). S. 1966 and H.R. 1526 would create a perverse incentive to intensively log our National Forests without addressing the true, long-term needs of rural communities and, in fact, would likely result in counties receiving far less in annual revenues than they have received under SRS.

The Administration echoed these sentiments when it issued a strong veto threat against H.R. 1526. The September 18, 2013 Statement of Administration Policy made clear that the “Administration *does not support specifying timber harvest levels in statute*, which does not take into account public input, environmental analyses, multiple use management or ecosystem changes” and that it strongly opposes because of “numerous harmful provisions that impair Federal management of federally owned lands and *undermines many important existing public land and environmental laws, rules and processes*,” which could “significantly harm sound long-term management of these Federal lands for continued productivity and economic benefit as well as for the long-term health of the wildlife and ecological values sustained by these holdings.” The Administration also does not support S. 1966, stating in its February 6, 2014 testimony that the bill “rolls back key environmental safeguards, diminishes public participation, sets artificial management targets in statute, and leads to potentially more conflict.”

For all of these reasons we urge your opposition to S. 1966 and H.R. 1526 and strongly encourage you to vote “no” on both bills. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

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