

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 7, 2016

Ms. Lisa Northrop, Supervisor  
Mt. Hood National Forest  
16400 Champion Way  
Sandy, OR 97055

Re: Polallie Cooper Draft Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

Dear Supervisor Northrup,

We are writing to express our concerns about certain aspects of the Mt. Hood National Forest's recently proposed Polallie Cooper Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project.

As you are aware, when Congress passed the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (PL 111-11, hereinafter "the 2009 Act"), Section 1205 designated the Crystal Springs Watershed Special Resources Management Unit ("Crystal Springs Unit"). This agreement was reached after many years of collaboration between the communities both in Government Camp and the Hood River Valley. Oregonians approached Congress with this agreement, which established the Crystal Springs Unit to "ensure the protection of the quality and quantity of the Crystal Springs watershed as a clean drinking water source for the residents of Hood River County, Oregon."

Specifically, the 2009 Act prohibits certain activities within the Crystal Springs Unit, including: "new road construction or renovation of existing non-System roads, except as necessary to protect public health and safety;" and "projects undertaken for the purpose of harvesting commercial timber," except for "activities relating to the harvest of merchantable products that are byproducts of activities conducted to further the purposes" of the Unit's designation. While the 2009 Act authorizes the Forest Service to conduct certain fuels reduction and forest health management treatments within the Unit, it emphasizes that these activities should focus on areas near existing structures and infrastructure, and other areas of the Unit "with priority given to activities that restore previously harvested stands."

We are concerned that the activities to be conducted under the proposed Polallie Cooper Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project may run contrary to the purposes and protections Congress outlined for the Crystal Springs Unit. As we understand it, the project proposes to treat a significant amount of the Crystal Springs Unit, including some units that are considered "recently unmanaged stands." Furthermore, it appears that more than 4.5 miles of roads would be constructed or reconstructed within the Unit. These activities raise significant questions as to the conformity of the project with the language of the 2009 Act. While we appreciate the importance of treating certain hazardous fuels and the communities' concerns of potential fire danger, we urge you to prioritize fuels treatments near existing development in areas that can be reached with the existing road system.

As you work to balance ecological and scenic protection of this area with wildfire risk mitigation, we ask you to consider that a large part of this project surrounds important recreation areas that are both highly visible and highly visited by hikers, mountain bikers, and river recreationists. The trails surrounding Highway 35 and the Wild and Scenic East Fork of the Hood River are important to the recreation community. A portion of this area, known as Tamanawas Falls, was included in legislation that was introduced in 2004 as part of a larger Wilderness bill. While it was not included in the 2009 Act, many advocates continue to work to protect the wilderness characteristics of the area.

As you also know, these provisions of the 2009 Act are contingent upon the Forest Service completing the pending Government Camp/Cooper Spur land trade with Mt. Hood Meadows. While the 2009 Act stated that the Forest Service was to complete that land trade within 16 months after passage of the 2009 Act, it has now been nearly seven years since President Obama signed the 2009 Act into law, and the Forest Service has yet to order the appraisals or release a draft environmental analysis for the exchange. Had the land exchange been completed within the timeframe laid out in the law, the Crystal Springs Unit would already be governed by certain provisions in the 2009 Act that guide the area's management.

We have repeatedly expressed our strong concern and disappointment that the Forest Service has been long delayed in finalizing the land trade which has impeded the exchange itself, but also the establishment of the Crystal Springs Unit.

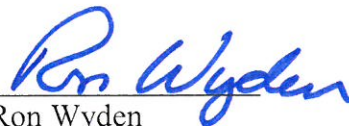
We have heard concerns from many of our constituents about this project and request that the Forest Service take a thorough, closer look. We strongly encourage the agency to reconsider any portions of this project that impact the Crystal Springs Unit and the legislative intent for this area, along with the many highly valued recreational opportunities.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator