

Support Rural Communities: Cosign Letter to Natural Resources Committee

From: The Honorable Alan Nunnelee

Sent By: elizabeth.parks@mail.house.gov

Date: 1/23/2012

Dear Colleague,

Please join Rep. Alan Nunnelee, Rep. Louie Gohmert, Rep. Mike Ross, and Rep. Heath Shuler in expressing appreciation and support of Chairman Doc Hastings and Ranking Member Edward Markey, Natural Resources Committee for their work on draft legislation, the National Forest County Revenue, Schools, and Jobs Act of 2011.

Timber management on our federal lands is critical to employment in our rural communities. Increasing timber outputs increases employment by more than 14,000 jobs per billion board feet. Over the long-term, this legislation improves the economic stability of rural federal forested counties by recognizing the need to manage lands and promotes multiple-uses of our National Forests. This legislation supports education opportunities for rural youth, promotes ecological sustainability for wildlife habitats, and provides jobs that support rural economies.

Please see the draft letter below, and for more information on the draft bill, please visit the Natural Resources Committee website by clicking [here](#). If you would like to cosign or have any additional questions, please contact Elizabeth Parks in Rep. Nunnelee's office at Elizabeth.Parks@mail.house.gov, (202) 225-4306 or Laura Abshire in Rep. Ross' office at Laura.Abshire@mail.house.gov, (202) 225-3772.

The deadline to cosign is **Noon**, on **Friday, February 3**. We appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

/s/
Alan Nunnelee
Member of Congress

/s/
Mike Ross (AR-04)
Member of Congress

/s/
Louie Gohmert (TX-01)
Member of Congress

/s/
Heath Shuler (NC-11)
Member of Congress

February XX, 2012

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman
Natural Resources Committee
United States House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Edward Markey
Ranking Member
Natural Resources Committee
United States House of Representatives
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: The National Forest County Revenue, Schools and Jobs Act of 2011

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member Markey:

We would like to express our support to members of the Natural Resources Committee for the draft legislation, the National Forest County Revenue, Schools, and Jobs Act of 2011. This legislation recognizes the importance and contributions of rural forested communities and provides transition payments that will, in the immediate future, promote these communities' fiscal and social health. Over the long-term, this legislation will improve the economic stability of rural federal forested counties by recognizing the need to manage lands and promote multiple-uses of our National Forests. Timber management on our federal lands is critical to employment in our rural communities. Nationwide, National Forest dependent mills employ over 350,000 people and have a payroll in excess of \$19 billion. Increasing timber outputs increases employment by more than 14,000 jobs per billion board feet. Additionally, recent studies have shown that active forest management is vital to wildlife as it provides abundant forage and helps maintain high-quality habitats. The Forest Service can easily increase outputs while improving wildlife habitats, reducing threats from catastrophic insect outbreaks and large wildfires. The creation of the Eastern National Forests is a conservation success story dating back to the passage of the Weeks Act in 1911, when cutover forest lands in the South were acquired by the federal government and replanted to accomplish several goals, chief among them the protection of valuable watersheds. In 1913, Congress amended the Weeks Act requiring that 25% of all revenues derived from National Forest activities be returned to the counties that housed those forests. As the timber industry returned to the South, the Forest Service helped develop the sawmilling industry by growing to longer rotations, helping to build an important value added industry. The Eastern National Forests also helped provide habitats for wildlife, including extremely popular game species such as white tailed deer, ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and bobwhite quail. Unfortunately, in many areas, lack of management has led to unhealthy forests, poor wildlife habitat (including habitat for threatened and endangered species), and serious economic challenges in many of our rural communities. Many of the counties with National Forests suffer from high rates of unemployment, poverty, and population loss, but by reconnecting management of the National Forests to the economic health of surrounding communities, we believe the National Forest County Revenue, Schools, and Jobs Act of 2011 will promote both economic and ecological sustainability. We believe that it is critical for the Forest Service to manage its lands to meet the multiple goals that these historic Acts mandate. We applaud the Committee for recognizing the obligations that the Forest Service has to our history and its constituents to protect watersheds, support economic activity, and promote recreation. We stand ready to assist the Committee in passing the legislation in the full House.

Alan Nunnelee
Member of Congress

Mike Ross (AR-04)
Member of Congress

Louie Gohmert (TX-01)
Member of Congress

Heath Shuler (NC-11)
Member of Congress