

forests and economically healthier communities.

Ironically, just 2 weeks before the Yosemite rim fire broke out, Congressman NUNES and I hosted a public meeting on a proposal by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that would add more restrictions on nearly 2 million acres of the Sierras. Our expert witnesses warned urgently of the fire dangers these policies have created, yet these warnings were actually ridiculed by leftist newspapers like the Sacramento Bee. How sad. Two weeks later, the Yosemite rim fire was burning out of control.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of my district, I want to thank the gentleman from Washington for this important reform. I only wish it had come in time to prevent the environmental devastation we are now suffering this summer in the Sierras.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) is recognized for 48 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to control this next 48 minutes as we explain how significant this Secure Rural Schools fix is and how important it is that we do something on a program that, quite frankly, is not sustainable.

So at this time I would like to recognize, if not the father, the godfather of Secure Rural Schools, the gentleman from Oregon. His State is impacted significantly by this program. It is a significant issue to the school kids of Oregon. Mr. WALDEN of Oregon is someone who has talked about this for many years and knows the significance and the importance of this particular issue. So I gladly yield to the gentleman from Oregon to explain his take on the Secure Rural Schools issue.

Mr. WALDEN. Well, I thank the gentleman from Utah, the chairman of the Forestry Subcommittee, a subcommittee that a number of years ago I had the great privilege and honor to chair when we passed legislation, as we're going to do in this House once again, to not only make America's great forests healthy, but also then to stop the devastation that we heard from the gentleman from California. We have so much work to do to continue the legacy of real environmentalism, which is healthy forests and healthy communities.

When President Theodore Roosevelt created the great forest reserves back in 1905, thereabouts, he said they have to be in partnership with the communities and the communities have to be supportive of this. The great purpose of this creation of forest reserves, in a speech he gave in your home State, as a matter of fact, in Utah, I believe, was wood for woodmaking, for home-

building, water for agriculture, which means the preservation of healthy forests, in the real term preservation—which is what I want—not what we're seeing in Yosemite National Park and the surrounding areas, the focus of 400 square miles of devastation, not what we saw in Oregon this summer where the smoke was so thick in the Rogue Valley that they had to cancel performances at the Shakespeare Theater. The restaurants literally shut down. The people had to wear masks. I called into the call center of one of the phone companies and the attendant there said to me, he said, It's smoky in here inside the building.

This is not what we want out of our forests. It's not what our taxpayers want. It's not what the schoolchildren want. Because, you see, we've lost the jobs; we've lost the revenue from the jobs. We've got sheriffs in counties in my district that now have maybe one deputy. We had situations of violence, 911 calls. A woman was being attacked and basically told by the 911 folks, We don't have anybody to send. Can you tell him to go away?

You can't make this stuff up.

I thank Chairman HASTINGS, Chairman BISHOP, and others for bringing this bill forward. Let me tell you what it means in a State like mine.

In 2012, the Oregon Department of Forestry, in collaboration with other State and Federal agencies, issued a report to Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber stating that, over the 20-year period from 1980 to 2000, wildfires in eastern Oregon burned approximately 553,000 acres, with an average fire size of 26,000 acres. Over the last 10 years, in that same area, it has burned 1 million acres, averaging 93,000 acres in size. That means wildfires have tripled in size in the last 30 years. Not all of those are in forests. Some of them are grasslands. But the point is it's out of control and it's very, very deadly and expensive. And it's unacceptable.

The Oregon Forest Resources Institute reported that, since 1990, the timber harvest from Federal forestlands in the great State of Oregon has dropped by more than 90 percent—90 percent reduction since 1990 in harvested timber off Federal lands. In fact, 60 percent of Oregon's forestland is owned/controlled—but not really managed—by the Federal Government. It now contributes less than 12 percent of the State's total timber harvest. Sixty percent owned by and controlled by the Federal Government, 12 percent of timber harvest.

What does that mean for timber dependent communities? Counties that have like 50, 60, 70 percent Federal ownership, my friend who taught school knows you don't have a tax base, and now you don't have jobs because now you're not doing harvest. You can't turn and entice some big company to come in. This is a forested, rural area, a long way from freeways in most cases but not all.

So what does that mean? Nine out of 20 counties I represent face double-

digit unemployment today. Sixteen of the 20 counties I represent have more than 14 percent of their populations living in poverty in America.

Here's a chart that shows what's happening. It shows mill closures in Oregon over the last 30 years. We've lost three-fourths of our mills and 30,000 mill jobs. Just recently, we lost another in. One Josephine County, the Rough & Ready mill closed after nearly 100 years. The owners were ready to invest \$2 million in upgrades, and they said, We can't count on a timber supply off the Federal ground that surrounds them. There went 87 jobs.

I want to show you another picture. I have used it before over the years. It is indicative of what happens in a fire. This is Kaleb and Ashley after the Egley fire, which burned 140,000 acres in Harney County, 2007. It just shows the devastation, these young children out there.

And what does it mean for our kids? The chairman asked about that. The Oregon Department of Education says 60 percent of the schoolchildren in the county where this fire occurred are eligible for free and reduced lunch. There's poverty all over the West, and there's a way to end that and produce jobs and revenue and have healthy forests rather than what we see today.

The chairman's bill would require foresters to look at the sustainable yield a forest could produce and then only seek to harvest half of that, of the sustainable yield, and only on land that is suitable for timber harvest. It says, if you're going to appeal a plan, you had to at least be involved in the process. We put that in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act that passed this body overwhelmingly and I think passed the Senate—huge support—signed by then-President Bush into law. It had great effect, but limited in terms of what we need to do. But it had that provision in there. It strikes a balance. You need to participate in the process in order to have a right to appeal.

□ 1745

It includes a 1-year bridge payment. This gets your schools issue for the counties who currently have lost or will lose their funding for emergency services, for roads, and for schools in the Secure Rural Schools side. This is a bridge to put people back to work in the woods when coupled with active management. This is balance—this is balance.

The bill also has an Oregon-specific provision. Not everything I would necessarily do if I could write it on my own, but do you know what? You don't get that process here. We've put together a good plan with Representatives DEFAZIO and SCHRADER. We've worked through our differences. We forged a balanced plan that would create thousands of new jobs. Creators saved up to 3,000 jobs in Oregon in these very unique lands called the O&C Lands. It ensures the health of these

lands for future generations. It provides long-term management and certainty of funding for our local services and schools and roads and law enforcement that lie within these counties.

According to Governor Kitzhaber's O&C Lands Report, it would generate \$120 million per year in county revenue. We don't come back here to the Federal taxpayer and say, Give us another check, give us another handout. We say, Let us manage our own lands and do it under the Oregon State Forest Practices Act, which is one of the leading environmental laws in the country for balance, for sustainable forest health and management. Do it under that and we'll create the jobs and save them, we'll create the revenue for our schools.

Let me tell you about the protections that you will get. It provides:

Activities near streams, lakes, and wetlands must include water quality protection. Something we all agree on.

Wildlife trees and down logs have to be left in most large clear-cut areas. Clear-cut sizes are limited to 120 acres. Now, some will say, Oh, my gosh, 120 acres. Let me tell you that the Douglas Complex fire that burned this summer burned 48,000 acres. If there isn't a more destructive clear-cut than that, I don't know what it is. And do you know what? After it burns, there's no requirement they go in and replant. If you harvest 128 acres, you're required to go in and replant, and those trees have to survive, and you go in right away.

Let me show you what happens after a fire to the environment. There's no stream setback here. Fire knows no bounds. Our legislation says you can't harvest near that, near a stream, you have to have setbacks. We believe in the environment. This is what you get when you don't manage.

You see, lack of action has an impact in a dynamic forest environment. Doing nothing doesn't mean the forest gets better. It means it gets overcrowded, overstocked, and when you get fire—and we'll always have it—it just won't burn naturally anymore. It will blow up, like my friend and colleague from California has experienced in the Yosemite fire and like we've experienced all over the West this summer and will every summer thereafter.

The Forest Service now spends more fighting fire than anything else. They ought to change their name to the U.S. Fire Service.

We've got to get back to managing these lands, and this legislation does that. I thank the committee for its incredible work. I thank you for bringing this to the floor. I look forward to voting for it when it comes to the floor. Together we'll get back to proper, thoughtful, constructive management of our Federal forests. We'll take care of that trust the people put in us to take care of their lands, and we'll take care of the people as well.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I thank the gentleman for his comments here.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard now from three Members from the west coast—one from California, one from Oregon and one from Washington—who have explained the situation and how this particular act is, indeed, a solution to the problems that those west coast States are finding in their forestry efforts.

But this also impacts the interior of this country, so I would like to yield a few minutes to the representative from the State of Montana, who represents the entire State of Montana, to explain how this has an impact on interior State forests, as well as the coastal State forests.

I yield to the gentleman from Montana (Mr. DAINES) to explain what's happening in his State.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Utah, and I thank the chairman for reserving this hour for this very important issue, saving our national forests and our forested communities, which is very important to my home State of Montana.

H.R. 1526, the Restoring Healthy Forests and Healthy Communities Act is important to Montana because many of our counties in Montana rely on the forest economy or at least the relics of what used to be one. Several decades ago, Montana forests supported local timber jobs and provided a steady revenue stream for our counties and schools.

In fact, I remember growing up when I was riding in the back seat, mom and dad in front in the station wagon and I would be in back with my sisters, we would watch logging trucks drive up and down our highways. Our counties enjoyed the benefits of the receipts from timber sales. It used to help support our schools.

But today, as I now drive around the State representing the State of Montana, most of our forest counties struggle with unemployment. In fact, Lincoln County, the most northwest county of my State, which is comprised mostly of national forest land, it used to generate timber jobs. They now face double digit unemployment.

The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest faces a very high mortality rate due to beetle kill. The tragedy here as we drive all over the State this time of year, we are seeing forest fires on one hand and then standing dead timber on the other that has died because of beetle kill. We can't even go in and harvest the dead trees, which we have a couple years to do so, because of the onerous process here on our national forest.

Inflexible and outdated Federal laws like the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act have imposed a huge administrative burden on Federal agencies, which limits our timber industry's access to wood and ultimately resulted in the mismanagement of our forests, allowing places where we love to recreate instead to burn up in smoke. And when they burn up in smoke, as the gen-

tleman from Oregon mentioned, it threatens our watersheds as well.

In fact, so far over 100,000 acres in Montana have burned this year. The number of large fires—large fires—has been as high as five just this week. My son last year played high school football his senior year. We had "Friday Night Lights" high school football games in Montana canceled because of air quality, because of forest fires.

Laws like NEPA and the Endangered Species Act are often the basis of lawsuits. These aren't filed by the rank and file Montanans who are working to collaborate to improve access to our national forests, but they're filed by fringe extreme groups to halt healthy timber management projects that could help prevent these fires and, importantly, create hundreds of jobs.

In fact, in one of our hearings in our committee, a top national forest official, Deputy Chief Jim Hubbard, said litigation has played a huge role in blocking responsible timber sales in Montana and other region 1 States, including projects supported by collaborative groups consisting of timber as well as conservation leaders. To quote Mr. Hubbard, he said this: "It has virtually shut things down on the national forest."

As the gentleman from Oregon mentioned, the numbers in Montana are the same. Timber harvests are down 90 percent on our Federal lands from where they were when I was growing up.

Mr. Chairman, something must be done, and I'm glad to join you in introducing this very important bill. H.R. 1526 will help revitalize the timber industry throughout Montana and create thousands of good, high-paying jobs. It also tackles beetle kill, protecting our environment for future generations and reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfires in Montana.

The Restoring Healthy Forests and Healthy Communities Act will cut the red tape that has held up responsible forest management in timber production. It also includes comprehensive reforms to discourage and limit the flood of frivolous appeals and litigation. It requires the Forest Service to increase timber harvest on non-wilderness lands now that it will have much needed latitude to do the work it knows how to do.

This improved management will protect the health of our forests, the health of our watersheds, the safety of our communities, and allow jobs to return to the timber industry. In addition, the legislation restores the Federal Government's commitment to provide 25 percent of timber sales receipts to timber counties. It extends the Secure Rural Schools program pending the full operation of the new timber program.

SRS has provided crucial stopgap funding to timber counties after timber sales, and the corresponding receipts, after they plunged in recent decades. It is the taxpayer now who is funding

that gap when instead we could have the timber industry cutting down trees and supplying jobs and supplying revenue to support our schools.

Recently, we welcomed Chuck Roady, the vice president and general manager of F. H. Stoltze Land and Lumber in Columbia Falls, Montana. He came back to Washington, D.C., as a witness for a House Natural Resources hearing on forest and fire management.

During the hearing, Chuck perfectly summed up the challenges we face. He said:

This is a nonpartisan, nonregional issue. It's simply the case of doing the right thing to manage our public forest. If we don't, Mother Nature is going to do it for us, and when she does it, it's uncontrollable and catastrophic.

Mr. Speaker, I could not have conveyed our challenges any better than that. We all know too well how devastating wildfires can be to our communities and our local economies.

I urge passing the Restoring Healthy Forests and Healthy Communities Act.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks of the gentleman from Montana.

Very few people realize the Federal Government actually owns 1 out of every 3 acres in this country, but it is disproportionate. So, of the 13 Western States, 54 percent of the land mass is actually owned by the Federal Government. The 33 States east of the Western States only have 4 percent of their land. Which simply means no one actually east of Denver quite understands how this relationship necessarily works. It also means that the unfortunate truth is, as we've already heard, that private and State forests are today healthier than the Federal forest system. But those of us in the West realize this firsthand because those are our neighbors, those are the areas that surround our communities.

I'm glad to hear from the next two speakers who will be talking—they are from Colorado. The first one is the gentleman from Colorado Springs, who is on the Natural Resources Committee, and he's going to explain the significant situation that they find in Colorado with our forest health situation.

I yield to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN).

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Utah. It's great to serve on the committee as a subcommittee chairman with him. And we serve with Chairman DOC HASTINGS, who is doing a great job on these issues.

The bill, H.R. 1526, the Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act, is a long-term solution to help put hardworking Americans back to work and ensure that these rural counties have a stable source of revenue to help pay for schools and teachers. It was introduced by my friend and colleague, Representative SCOTT Tipton, of Colorado, and I am a cosponsor.

Over a century ago, the Federal Government made a promise to actively

manage our forests and share 25 percent of the revenues generated from timber sales with counties containing national forest land. This is funding that rural counties depend on to help fund vital services, such as education and roads. But the Federal Government has failed to uphold this commitment and has cut back on active management of our national forests.

This lack of active forest management not only deprives counties of revenue to help fund schools and roads but also inhibits job creation and makes our national forests increasingly susceptible to wildfires and invasive species. Currently, there are over 21 active large wildfires burning right now in eight States. Over 406,000 acres are burning, with only 2 of the 21 fires contained.

This year, to date there have been over 35,000 fires with almost 4 million acres burned. Last year, the tragic Waldo Canyon fire occurred on Federal land in my Colorado district, claiming two lives and destroying almost 500 homes.

H.R. 1526 will help improve forest health and prevent catastrophic wildfires by allowing greater State and local involvement in wildfire prevention on Federal lands. It will help improve local forest management by allowing counties to actively manage portions of national forest land.

Restoring active management of our national forests would ensure a stable, predictable revenue stream for counties and schools. Active management would also promote healthier forests, reduce the risk of wildfires, and decrease our reliance on foreign countries for timber and paper goods.

I want to thank the gentleman for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, since Mr. LAMBORN has already introduced the concept of what's taking place in Colorado and the bill for Mr. TIPTON, let's turn now to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TIPTON) to also explain the significance of why he actually did that particular bill.

Mr. TIPTON. Thank you, Chairman BISHOP. I certainly appreciate your leadership on this issue, along with Chairman HASTINGS.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague had just described some of the challenges that we've been facing in Colorado. I would like to be able to expand upon that.

Not long ago, I was at the incident command centers in Monte Vista, Colorado, on the east side of the Rockies, and also in Pagosa Springs, on the west side of the Rockies, to be able to visit the incident command centers trying to deal with the West Fork Complex fire.

□ 1800

How big is the fire? It's 170 square miles and counting. We are not talking 170 acres. We are talking 170 square miles of forests in my district.

The challenges that this is going to bring in terms of being able to deal

with endangered species, in terms of water quality, in terms of tourism and the economy in western Colorado can probably not yet be numbered. That is why the Restoring Healthy Forests Act is a bill whose time has come.

The National Interagency Fire Center reported this week that there have been 35,000-plus fires in the United States in 2013 alone. Devastating bark beetle infestation, prolonged drought conditions, and unnaturally dense forests—these have all combined with ineffective forest management for a devastating fire season. These factors have led to a significant increase in the magnitude and in the number of wildfires in the country over the past decade.

So far this year, 3.9 million acres have already burned, and these figures continue to grow with 21 active, large wildfires. The property damage and costs associated with these wildfires is tremendous; and to date, the Forest Service has already spent over a billion dollars in fire suppression alone. In 2012, the Forest Service spent only \$296 million on hazardous fuels reduction; whereas, they spent \$1.77 billion on wildfire suppression at that same time.

Part of this is a planning process. We have dealt with leadership in the Forest Service. They've talked about computer models which their own folks are telling us simply don't work. We have to be able to get in and effectively manage these forests, to be able to treat them in a responsible way, to be able to build for our communities, and to be able to make sure that our children are able to see the same forests that we grew up living in.

The cost of proactive healthy forest management is, indeed, far less than the cost of wildfire suppression. When it comes to our forests, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; but instead of ramping up forest management efforts and addressing hazardous conditions in the West, the Interior Department has proposed to cut the budget by 48 percent for hazardous fuels reduction in 2014, and the Forest Service has proposed reducing this proactive management by a further 24 percent. Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle have expressed outrage at this approach of further reducing funding for hazardous fuels.

Under the current management system, a cumbersome regulatory framework has further inhibited active forest management while excessive litigation has obstructed projects that would prevent devastating wildfires and protect our vital water supplies and precious species habitats. The status quo is not working, and immediate action is needed to be able to fix this broken system.

Our forest management package, H.R. 1526, would allow greater State and local involvement in wildfire prevention on Federal lands in order to expedite hazardous fuels reduction projects and reduce litigation. In doing so, it would help restore sustainable

timber harvesting, create jobs, and provide reliable sources of revenue for rural education and infrastructure.

H.R. 1526 also addresses the shortfall in county revenue for schools and critical services caused by a lack of timber harvest by requiring the Forest Service to produce at least half of the sustainable annual yield of timber required under the 1908 law and to share 25 percent of those receipts with our rural counties.

In order to meet this goal while providing for healthy forests, the bill includes the local management framework by directing the Forest Service to prioritize hazardous fuels reduction projects proposed by Governors and affected counties and tribes. To expedite locally based healthy forest projects, this package builds on the positive streamlining procedures implemented under the bipartisan Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003.

I am pleased to have been able to work with Chairman BISHOP and Chairman HASTINGS on this bill. It's time that we stand together to be able to return health to our forests in a proactive, responsible, and positive way. H.R. 1526 accomplishes that goal.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I thank the last two speakers from Colorado for explaining the situation they are facing within their State on Federal forest land.

Before we turn to somebody from the East who gets what we're talking about here, let's continue with the backbone of the Rocky Mountains by turning some time over to the Representative from the State of Wyoming (Mrs. LUMMIS) in order for her to explain how this impacts her State.

Mrs. LUMMIS. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I also thank Chairman HASTINGS of the Natural Resources Committee for bringing this important legislation to the attention of the American people, especially after this tremendous fire season that we've had in the West for the past 3 or 4 years, in which we have lost valuable natural resources, jobs, wildlife, livestock, people, houses. It is an unnecessary devastation that always amazes me as we would bring about legislation to address regional haze, which has no environmental impact other than to reduce the viewsheds or the damage to the viewshed, when the damage to the viewshed is being caused by our inattentiveness in managing our national forests.

I want to talk, Mr. Chairman, about forest health and about the benefits of logging to have healthy forests, vibrant wildlife, and clean water and air.

The air is cleaner when the West is not on fire. The water is cleaner when protected from the ash that goes down the hills, into the streams, choking the oxygen out of our streams, which then, in turn, kills our fish. That reduces fishing opportunities, and it reduces a vibrant fish population.

In addition to providing clean air by lack of fire, clean water due to lack of

fire, by logging, we can actually have more vibrant, widespread wildlife habitat and water for that habitat. When we log and do it in a manner that preserves the natural contours in our forests, we can have high mountain meadows with forages that will keep elk, deer, and other species on those high mountain meadows longer in the year, thereby providing habitat for a vibrant, healthy, diverse, ungulate population and for the species that share that ecosystem habitat. So it's good for wildlife.

Furthermore, it's good for the health of the forests, themselves, because, if you would look, for example, at the Medicine Bow National Forest and the Routt National Forest across the border in Colorado, these two forests have been absolutely denuded of lodgepole pine by the bark beetle with the exception of the young trees in the areas that have previously been logged. The healthy areas of the Medicine Bow National Forest in Wyoming and the Routt National Forest in Colorado are the areas that were previously logged, because there is a diversity of the age of the trees, thereby having a young, more resilient, healthy tree intermingled with stands of medium-maturity and high-maturity trees. The combination of the old growth, the medium-maturity trees, and the young trees makes for a more vibrant, healthy forest that can better withstand an onslaught like the bark beetle epidemic that has devastated so much of the Intermountain West.

So we have addressed clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat through the opportunity for high mountain meadows, and we have addressed the health of the trees, themselves. All this can happen while we have jobs in logging, while we have opportunities for revenues for schools.

The point here is we are all part of this ecosystem—the people, the animals, the air, the water, the trees. All can benefit by this bill. This is a commonsense solution that has taken Americans decades to understand and appreciate the importance of, but that has never been more apparent than it was this summer.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this important dialogue.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. I appreciate the gentle lady from Wyoming for being with us and talking about the concepts that are going on and what we can do for our future.

If I could, Mr. Speaker, at the turn of the 20th century, the so-called "progressive era," there was a paradigm shift that took place in the United States in which the government decided to basically keep all of the land. It was based on three premises:

The first is that the West had to be protected from itself. The second is that only somebody in Washington, D.C., would have the vision to make decisions that could impact the rest of the Nation, and if there were ever a conflict between what local leaders or

local officials wanted and what D.C. wanted, D.C. obviously had the better advantage.

The result of that is, as you have heard from the people here today, that our forest system is not as healthy as it used to be or ought to be. The communities that relied upon the timber industry to survive and the school systems in those areas that relied upon the timber industry to survive have been decimated, and our solution as a Congress and as an administration is simply to find a temporary payment to these solutions with actually no revenue source to make them permanent.

What we have now done since 2000, when the Secure Rural School Program started, is spend \$6 billion, which has come from the pockets of those who live in the East, to fund a temporary program when what we actually need is a long-term solution that works—that puts people to work, that finds a real source of funding for education services and provides a real solution for what we need, a solution that will provide for healthy forests, a solution that will provide for vibrant communities and for the support of our public school system. That is, indeed, what this proposal for the Secure Rural School Program attempts to do.

Mr. Speaker, about 20 years ago, a former Democrat Member of this House, who is now part of the Senate leadership—I realize that's an oxymoron, "Senate leadership"—but he was here, and he gave an impassioned speech upon this floor that dealt with the controversial decision of Major League Baseball's potentially switching to aluminum bats. As that Representative from Illinois, who is now a Senator, rose, he said:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to condemn the desecration of a great American symbol. No, I am not referring to flag burning; I am referring to the baseball bat.

Several experts tell us that the wooden baseball bat is doomed to extinction . . . Please, do not tell me that wooden bats are too expensive . . . Please, do not try to sell me on the notion that these metal clubs will make better hitters . . . If we forsake the great Americana of broken-bat singles and pine tar, we will have certainly lost our way as a Nation.

His conclusion was simply this:

I do not want to hear about saving trees. Any tree in America would gladly give its life for the glory of a day at home plate.

As much as I agree with his statements, I'd like to take his comment one step further and say that, not only would any tree in America gladly give its life for the glory of a day at bat at home plate, but any tree in America would gladly be overjoyed to give its life to help fund the education of our kids.

The solution is that we don't need all trees to provide the bats or the education funding—just some of the trees. In fact, by not cutting them all, you actually save and improve the health of the forests; but if you don't do it, we lose these trees to fire, and every burned tree is a burned baseball bat,

and that is not good for the psyche of this particular country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time in order to turn the management time of this Special Order over to Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania so that he may speak and also introduce a couple of more speakers whom we have still to talk about this vital issue of Secure Rural Schools and how this House has finally come up with a solution—a long-term, lasting solution—to this particular problem.

SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) is recognized for 12 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Chairman BISHOP and Chairman HASTINGS.

As an individual from Pennsylvania, from the eastern portion of the United States, I do get it. This is a problem that obviously—as you've heard from my colleagues from the western part of the country—is devastating there. It's devastating in communities in Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District. We have the Allegheny National Forest there. I have four counties—schools, municipalities—which struggle because of a failed policy in terms of forest management. They struggle economically.

□ 1815

When we do not have healthy forests, we do not have healthy communities. So I stand here very appreciative to Chairman HASTINGS' work and certainly supportive of H.R. 1526.

As chairman of the Agriculture Committee's Forestry Subcommittee, I continually point out that the Forest Service is housed within the USDA—rather than the Interior—and was done so for very specific purposes.

This decision was made long ago because our national forests were intended for multiple use. The most important function of that mission is to properly manage these forests and grasslands in order to retain the ecological health of those resources for sustained economic and recreational use.

You can't adequately manage a forest without harvesting timber. Just look to our private and State forests to see how to manage a forest cost effectively and environmentally responsibly. National forestlands, when managed correctly, will be more ecologically healthy and economically beneficial to the local communities.

Representing a forested district and as an outdoorsman, I've been very alarmed at how precipitously our annual harvests have dropped off in the past 20 years. Between 1960 and 1989, the Forest Service was harvesting roughly 10 billion to 12 billion board

feet per year. Since the early nineties, the annual harvest across Forest Service lands fell below 2 billion board feet and hit its bottom in 2002 at 1.7 billion feet. This is about one-fifth of what they've been harvesting in an average year.

We have seen firsthand the economic impacts of reducing our harvesting levels in national forests. Under longtime Federal law, 25 percent of the timber receipts generated on national forests are required to be returned to the county of origin. The purpose of this is that since there is no tax base there for the local government, timber receipts were to provide a consistent source of revenue to the counties to be used for schools, police, and local expenses.

In 2000, this lack of timber dollars plummeted so low that Congress created the now expired Secure Rural Schools program to make up for the loss of the county revenues in the national forestlands. This program simply would not have been needed if the Federal Government was keeping its promise to these rural areas by managing and harvesting the appropriate amount of timber.

In the Allegheny National Forest located in my district, we have slightly inched up in meeting the recommended level of harvest, but we are still nowhere near where we need to be. This is especially true across almost every other national forest around the country where they typically are generating only a few percent of the recommended level.

Too little harvesting will have a significant impact on overall forest health. Decreased timber harvesting means more dead trees and more highly flammable biomaterials that do little more than serve as fuel for wildfires. According to the Forest Service, the instances of wildfires each year have actually decreased in recent years. However, fires that we've been seeing recently are much more intense than they have been in past years. Why? The reason is because of increased flammability in the forests as a result of materials that have been accumulated and not removed through management activities.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, 65 million to 82 million acres of forestland are at high risk of wildfires. Last year, wildfires burned 9.3 million acres while the U.S. Forest Service only harvested approximately 200,000 acres. This means that 44 times as many acres burned as were responsibly managed and harvested.

As an original cosponsor of H.R. 1526, I want to applaud Chairman HASTINGS for his leadership and introduction of the bill. This legislation will provide responsible timber production on forestlands and does so in areas specifically identified by the agency.

Access and retaining the multiple-use mission of the Forest Service is paramount to ensuring that our rural forest communities continue to flourish and be viable.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to recognize my good friend, a Western Caucus colleague, Mr. PEARCE.

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for yielding and for his work on behalf of H.R. 1526.

New Mexico is a home to multiple national forests. We see firsthand the effect of our national Forest Service policy. Last year, in the middle of the year, a fire broke out. It was about 4 acres for 2 or 3 days. The Forest Service's policy was basically "let it burn."

They let it burn for 3 or 4 days, had enough people to swat it out with whisk brooms, when suddenly the winds got up, as they do in New Mexico always, and blew that fire into 10,000 acres. It almost immediately started burning down homes, 255 homes. It's at that point we began to speak publicly about the Forest Service policies that would create infernos in our western forests.

Formerly, we had a policy in the Forest Service of the 10 a.m. rule. It was, if you get a fire, you put it out by 10 a.m. tomorrow. If you're not successful by 10 a.m. tomorrow, then it's 10 a.m. the next day. You dedicate all the resources you can to putting out the fire.

Those policies have been amended by current Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell into saying, We're going to let them burn. We're watching right now wondering if the sequoias will survive this Forest Service policy.

Many of the forests in New Mexico and the West are not surviving. Hundreds of millions of acres are at risk every year. It's not a matter of if they will burn, but when.

As we talked publicly about Forest Service management policies during that fire, then we started getting calls from individuals around the country who had retired out of the Forest Service saying, Yes, keep talking. We, as retired professionals, disagree with the current philosophies in the Forest Service.

We invited one of those 30-year employees—Bill Derr—into our district to run a congressional study and to come up with recommendations. He basically had two, after months of study. He said we should be mechanically thinning our forests—that is, logging in our forests—and, secondly, returning to the 10 a.m. policy.

What are the downstream effects of bad Forest Service management?

First of all, we're losing the habitat for millions of species; we're burning millions of species in the fire. These are endangered species sometimes, but otherwise we're just killing lots of animals.

Also, we're destroying a watershed. In New Mexico, in the Whitewater-Baldy fire, the forest around one of the lakes there that provides drinking water for Alamogordo was at risk. The Forest Service said they should clean it, and instead lawsuits were filed to stop that. The fire burned right up to the edge of the lake, and the lake now has 50 feet of fill in it. All the fish are