As a senior member of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Congressman DeFazio is committed to the responsible management of our nation's natural resources. DeFazio has worked tirelessly for the economic security and sustainability of rural communities in Oregon and across the U.S., offered common-sense solutions to promote forest health and reduce the risk of wildfire, and championed legislation to protect some of Oregon's most incredible natural treasures.

Biomass Utilization

DeFazio supports the responsible utilization of biomass material from federal land to develop renewable energy, create jobs, and improve forest health. Hundreds of thousands of acres of federal forests in Oregon could benefit from ecological-based thinning projects. These projects generate thousands of tons of wood chips, slash, and brush that could be used to generate local energy. However, current practice of forest contractors is to pile and burn this material in the open on our public lands- a practice that is bad both for the soil and air. A better approach would be to transport this material from federal lands to local facilities to produce local, renewable energy. DeFazio is working to ensure that biomass utilization plays an important role in our nation's energy policy. In May, 2009 DeFazio introduced H.R. 2364, legislation which amends the definition of "renewable biomass" to facilitate biomass utilization from federal forests. Due to short-sighted policy, woody biomass from forest restoration and commercial thinning is prohibited from utilization as a renewable fuel and energy source. DeFazio's tireless efforts to change this policy paid off when H.R. 2364 was incorporated into H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act, which was passed by the House of Representatives on June 26, 2009.

Climate Change

Congressman DeFazio is committed to promoting the development of renewable energy, helping reduce emissions of greenhouse gases responsible for climate change, and putting an end to our reliance on foreign oil. While DeFazio supports implementing strong domestic caps on greenhouse gas emissions, he believes the most efficient and effective way to cut greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, is for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate emissions. Well-designed regulations would also provide the needed predictability and stability to businesses and polluters as they move forward in cutting their emissions. Unlike a speculative, volatile, Wall Street-led cap and trade system, EPA regulations can help us reach real reductions without excessive corporate profits and windfalls. Read more [Link to climate

change page].

Forest Management

There is probably no more politically divisive issue in Oregon's Fourth Congressional District than forest policy. Historically, it has been one the most heavily timber-dependent districts in the country.

DeFazio has been widely acknowledged for his skill in managing forest policy. Early in his congressional career, when Oregon was suffering from a recession, he proposed legislation which was signed into law, to ban log exports and protect family-wage timber jobs. But he was truly thrust to the forefront of this issue when timber harvests were severely curtailed in the late 80's. Cutting old growth timber was banned to protect the habitat of the endangered northern spotted owl. He spent countless hours working with labor, environmentalists and industry leaders to craft a forest plan that would have avoided legal conflicts and provided real certainty to timber-dependent communities. His efforts to find middle ground and reach consensus were ridiculed by extremists on both sides of the issue, yet he was successful in gaining broad support for his vision of forest management.

Shortly after taking office, President Clinton took steps to try to resolve the spotted owl controversy. The President offered the Northwest Forest Plan, which failed in its promises of a steady supply of timber to local mills and protection for vital ecosystems. DeFazio opposed the Clinton plan. Since the mid-1990s, DeFazio has urged the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations to revise the Northwest Forest Plan to protect old growth and provide sustainable jobs. DeFazio also continues to work on an alternative forest plan that would provide a predictable supply of timber to mills and rural communities, protect remaining old growth, and create family-wage jobs in the Pacific Northwest.

Recently, DeFazio helped organize a forest field tour to encourage dialogue between federal agencies, the timber industry, and environmental groups on the future of managing federal forests in western Oregon. Approximately 50 stakeholders, community members, federal and state agency heads, and Obama administration officials attended. The tour gave stakeholders the opportunity to ask land managers and leadings scientists questions, challenge the experts, and try to find some agreement on what public forests should look like. DeFazio will continue to collaborate with stakeholders and the general public to inform his alternative forest plan.

Protecting Oregon's Natural Treasures

DeFazio has been a champion of protecting some of Oregon's most unique and spectacular places for the enjoyment of current and future generations. His leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives was crucial to securing appropriate protections for Steens Mountain, Mt. Hood, the Cascade-Siskiyous, the Elk River and Copper Salmon area, the Oregon Badlands, Soda Mountain, and Spring Basin. In the current session of Congress, DeFazio is working on the following legislation:

H.R. 2888, the Devil's Staircase Wilderness Act: The legislation would designate approximately 30,000 acres of old growth forest in the Siuslaw National Forest as wilderness. The bill would also protect the headwaters of Wasson and Franklin creeks, both of which serve as salmon habitat. H.R. 2888 was passed by the House Committee on Natural Resources in October, 2009.

H.R. 2889, the Oregon Caves National Monument Boundary Adjustment Act: The legislation that would expand Oregon Caves and transfer management responsibilities of the unique caves from the Forest Service to the National Park Service (NPS). The expansion, which was proposed and supported by NPS over 75 years ago, would ensure that the caves and surrounding watershed are adequately protected from water contamination and pollution from grazing. Management by the Park Service would also emphasize wildfire prevention and forest restoration. H.R. 2889 was passed unanimously by the House Committee on Natural Resources in May, 2010.

H.R. 2890, the Lower Rogue Wild and Scenic Expansion Act: The legislation would add nearly 143 miles of 40 Rogue River feeder streams as Wild and Scenic Rivers. These protections are necessary to preserve the remarkable values of the Rogue River, which attracts people from around the world who come to fish, hike, raft, and enjoy the wild beauty of Southern Oregon.

The Rogue River is also host to 100,000 migrating salmon and steelhead and serves as the cornerstone of a multi-million dollar recreation and fishing economies.

H.R. 5526, the Chetco River Wild and Scenic Expansion Act: legislation to protect the Wild and Scenic Chetco River from harmful mining practices. The U.S. Forest Service announced it will administratively withdrawal the Chetco Wild and Scenic River from mineral extraction in July, 2010.

Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (a.k.a. "County Payments")

One of DeFazio's proudest accomplishments is his work on legislation to provide "safety net" payments to timber-dependent counties after changes in federal timber policy dramatically reduced timber receipts to rural communities across the United States. DeFazio helped break the legislative gridlock surrounding the bill and hammered out a compromise signed into law on October 30, 2000. The legislation means over $250 million annually for Oregon schools, roads, and public safety. DeFazio played an instrumental role in extending the "safety net" in 2007 and again in 2008 when he helped pass a four year reauthorization. DeFazio is helping lead the effort in the House of Representatives to extend this safety net once again to rural Oregonians.

Recent Press Releases

- 09.06.10 DEFAZIO REQUESTS INVESTIGATION INTO USE OF FOREIGN WORKERS ON FOREST SERVICE CONTRACTS
- 08.31.10 DEFAZIO LEADS AGENCY AND STAKEHOLDER REPS ON FOREST TOUR
- 08.20.10 DeFazio Bashes Obama Administration for Failed Policies to Protect Rural Jobs in Oregon
- 07.26.10 DEFAZIO, THOMPSON URGE PROTECTIONS FOR WEST COAST FISHERMEN AND COASTAL COMMUNITIES

- 07.20.10 At Wyden, Merkley and DeFazio's Urging Administration Takes Steps to Preserve Chetco from Mining
- 06.16.10 OREGON HOUSE MEMBERS LEAD BIPARTISAN EFFORT CHALLENGING EPA'S DECISION TO UNDERMIND SUSTAINABLE BIOMASS
- 06.15.10 Wyden, DeFazio, Merkley Introduce Chetco River Protection Bills in House and Senate
- 05.05.10 DEFAZIO LEGISLATION TO PROTECT OREGON CAVES PASSES COMMITTEE
- 04.22.10 DEFAZIO, WYDEN AND MERKLEY PUSH TO PROTECT NATURAL TREASURES IN SOUTHWEST OREGON FROM MINING
- 03.19.10 DEFAZIO FIGHTS TO SAVE OREGON TIMBER JOBS
- 03.10.10 DEFAZIO BILL TO BRING RELIEF TO TIMBER DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES PASSES SENATE
- 02.18.10 DEFAZIO DENOUNCES SEN. FEINSTEIN'S WATER PLAN, FIGHTS FOR FISHING JOBS IN OREGON
- 02.16.10 DEFAZIO WORKS TO CREATE JOBS WITH PUBLIC LANDS PROJECTS
- 02.08.10 DEFAZIO FIGHTS FOR OREGON WOOD MANUFACTURING JOBS
- 01.19.10 DEFAZIO BILL TO BRING RELIEF TO TIMBER DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES PASSES HOUSE

For more information on DeFazio's record on natural resources, go here .