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WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio today offered an amendment that would expedite salvage logging on millions of acres of federal land which is managed for timber production, and better prepare for forest fires and other unexpected catastrophic events on other lands. DeFazio offered the amendment to the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act, H.R. 4200, during consideration of the bill on the floor of the House. The amendment garnered 184 bipartisan votes. DeFazio predicted that in order for the bill to become law, changes would need to be made to the final version of H.R. 4200.

In testimony taken by the Subcommittee on Forests, Oregon State College of Forestry Dean Dr. Hal Salwasser; Dr. Jerry Franklin, professor of ecosystem analysis at the University of Washington; and Dr. Norm Johnson, College of Forestry professor at Oregon State, all agreed that the goals and objectives for management of different land allocations is the key factor in determining where salvage is appropriate.

“I attended multiple hearings on this issue with Chairman Walden and listened to the forest scientists and experts who testified,” DeFazio said. “They contended that wildlife reserves should not be treated the same as industrial forest land. My amendment addresses these experts' criticism of H.R. 4200 and is based directly on their recommendations.”

Drs. Salwasser and Franklin also agree that the pre-approved practices in H.R. 4200 are unworkable and need to be specific to land allocation, forest type, and plant association group. They recommend amending land management plans to deal with these issues. The DeFazio amendment would have required the secretaries to amend land management plans to incorporate salvage options.

“Another concern I have with this legislation in its current form is that it gives extraordinarily broad discretion to the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior,” DeFazio said. “I understand that some may want this administration's political appointees to have this broad authority, but when Congress grants such broad discretion, they grant it to all administrations, including future administrations who may or may not use these extraordinary discretionary powers

wisely."

DeFazio's amendment would have provided a workable framework for a bill with a chance to become law. His amendment attempted to strike a balance between what is appropriate management when timber production is the goal, and the more careful consideration that should take place when managing for wildlife, recreation, or other values. The DeFazio amendment would have also provide for greater participation by the public, more certainty by pre-planning for events, and helped to eliminate political manipulation and interference in these decisions.