

June 7, 2007

WASHINGTON, DC-The House Natural Resources Committee approved an amendment offered by Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) that would allow for increased removal of biomass from overstocked federal forests. Biomass, made from small trees and brush, can be converted into fuel and help decrease the country's dependence on foreign oil. The amendment was approved as part of H.R. 2337, the Energy Policy Reform and Revitalization Act of 2007, legislation to promote alternative energy, energy efficiency and climate change mitigation.

As introduced, H.R. 2337 would have precluded biomass removal from millions of acres of federal forest land in the Pacific Northwest. However, scientists agree that careful forest management of these areas can be beneficial, provided that the old growth forest structure is maintained, and other ecological considerations are met. An estimated 5 jobs are created for every megawatt of energy produced from biomass.

"Things are different in my district," DeFazio explained. "There are many areas of old growth forest where small trees have grown up into the old growth canopy as a result of fire suppression and previous management. My amendment would protect old growth trees, but also allow biomass removal to protect the remaining old growth characteristics in our forests."

Congressman DeFazio supported the remainder of the biomass provisions in H.R. 2337, which would establish pilot projects to stimulate biomass utilization on federal lands. "Biomass utilization is an important component of energy independence," he said. "There are many innovative companies that are actively developing new biomass technology. This provision and my amendment will ensure that we take an environmentally sensitive and yet active approach towards stewardship of our federal forest lands and biomass development."

DeFazio also worked with Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA) to change the wind provisions in the bill to better protect this growing clean, renewable energy resource. As introduced, H.R. 2337 would have imposed new federal mandates for the siting and operation of wind projects. Currently, wind projects are sited by state and local officials. In Oregon, such officials are also responsible for monitoring and mitigating the impact of wind turbines on wildlife. DeFazio warned that the proposed federal mandates would stifle wind power development at a time when we should be

promoting investment in this clean, renewable energy source. The amendment worked out by DeFazio, Markey and Chairman Rahall replaced the federal regulatory control provisions with an advisory committee that would make recommendations to Congress and the Secretary of the Interior on how to improve the siting, operation, and monitoring of wind projects in order to minimize the impact on wildlife. The amendment also authorizes \$2 million a year for additional research into minimizing wildlife impacts from wind projects.

"Wind power is growing in importance in the Northwest both as a non-polluting energy resource as well as an economic development driver. The original bill would have been devastating to wind energy. I am pleased we were able to better protect the ability of our region to develop much-needed wind projects while protecting wildlife," said DeFazio.