

May 14, 2009

WASHINGTON, DC—Congressman Peter DeFazio's (D-Ore.) legislation, H.R. 2364, was included today in H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act which was introduced by Rep. Henry Waxman, Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. DeFazio's provision would allow biomass recovered from federal lands to qualify for the renewable electricity standard. H.R. 2454 is expected to be marked up in committee next week, and considered by the full House of Representatives in June.

Biomass is material such as slash, small diameter trees, brush, and chips. It also includes other organic material from preventative treatments on federal forests to reduce hazardous fuels, to reduce or contain disease or insect infestation, or to restore ecosystem health. Biomass can be converted into alternative fuels and electricity.

"I have been working for three years to get my colleagues and the Administration to recognize the beneficial role the woody debris from thinning and fuel reduction projects on Federal lands could play in creating sustainable energy. I have finally succeeded. The major energy legislation introduced today recognizes, for the first time, the role woody biomass from federal lands can play in creating sustainable energy," DeFazio said. "This provision will improve the health of our forests, create much needed jobs in rural areas and create clean, sustainable energy."

DeFazio introduced his legislation in response to a draft of the American Clean Energy and Security Act, which was circulated in March. The draft prohibited the use of biomass from federal lands to meet the federally mandated renewable electricity standard. By excluding biomass from public lands from the electricity standard, H.R. 2454 would have denied land managers an important outlet for the excessive biomass loads that often accumulate on public lands and could have lead to a decrease in responsible forest management. Alternatively, DeFazio's provision promotes the use of renewable energy from biomass gathered on federal lands. His definition is particularly relevant to Oregon where thousands of acres of federal forests are in dire need of thinning treatments to reduce fire hazards, contain disease and infestation, and to restore forest health.

DeFazio's definition of biomass will also contribute to American efforts to develop and promote renewable energy solutions. Investments in renewable energy sources of this kind are necessary to increase American energy independence, strengthen national security, lower energy costs, contribute to the growth of the economy, and reduce global warming.

"Biomass utilization is an important component of energy independence," DeFazio said. "There are many innovative companies that are actively developing new biomass technology. The language I was able to include in H.R.2454 will ensure that we take an environmentally sensitive and responsible approach towards stewardship of our federal forest lands and biomass development. We can't import, dig, drill and burn our way to long term energy security and efforts, such as this one surrounding biomass, are invaluable in our long term search for energy independence. This is only a first step but I am pleased that my colleagues have finally realized the role that our national forests can play in solving our energy process."