

**December 8, 2010**

WASHINGTON, DC – Today’s historic meeting, the second in two months between Secretary Salazar and a diverse group of stakeholders, was the result of a process DeFazio initiated earlier this year to break the decades-long stalemate over forest policies in Southwest Oregon. At today’s meeting, the Oregon congressional delegation made it clear they are tired of the gridlock over forest policy and want to see movement on projects to improve forest health in western Oregon and stabilize the economies of timber dependent communities.

“The health of the forests and the economies of rural communities in Southwest Oregon are at severe risk. The status quo is unacceptable. The Oregon delegation made it clear today that we are ready and willing to move forward with projects to improve forest health and provide economic certainty for rural communities. If the administration can’t do it in a timely manner, we’ll do it legislatively.”

In July 2009, Secretary Salazar administratively withdrew the Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR), a plan to dramatically increase logging in western Oregon citing the plan as legally indefensible. At the time, Salazar offered several interim timber sales to provide short-term volume while a longer term solution was worked out. However, many of those sales were challenged and the interim timber supply was inadequate.

One year later, in July 2010, the Department of Interior announced a plan to have a plan which was widely panned. In response, DeFazio convened a meeting of stakeholders that included world renowned scientists Jerry Franklin and Norm Johnson who presented a scientifically defensible alternative management process for timber sales to move forward and break the decades-long stalemate. The meeting went well enough that in August DeFazio led the group on a forest tour to look at and discuss alternative management options. The BLM provided funding to allow Franklin and Johnson to design demonstration sites for the forest tour.

And in October, Secretary Salazar visited Roseburg at DeFazio’s request to meet with many of today’s meeting participants to hear firsthand the complex challenges facing rural communities in Southwest Oregon. The conversation was constructive and at the conclusion, Secretary Salazar invited the group to DC to continue discussions. Secretary Salazar has stated he is pursuing all administrative options to move the projects forward. However, if it can’t be done

administratively in a timely manner, the delegation will legislate to protect the health of the forests, the economies of timber dependent communities, and the industry that relies on those forests.

A focus of today's meeting was the design of two landscape scale pilot projects, one near Roseburg and the other near Medford. The projects, to be implemented over the next year with the assistance of Drs. Franklin and Johnson, are expected to produce a suite of forest health projects that provide ecological benefits to public lands and economic benefits to rural communities in Southwest Oregon.