

CONGRESSMAN LES AuCOIN
NORTHWEST OREGON MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE
JANUARY 11, 1988 SPEECH

THANK YOU, ED, FOR THAT INTRODUCTION. I WANT TO CONGRATULATE PP&L FOR HAVING THE FORESIGHT TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURAL RESOURCES ON NORTHWEST OREGON'S ECONOMIC HORIZON, AND FOR BEING A CONSTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE IN FOREST RESOURCE DEBATES.

OREGON BUSINESSES MUST ACKNOWLEDGE HOW THESE ISSUES BEAR ON THEIR OWN WELL BEING, AND DON FRISBEE AND BILL ROBERTSON AND HIS CREW SHOULD BE SALUTED FOR THE WORK THEY ARE DOING.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE IN OREGON FACE A SERIES OF CHALLENGES IN PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT. THOSE CHALLENGES ALMOST ALWAYS INVOLVE DECIDING HOW TO CARVE UP WHAT IS PERCEIVED TO BE AN EVER-SHRINKING RESOURCE PIE INTO DIFFERENT-SIZED SLICES.

FOR NORTHWESTERN OREGON, IT'S A CHALLENGE THAT SHOULDN'T JUST BE MET IN A BUSINESS AS USUAL FASHION.

LOOKING AT LAND MANAGEMENT IS NOT AN EASY JOB. IT'S MUCH LIKE LOOKING THROUGH A PRISM, WITH DIFFERENT FACETS AT DIFFERENT ANGLES REFRACTING THE SAME LIGHT FOR DIFFERENT RESULTS.

IN NORTHWESTERN OREGON, IT IS TIME TO TURN THE PRISM IN A NEW DIRECTION. I'VE BEEN DOING THAT AND I'M HERE TODAY TO PROPOSE A REVOLUTIONARY NEW APPROACH TO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT -- WITH REVOLUTIONARY BENEFITS FOR ALL OF US.

BECAUSE LET'S FACE IT -- FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES ARE THE ENGINE THAT DRIVES THE REGION'S ECONOMY.

BUT THE PROBLEM IS THAT FEW PEOPLE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO LOOK AT WAYS OF ACCOMMODATING MULTIPLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN THE REGION, AND EVEN FEWER HAVE TRIED TO DEVELOP WAYS OF EXPANDING THE FOREST RESOURCE PIE.

INSTEAD, THEY AGONIZE OVER HOW TO REARRANGE THE SAME SMALL SLICES.

I THINK WE'RE MISSING REAL OPPORTUNITIES BY FAILING TO TAKE A MORE CREATIVE APPROACH.

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, I BEGAN TO TURN THE PRISM, TO LOOK AT THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF NORTHWESTERN OREGON IN A NEW LIGHT.

YOU KNOW, WE HAVE A LONG HISTORY IN WESTERN OREGON THAT DEFINED THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE, BUT THAT HISTORY DOES NOT RATIONALLY DESCRIBE THE LAND BASE ITSELF.

AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THIS TORTUOUS HISTORY, THERE IS CURRENTLY A NATIONAL FOREST RANGER DISTRICT THAT IS TOP-HEAVY WITH OVER 65 PERCENT OF ITS 130,000 ACRE LAND BASE MADE UP OF MATURE TIMBER STANDS. THAT'S THE HEBO DISTRICT.

THERE IS A BLM MANAGEMENT UNIT WITH 29,000 ACRES OF SIMILARLY MATURE TIMBER AND ABOUT 70,000 ADDITIONAL ACRES SPREAD FAIRLY EVENLY BETWEEN NEW STANDS AND 70 YEAR-OLD TIMBER.

MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, THERE ARE ALSO STATE LANDS WITH ABOUT 350,000 ACRES OF YOUNG TIMBER, FROM 20 TO 50 YEARS OLD.

FINALLY, THERE ARE THE PRIVATELY HELD LANDS, THE LAST PIECE IN THE MOSAIC, BUT I WANT TO FOCUS MY ATTENTION ON THE OTHER THREE CLASSIFICATIONS.

THE HISTORY AND CIRCUMSTANCES THAT PAINT THESE LANDS DIFFERENT COLORS ON A MAP ARE ARBITRARY -- ACCIDENTS OF NATURE AS WELL AS THE FORTUNES AND MISFORTUNES OF THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS.

BUREAUCRATIC LINES ON A MAP, HOWEVER, DON'T DICTATE LOGICAL BOUNDARIES: BOUNDARIES FOR STANDS OF TIMBER IN SPECIFIC DRAINAGES; BOUNDARIES OF ANADROMOUS FISH STREAMS; BOUNDARIES OVER WHICH FIRES MAY CROSS.

AND THOSE BOUNDARIES DON'T REVEAL THE FACT THAT NO MATTER WHAT THE JURISDICTION IS, THESE LANDS COMBINED ARE AMONG THE MOST PRODUCTIVE IN THE WORLD FOR A VARIETY OF RESOURCE OUTPUTS.

IN FACT, I BELIEVE THE BOUNDARIES DRAWN BY MAN ALMOST A HUNDRED YEARS AGO WORK IN MY DISTRICT TO THE DETRIMENT OF CREATIVE LAND MANAGEMENT IN WESTERN OREGON.

FOR EXAMPLE, DURING LAST FALL'S DROUGHT, FOREST ACCESS WAS RESTRICTED ON STATE, PRIVATE, AND BLM LAND IN NORTHWESTERN OREGON, BUT NOT ON FOREST SERVICE LAND.

YET A FOREST FIRE COULD HAVE BEEN STARTED JUST AS EASILY ON THE FOREST SERVICE LAND, AND IT WOULD NOT HAVE STOPPED WHERE THE STATE ASSUMES MANAGEMENT.

THAT'S ILLOGICAL MANAGEMENT, AND IT HAPPENS IN SPITE OF NATURE, BECAUSE OF OUR OWN ARBITRARY BOUNDARY-DRAWING.

IF HISTORY HAD BEEN DIFFERENT AND ALL THESE LANDS FELL UNDER A SINGLE MANAGEMENT UNIT -- STATE OR FEDERAL -- TODAY WE WOULD HAVE A MUCH DIFFERENT LAND MANAGEMENT SCHEME IN NORTHWESTERN OREGON FROM THE FRACTURED, ISOLATED PLANS WE HAVE TODAY.

WHAT WE ARE LIVING WITH IS FORESTRY IN A VACUUM, WITH DIFFERENT AGENCIES MANAGING STANDS OF TIMBER IN ISOLATION FROM WHAT OTHER AGENCIES ARE DOING RIGHT NEXT DOOR.

I THINK IF THERE WAS EVER A TIME TOP PRISM, IT IS NOW. IT'S TIME TO KNOCK DOWN THE ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES, TO MANAGE THE AREA BASED ON OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITS ON THE LAND AS A WHOLE, NOT AS THREE ISLANDS ON THE MAP OF NORTHWEST OREGON.

THAT IS WHY I COME TO BE HERE WITH YOU TODAY: TO TELL YOU OF MY INTENTION TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION THAT WOULD IMPLEMENT SUCH A COORDINATED MANAGEMENT PLAN.

I AM ALSO SEEKING A SET OF FEASIBILITY STUDIES TO EXAMINE HOW WE CAN BETTER MANAGE THE RESOURCES OF THE FOREST -- TIMBER, FISH, WILDLIFE, RECREATION, SOIL, WATER, PLANTS, AND OTHERS -- IN MUCH MORE SPECIFIC DETAIL.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR NORTHWESTERN OREGON'S LARGEST MANUFACTURING EMPLOYER? AND FOR OTHER OREGONIANS?

IT MEANS WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A MANAGEMENT PLAN THAT BALANCES THE TIMBER ASSETS THAT ARE NOW MATURE ON FEDERAL LANDS WITH THOSE THAT WILL BECOME MATURE IN ABOUT 20 YEARS ON STATE LANDS.

IT MEANS WE CAN STABILIZE -- PERHAPS EVEN INCREASE -- LIFE SUSTAINING PUBLIC TIMBER SUPPLY TO DEPENDENT MILLS IMMEDIATELY AND INDEFINITELY.

IT MEANS WE CAN SEIZE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ONCE TO BE AHEAD OF THE CURVE -- TO MAKE A SHIFT TO LARGE-SCALE UTILIZATION OF A SECOND-GROWTH TIMBER RESOURCE.

IF WE CONTINUE TO LOOK THROUGH THE PRISM AS WE HAVE FOR YEARS, NORTHWESTERN OREGON IS DESTINED FOR A BUST-BOOM-BUST FOREST INDUSTRY CYCLE. WE CAN DO BETTER! OUTPUT FROM THE SIUSLAW NATIONAL FOREST MAY BE REDUCED OVER THE NEXT DECADE.

PRIVATE LAND PRODUCTION IS IN A CYCLICAL TROUGH.

AND TWENTY YEARS FROM NOW, THE TILLAMOOK FOREST WILL BEGIN TO PROVIDE AN IMMENSE WEALTH OF TIMBER RESOURCES, FAR OVERSHADOWING THE SUPPLY OF ALREADY-MATURE TIMBER FROM THE FOREST SERVICE AND THE BLM.

THAT SUPPLY FROM STATE LANDS IS SO CONCENTRATED IN A FEW AGE CLASSES, HOWEVER, THAT IT CANNOT PROVIDE A SIGNIFICANT, SUSTAINABLE VOLUME OVER A CONSISTENT PERIOD OF TIME.

WE CAN AVOID THIS CYCLE BY MANAGING THE AREA AS A WHOLE.

IN FACT, IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO INCREASE TIMBER PRODUCTION ON A SUSTAINABLE BASIS BY UP TO 80 PERCENT FROM THESE LANDS IF THEY ARE TREATED AS A LOGICAL MANAGEMENT UNIT, WITHOUT ALTERING CURRENT FOREST PRACTICES ON ANY OF THOSE LANDS.

THAT COULD MEAN BOLSTERING THE REGION'S INSTALLED MILL CAPACITY AS WELL, CREATING 2,000 NEW JOBS, WITHOUT PLACING ANY BURDENS ON THE SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE LAND.

IT COULD ALSO MEAN AVOIDING A RETURN TO PANIC BIDDING DRIVEN BY UNCERTAIN LOG SUPPLY -- THE KIND OF MARKET ACTIVITY THAT SPELLED DISASTER FOR OUR INDUSTRY LESS THAN A DECADE AGO.

LET ME ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THERE ARE SOME PROBLEMS THAT WILL HAVE TO BE RESOLVED BEFORE THIS IDEA CAN BE REALIZED.

FIRST, THE LEVEL OF FEDERAL AND STATE COOPERATION NEEDED FOR THIS PROJECT TO SUCCEED IS UNPRECEDENTED.

SECOND, WITH CHANGES IN THE ANTICIPATED TIMBER HARVEST PATTERN OVER THE AREA THERE WILL BE SOME CHANGES IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF RECEIPTS TO THE AREA COUNTIES.

FINALLY, THERE WILL INEVITABLY BE ENTRENCHED OPPOSITION IN THE LAND MANAGEMENT BUREAUCRACIES, BECAUSE THIS INITIATIVE REPRESENTS A CHANGE FROM THE STATUS QUO.

BUT TO THOSE WHO CONSIDER THOSE CHALLENGES INSURMOUNTABLE, I WOULD SAY THAT THEIR THINKING IS TRAPPED BY THE ILLOGIC OF THE EXISTING POLITICAL BOUNDARIES, INSTEAD OF BEING OPEN TO THE LOGIC OF BIOLOGICALLY UNIFIED MANAGEMENT.

I WANT TO ADD ONE MORE MESSAGE. THIS IS CREATIVE SECOND-GROWTH TIMBER MANagements AND AS ONE WHO HAS EFFECTIVELY WORKED ON A SHOPPING LIST OF TIMBER MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION ISSUES IN OREGON, FROM THE COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE TO THE SISKIYOU FOREST FIRES, I WANT TO SAY THAT THIS INITIATIVE IS ONE FOR IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT OF NOT JUST TIMBER BUT ALL RESOURCES.

THERE ARE 2200 MILES OF ANADROMOUS FISH STREAMS RUNNING THROUGH THESE LANDS. THERE ARE TREMENDOUS ELK AND DEER HERDS, HIKING TRAILS AND CAMP SITES, ALL OF WHICH CAN BE MANAGED MORE PRODUCTIVELY IF DONE IN A COORDINATED FASHION.

MAKING MORE PRODUCTIVE USE OF THE LAND FOR ALL RESOURCES INVOLVED IS AT THE HEART OF MY THINKING. AN INITIATIVE THAT BOOSTS TIMBER SUPPLY DOES NOT HAVE TO DO SO TO THE DETRIMENT OF OTHER RESOURCES.

WE DON'T OFTEN HAVE SITUATIONS IN PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT WHEN ALL USERS COULD COME OUT AS WINNERS. THE NORTHWEST OREGON MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE PRESENTS THIS KIND OF OPPORTUNITY, HOWEVER.

ALREADY, THE AGENCIES DO COOPERATE IN SMALL WAYS - BUT I THINK IT IS TIME TO TAKE A BOLDER, BIGGER STEP.

WE CAN DO THAT BY ENDING THE ARBITRARY LIMITATIONS ON THE LAND RESOURCES RESULTING FROM ILLOGICAL JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES.

THIS IS THE KIND OF INITIATIVE NORTHWEST OREGON NEEDS TO PROPEL ITS MULTIPLE RESOURCE-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES WELL INTO THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY, AND TO PROVIDE THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES OF NORTHWEST OREGON WITH THE STABILITY THEY NEED TO GROW AND PROSPER.