

KUDOS TO MONTANA'S SENATORS

U.S. Senators Jon Tester and Steve Daines have introduced legislation to reverse a 9th Circuit court decision that has imperiled 80 vegetation management projects and hundreds of millions of board feet of timber.

Known as the “Cottonwood Decision,” the ruling forces the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service to engage in pointless discussions while delaying badly needed forest management projects.

The legislation introduced by Tester and Daines will codify that federal agencies are not required to consult with FWS at a programmatic level when new critical habitat is designated or a new species is listed.

Legislating a fix to the Cottonwood decision has bipartisan—and bicameral—support, as a companion bill has also been introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressmen Mike Simpson, Idaho and Collin Peterson, Minnesota.

Quoting Montana's Senators:

- “The Cottonwood decision could lead to endless red tape for folks working on timber projects, trail maintenance and conservation efforts,” Tester said. “To restore certainty for Montana mills and folks who work in the woods, we need to eliminate these hurdles.”
- We need to take action immediately to reverse this disastrous court ruling that negatively impacts forest health, recreation, and watershed and habitat protection,” Daines stated. “This bipartisan legislation enjoys the support of diverse stakeholders and will protect Montana jobs and commonsense collaborative forest management projects.”

MLA members communicating with Montana's Senators are encouraged to thank them for working together to fix the 9th Circuit Court's ridiculous, time-consuming, expensive and unnecessary ruling.

This ruling has nothing to do with responsible public land management. In fact, it has everything to do with bureaucratic roadblocks to essential land management projects intended to enhance the quality of America's national forests.

It is unfortunate the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case upon appeal... as it may have resulted in yet another overturn of a Circuit Court that has clearly lost its way.

U.S. HOUSE TAKES UP FOREST MANAGEMENT BUDGET

Unfortunately, Montana has no member in the U.S. House of Representatives at this time, because the House Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee—that funds the Forest Service, among other agencies—is taking appropriation requests for USFS timber sale, roads, and hazardous fuels programs for FY 2018.

With former Congressman Zinke confirmed as Secretary of the Interior, Montana's lone House seat will remain empty until his replacement is seated following a May 25th Special Election.

In the meantime, we will have to trust (?) the House of Representatives to do the right thing. The American Forest Resource Coalition is asking for the subcommittee to...

- Restore funding for **Capital Improvement and Maintenance** roads budget to pre-sequester levels of \$195 Million... and focus on roads that provide access for both recreational hunting and fishing and access to forests needing management.
- Increase spending for the **National Forest timber program** to \$400 million, with an explicit goal of reaching a 4 Billion Board Foot (BBF) timber target in FY 2018.
- Maintain strong funding for **Wildland Hazardous Fuels Reduction**.
- **Reorient the Forest Service workforce away from the Washington Office** to field units that actually do the work and create jobs: Since 1998, the number of Forest Service employees associated with the Washington Office has increased by over 450 percent. The Forest Service should be directed to reduce Washington Office staff by half by 2020, and increase or retain field staff working directly on land management.
- Adopt a fix to the current **Good Neighbor Authority** that allows States to do work anywhere on National Forests, and which eliminates restrictions on road reconstruction and maintenance.