

EXHIBIT 1.6  
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As timber mill owners and managers in Montana, we're disappointed that the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act, a bill to create jobs for loggers and mill workers, was prevented from passing in Congress last week. Hundreds of workers in our mills, along with hundreds of independent contractors and vendors we work with, all supporting hundreds of families and whole communities throughout western Montana, are disappointed by congressional inaction on this bill.

For the past five years, we've been working closely with people who don't always agree with us. Together, we've developed a new way to approach forest management that creates jobs by requiring more work get done in the woods while also protecting the places that we all love to hunt and fish.

But we're not going to give up. The gridlock in the forests, not to mention Congress, bolsters our belief that Montanans have far more to gain by focusing on our agreements instead of our differences.

Obviously, not everyone agrees even on that point, including our lone voice in the House of Representatives, Denny Rehberg, R-Mont. But the majority of Montanans do agree. Polls have shown strong public support for this bill, and as Montanans push harder in the months ahead, for forest jobs, recreation opportunities and better stewardship overall, we want our congressman to start pulling on our behalf.

The total value of Montana's primary wood and paper products was approximately \$325 million last year, and our industry employed almost 7,000 people. That's a huge economic input, especially during a recession. And we have the potential to be much more productive in the future if politicians starting working together in D.C. like we've been working together here in Montana.

The Forest Jobs and Recreation Act is the best example of legislation that would help our industry move forward. First introduced in July 2009 by Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., and endorsed by Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., the legislation incorporates three community-based, collaborative proposals to improve forest stewardship in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and portions of the Lolo and Kootenai national forests. Each part of the bill represents years of hard work by people in communities with close ties to the forest.

We want to be clear: This bill will create and maintain jobs in our wood products industry. It mandates responsible timber harvest and restoration and it sets up collaborative processes that would leverage cooperation over conflict. It's a bill that tackles some of the most difficult challenges the Forest Service faces when they're trying to get a forest restoration project from planning to implementation, and we believe it would result in better decisions and less litigation.

But, it's also a balanced bill that protects many of the places important to hunters, anglers and conservationists, from the Centennial Range to West Pioneers to the Blackfoot and Yaak River valleys. That's why we have horsemen, bicyclists, snowmobilers and hikers all signed on.

The worst anyone can say about this bill is that it strives for a reasonable balance instead of ideological purity. Extremists don't like the bill. Critics include people who oppose all logging, every wilderness designation or any hint of compromise.

So, how much longer will it take to pass the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act? What will it take to pull our congressional delegation together on our behalf? We can only guess.



But one thing is clear: Defending the status quo and fighting the old fights seem more and more out of touch with each passing day. That type of approach does a disservice to all those who have worked so hard to move Montana forward. We encourage Rehberg to move forward with us.

*This opinion is signed by Loren Rose of Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake; Tony Cotter of Sun Mountain Lumber in Deer Lodge; Dan Daly of Roseburg Forest Products in Missoula; and Wayne Hirst of Hirst and Associates in Libby.*

12/23/11 Missoulian

January 03, 2011 9:07 am • [Guest column by THE COMMISSIONERS of Missoula, Broadwater, and Lewis and Clark counties and OTHERS](#)  
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Sen. Jon Tester's Forest Jobs and Recreation Act is an opportunity for a good, homegrown, collaborative, Montana bill to create jobs and manage forests in western Montana. Unfortunately, an unwillingness to acknowledge the collaborative approach to this bill could jeopardize any constructive movement in the local forests and could result in the loss of timber industry jobs in our communities and dollars spent on Main Street.

Western Montana needs jobs in the woods and we need to manage our forests.

Over the past several years, individuals from groups that were often seen as opposing sides of the logging vs. wilderness debate came together to look for Montana solutions. These folks recognized that continuing to fight over logging sales, wilderness areas, trout streams, and recreation spots would only result in a stalemate. Mother Nature reminds us through forest fires and beetle infestation that our forests need to be managed – both for forest health and fire-wise protection. Unmanaged forests also threaten our trout streams, aquatic and wildlife habitat and wilderness areas. The collaborative approach was, therefore, mutually beneficial.

For some forests, it could be too late. Those of us who live in this region know this well. We have watched landscapes that were lush and green turn bright red and now gray with bug kill. We've seen vibrant communities struggle. So do we admit defeat and quit? Or is this the time to get serious about managing what we have left and create sustainable jobs in the process? These individuals drafted reasonable, collaborative solutions and then asked Tester to carry legislation to resolve these issues. He listened.

We are fortunate to still have enough of our wood products industry infrastructure in the remaining mills to continue to provide that management and promote forest health where we can. However, without an adequate timber supply that comes from responsible management, we could be in danger of losing this infrastructure in the future. It is hard to believe that a state with this much timber and in such a high demand for forest restoration can't keep our timber industry working.

R-Y Timber in Townsend, Marks Lumber in Clancy, Sun Mountain in Deer Lodge, Pyramid Mountain Lumber Co. in Seeley Lake, and Roseburg Forest Products in Missoula are major employers in the region with hundreds of employees who make Montana their home and are dedicated members of our communities.

R-Y, Marks, Pyramid Mountain, Sun Mountain and Roseburg continue to improve their business technology, add new products and create new jobs. This helps to achieve vibrant communities and healthier forests. Many related businesses count on these companies for a substantial portion of their income with their ancillary components to the timber industry.

This is not a wilderness bill, it is a jobs bill with recreation and wilderness components designed to protect the things we love about our state. The people who live, work and recreate here came together to find collaborative solutions for forest health, forest jobs, fire protection and recreation. The collaboration required under the bill gives all parties a stake in planning individual stewardship projects on federal land. It will give western Montana the opportunity to show the nation there is a way to harvest timber, manage stewardship projects, allow multiple-use and protect wilderness.

Rep. Denny Rehberg, without this collaborative jobs bill, we will lose even more jobs in western Montana and potentially the remaining infrastructure needed to continue to process our own timber. As the next Congress convenes, we encourage you to pass the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act. Without your help, Montana will never be able to jump-start forest management in any meaningful way. Our counties cannot afford the financial hardship that will result from doing nothing.

Sen. Tester, thanks for listening to individuals from all sides that brought this bill forward. Thanks for listening to Montanans and our need for jobs. This bill is proof that we can work together to find a solution and get things done. Government is often criticized for not taking action until it's too late. It would be a mistake not to pursue this legislation in the next session of Congress.

*This opinion is signed by Missoula County Commissioners, Lewis and Clark County commissioners, Broadwater County commissioners, Granite County commissioner Susie Browning, Pyramid Mountain Lumber, Roseburg Forest Products and Marks Lumber.*