

Statement by James Hubbard
Nominee for the USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment
Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

July 24, 2018

Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, and members of the Committee, I thank you for your time today and your consideration of my nomination as Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I thank President Trump for nominating me to serve and Secretary Perdue for his support.

I was raised in rural Kansas, and am the product of the collective values of hard working people close to the land. My commitments run deep. 53 years ago, I married my wife, Cindy, and I am blessed that she is able to be here with me today. Together, we have 3 wonderful daughters, and 7 very busy grandkids.

Professionally, I have been a public servant for 48 years, beginning in the old growth forests of Oregon, and moving to Colorado's diverse ecosystem. I was lucky enough to serve as State Forester for Colorado for 20 years, serving under four Governors.

Wildland fire in Colorado demanded special attention due to the risks presented to the land, people, and local economy. I soon learned that the issue had to be addressed on a landscape scale and across boundaries. To achieve this, I worked tirelessly with my colleagues in Colorado to secure Congressional support to take action across the National Forest Boundary. This authority, known as the Good Neighbor Authority, was born out of a necessity for state, private, and federal forests to work together to achieve common land management objectives.

It was through my work in Colorado that I became involved with the National Association of State Foresters, a bi-partisan group representing all 50 states. While there, I oversaw the legislative agenda for 10 years, and served as the President of the Association in 1990, working with some of you on this Committee to craft the first Forestry Title in the Farm Bill.

In fact, this national policy work drew me to Washington D.C., first at the Department of Interior directing the Office of Wildland Fire. I then moved to the USDA Forest Service as Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry. In this role I oversaw cooperative forestry with the States, Tribal Forestry, Wildland Fire, Forest Health and Conservation Education, all of which are landscape scale, cross-boundary programs. While I retired a few years ago, the call to serve is great, and I am hopeful for your support so that I can take on the many exciting opportunities and challenges at the Forest Service.

While that is a little about my past experience, I'd like to turn to the 3 top priorities I would like to address, if confirmed.

- 1: Provide a safe, inclusive work environment.
- 2: Increase sustainable active land management.
- 3: Share fire protection across jurisdictions.

I'd like to specifically address the first priority I mentioned in detail, as it is the most important. Secretary Perdue has a motto of "Do right, and feed everyone." This priority fits squarely into the bucket of "Do Right". If confirmed, I will be personally responsible for providing leadership to ensure that everyone is treated right, that instances of harassment are quickly identified, and accountable actions are taken. The Forest Service has already taken steps to both change the culture and improve accountability. If confirmed, my first briefing from NRE staff will be on

these activities so that I can assess where the Forest Service is now and identify what I can do to reinforce, and if needed, strengthen these efforts. If confirmed, I will continue to do whatever is necessary to ensure that everyone in our workforce feels safe, that our people are valued, and everyone looks out for one another. Beyond just being the right thing to do, this is one of the essential components of having the effective, skilled, dedicated workforce that is critical to the success of any endeavor.

Before I close, I want to take a moment to thank Congress for addressing the policy issue of suppression financing in the recent Omnibus Bill. This is an issue which has needed to be addressed for quite some time as it is a big step to allow the Forest Service to keep our nation's forest's healthy.

The U.S. has a natural resource asset unique in the world. My pledge is to see that these forests and grasslands have a sustainable future. I am honored to be with you today. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.