

NEWS RELEASE

Judd Gregg

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NEW HAMPSHIRE TIMBERLAND OWNERS HONOR SENATOR GREGG WITH “OUTSTANDING LEGISLATOR” AWARD

KINGSTON, NH -- The New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association today presented U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) with its “2003 Outstanding Legislator” award. At an award ceremony today at the Northland Forest Products in Kingston, Senator Gregg was recognized for his efforts in co-chairing the Connecticut Lakes Headwaters Partnership Task Force and securing \$11.6 million in federal funding to protect the IP lands, and for leadership in supporting the communities of Berlin and Gorham during the mill closures. Senator Gregg was joined by Jasen Stock, Executive Director of NHTOA, Tom Thomson, NHTOA Awards Committee Chair and NH Tree Farmer, Jameson French, President of Northland Forest Products, Phil Bryce, NH’s State Forester, and Jane Difley, President of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

Senator Gregg stated, “I am sincerely honored to be recognized by the Timberland Owners Association. When I first learned that International Paper wanted to sell the Connecticut Lakes Headwaters land, an area that represents almost 3% of New Hampshire’s total acreage, I wanted to ensure that the multiple-use tradition of the land would be carried forward. The IP land sale represented a once in a life-time opportunity for working forest conservation in the Granite State -- a chance for federal, state and local officials to guarantee the protection of the traditional economic, recreational and natural resource values of the land for generations to come. While we were working on a proposal that would accomplish that goal, the North Country was struggling with the closure of the Pulp and Paper mills in Berlin and Gorham, an employer supporting hundreds of families in the region. The disruption of those jobs required an immediate response on the part of the local communities to apply for federal funds, and I was pleased to support their efforts with the Department of Labor and even more pleased to see that these funds have made their way into the hands of affected families. I would like to thank the Timberland Owners for this award and congratulate them on the tremendous job they do promoting good forestry and a healthy forest products industry.”

Tom Thomson, NHTOA Awards Committee Chairman, stated, “This year’s ‘Outstanding Legislator’ Award is presented to Senator Gregg for his leadership role in securing \$11.6 million to protect 171,400 acres of International Paper Company land in northern New Hampshire. He formed and co-chaired the Connecticut Lakes Partnership Task Force to ensure that the traditional economic, recreational and natural resource values of the IP lands would be preserved for the benefit of future generations. At the same time, the Senator was working to provide assistance to the Berlin and Gorham region which was reeling from the bankruptcy and closure of the Berlin Mills that were owned by the former Pulp and Paper of America. The Senator led federal efforts to provide economic development assistance, provide training and benefits for unemployed workers and worked closely with the state and individual communities to address issues such as EPA compliance to clear the way for the purchase by Fraser Paper Company and restart the mills.”

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As a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Senator Gregg was able to include \$8 million in Fiscal Year 2003 Interior Appropriations bill, which, coupled with the \$3.6 million he secured in FY02 measure represents the federal government's share of the purchase of the easement on the International Paper land. Following the announcement by the International Paper Company to sell the 171,500 acres of forest in July 2001, Senator Gregg worked in a bi-partisan manner with former Governor Shaheen, House Speaker Gene Chandler and then Senate President Arthur Klemm to assemble the Connecticut Lakes Headwaters Partnership Task Force, a team of local, state and federal officials and private conservation organizations charged with developing a consensus approach, vision and funding mechanisms for protection of the IP lands. Senator Gregg co-chaired the Task Force, along with former Governor Shaheen, which issued a final report and recommendation in December 2001 for the protection of the IP lands, recreational public access for NH residents and visitors, the continuation of sustainable forestry, and the protection of ecologically sensitive resources. New Hampshire HB 1000, which was signed into law in May 2002, authorized \$10 million in state appropriations and directed the State of New Hampshire to acquire fee ownership and conservation easement interests on the land.

Following the closure of the mills in Berlin and Gorham, Senator Gregg convened a meeting in August 2001 of federal officials from the Economic Development Administration and local residents in Berlin to discuss economic development options for the North Country region. Senator Gregg then contacted U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao in strong support of an application, which was awarded soon afterward, for \$4.5 million in federal assistance through the National Emergency Grant program for the 915 workers adversely affected by the closure of the mills. The funding assists former mill workers, loggers and other suppliers with job training and relocation services and provides income support to individuals enrolled in training. The grant may also be used to help pay for certain other services, such as child care and transportation. Senator Gregg serves as Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and also serves on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees funding for the Department of Labor.

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