



**Curry County
Board of Commissioners**

Sue Gold, *Chair*
Thomas Huxley, *Vice Chair*
Court Boice, *Commissioner*

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Gold Beach, OR 97444
541-247-3296, 541-247-2718 Fax
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March 7, 2018

Sutter Coast Hospital Board of Directors

Mitch Hanna, CEO

Sutter Coast Hospital

800 E. Washington Blvd.

Crescent City, CA 95531

Sutter Coast Board of Directors and CEO, Mitch Hanna:

The issue of Sutter Coast Hospital's extremely high health care service charges has been repeatedly brought to our attention. These excessive charges on the citizens in Curry County result in severe hardships; financially, emotionally and physically. We are also concerned about the total lack of transparency in posting your service charges as well as excluding public knowledge of and input to your Board meetings. We support the concept that tax-exempt "public benefit" corporations should be accountable to the public.

You are surely aware that these issues were addressed by this Commission in June of last year. The presentation provided by Carlos Priestly, Sutter Coast Hospital's Administrator, at that BOC meeting advocated that we rescind the letter of concern at that time. We respected his request with the assurances that specific issues would be addressed and resolved by January of this year. Unfortunately there has been no additional communication, nor resolution of the negative impacts on the citizens of both Del Norte and Curry counties.

A primary concern regards the repeated promises by Sutter that the EmCare contract for emergency room services would be remediated in the contract renewal, January 2018. This has not occurred. In fact, Mr. Priestly's recent presentation at the Del Norte Health District meeting verified that EmCare is continuing to be the sole emergency care provider, yet the issue of outrageous and unwarranted charges to "out-of-network" patients has not been addressed/resolved.

We are sure that you, and the administration of the Sutter Health Corporation, are cognizant that both Curry and Del Norte counties are designated as medically and provider underserved by our federal government. Relevant components of these designations include our poverty levels, aged population, and rural and remote location. To impede and/or effectively deny essential emergency care by your charges and contractual agreements, is in direct contradiction to the purpose and intent of federal/state tax exemptions for hospital corporations.

As Commissioners, we have an obligation to advocate for affordable, accessible and effective health care for our constituents. It should be to our mutual benefit to protect the interests and well-being of our citizens, since they constitute approximately one-third of service provision and revenue to Sutter Coast.

Our request is that Sutter's excessive charges and "out-of-network" contractual agreement with EmCare be reviewed and revised as promised. Further, we request that all charges/costs of care be established within market averages and provided publicly in accord with the public's right to informed consent.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sue Gold, Chair

Court Boice

Tom Huxley

Cc: Sutter Health Board of Directors, 2200 River Plaza Dr. Sacramento, CA 95833

Peter DeFazio 2134 Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515

Jared Huffman 1406 Longworth House Office, Washington, D.C. 20515

Del Norte District Health Board of Directors



Curry County Commissioners

94235 Moore Street, Ste. 122

Gold Beach, OR 97444

Ph.: (541) 247.3229

March 7, 2018

RE: Chetco Bar Fire, Curry County Recovery. Rogue River – Siskiyou National Forest

Good Day Interim Supervisor Russell;

We want to thank you again for the extended and committed time you offered recently in Curry County. As this critical process moves forward, and as discussed, we are and will continue to request additional and more acceptable salvage totals well above the 13 K burned acres currently being considered.

This Federal Disaster seems all too familiar when we review historically the dreadful overall results of the 2002 “Biscuit Fire”. That was essentially due to horrible and extreme environmental delays -- the ‘clock ran out’. Sadly, millions of trees unnecessarily were wasted.

We stand by our position that the 13,000 acres plus “Road Hazard” trees of the 172,000 acres of Public Lands lost simply are not nearly a large enough portion. In Curry County this represents millions of dollars and a tragic compromise for future generations. We will not accept colossal waste especially after the tremendous hit our County and the City of Brookings took due to the devastating Chetco Bar Fire.

Please review and adjust the Late Successional Reserve Lands. Those incredible and valuable trees are obviously not coming back and as well the ground is mostly in the severe burn category. Conifer seedlings will not prosper in ruined soil for many years. Further, each and every dead tree left to rot raises the risk level with additional fuel for another Catastrophic Forest Fire. As the Chetco Bar Fire was not part of a normal burn cycle, that destroyed timber has no other legitimate value.

Thank you as well for your consideration of our request regarding Salvage Contracts vs. Stewardship Salvage. Curry County needs all the historical harvest funds it can obtain and in the interest of succeeding in our complex recovery. We stand guarded, however optimistic and remain fully resolved to challenge any decisions on behalf of our citizens.

We ask you to take immediate action. Thank you again for your professionalism and noteworthy communication.

Curry County Commissioners



Court Boice, *Commissioner*

94235 Moore Street, Ste. 122

Gold Beach, OR 97444

Ph.: (541) 247.3229

January 31, 2018

**Jessie Berner, District Ranger
Rogue River Siskiyou National Forest, Powers Ranger District
861 HWY 242
Powers, Or 97466**

Re: Chetco Bar Fire, Burned Timber Salvage

We all share in the number one responsibility of Public Safety and the protection of life and property.

Some would characterize that 'extreme environmental policies' have had disastrous results for Curry County and most of rural Oregon in general. These Forest Policies clearly have not worked. Now, those with a penchant for being a louder voice are 'doubling down.' Further, many would argue that 30-year old directives to forest management have resulted in poverty and revenue loss for many of our small communities.

Let the committed USFS employees on both sides of the Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest do the job they prefer to do. These goals include producing and managing healthy, and certainly more fire resilient forests. Those efforts may require occasional road construction along with proper road maintenance. Below, I list the five most basic reasons for an emphasis on roads. Our critical 'hub' will greatly improve the best forest and public land management practices.

- Implementation of important forest projects**
- Future fire prevention and suppression access**
- Multi-use recreation**
- Law enforcement**
- Future timber harvest**

I ask your and the United States Forest Service to critically consider many local recommendations of a substantially increased amount of proposed burned timber salvage acreage. Even so, under the best of all harvest conditions, there would be very minor measurable impacts. Consider the massive amounts of the actual

volume available today. Without a reasonable harvest, there will be essentially no funds for crucial reforestation and rehabilitation!

Curry County and Oregon have a very serious public safety and private property protection matter before us. Allowing the burn of 191,000 acres or one-fifth of our County is unacceptable and frankly horrible stewardship. We have a duty to do everything possible to reduce the odds of future mega-fires.

The crucial question remains. Will all citizens within our region and holding diverging views truly compromise their positions? Try a new way folks!

Sincerely,

Court Boice, Curry Commissioner

Chetco Bar Fire Burned Timber Salvage Harvest – Urgent ...

- The USFS is requesting comment on Salvage Harvest
- Contact Person: Jessie Berner, Chetco Fire Salvage Coordinator
Gold Beach Ranger District, 29279 Ellensburg Ave., Gold Beach, Or. 97444
Email: comments-pacificnorthwest-siskiyou-goldbeach@fs.fed.us
- With comment, each responder will be notified when the draft environmental statement is advertised for 30 day public comment period.
- Protecting Property and People is the critical responsibility for those agencies managing our Public Lands. Rural lives matter and are more important than the birds and wildlife that are taking the top preference.
- Approximately 170,000 acres of the 191,000 acres the Chetco Bar Fire consumed was on the USFS section. The remaining fuels now are perhaps at a higher level than ever.
- The proposed harvest by the USFS is only **13,000 acres or about 7.6%** of the burned area on USFS Public Land. It is deemed suitable for salvage harvest because 50% to 100% of the forest canopy was destroyed.
- Reforestation is dependent on Salvage Contract Revenues and only harvest areas will be reforested.
- About 25,000 acres of Matrix lands total were burned (Matrix Land is the land the USFS has not set aside in Late Succession Reserves for Owls and Old Growth and is available for harvest)
- The additional 12,000 acres of burned Matrix lands had less than 50% canopy loss. It is unlikely however these trees will survive the damage they incurred as the majority is less than 20 inches in diameter. These areas likewise will not be reforested without the benefit of contracts. Selective cuts in these classifications are a wise choice.
- The USFS likes to leave large trees over 20 inches as wildlife trees – there are 10's of thousands of dead burned snags that will not be logged already. We would encourage that only no value large snags are left in Matrix burn areas and all dead or severely damaged merchantable trees allowed additionally for harvest.
- The Government Accounting Office Report on the 2002 Biscuit Fire gives a great look at how the USFS failed miserably in Salvage Logging there. The Biscuit Fire is a great reference. Report # GAO-06-967 and can be found with online search.
- The USFS commitment to Salvage Logging and reforestation is documented as very poor at best, we can hope for better results certainly following the Chetco Bar Fire.
- Without harvest destroyed Logs there is no money for reforestation and further the 13,000 acres is not nearly enough. The wanton waste is unacceptable. It cost the USFS 78 million to slowly and eventually stop the Chetco Bar Fire.

- Areas outside Matrix Lands that were Late Succession Reserves which is the majority of the burned area at 91,000 acres with 50% to 100% canopy loss cannot be considered Late Succession Reserves or Owl and Marble Murrelet habitat as they are simply dead snags. Selective contracts and reforestation needs to be completed on these 91,000 acres also or it will take 150 years to recover.
- Much of the burned area was in the 47 mile long Wild and Scenic corridor of the Chetco River. This area is 1700 ft. of protection on either side of the Chetco River. This area also needs to have the destroyed trees harvested and subsequent harvest to prevent further erosion and damage to the Chetco Wild and Scenic waterway and as the ground is very steep.

From USFS website dated August 14, 2017

<https://www.fs.fed.us/postfirevegcondition/process.shtml>

“Following large wildfires, a rapid initial assessment of post-fire conditions is important to support management decisions on [National Forest System lands](#). This is particularly important in areas where vegetation management activities are allowed: outside of congressionally designated wilderness areas, Wild and Scenic River corridors, or research natural areas (RNA) where under certain conditions, vegetation manipulation may take place to meet specific resource objectives.”

<https://www.fs.fed.us/restoration/reforestation/overview.shtml>

Reforestation is an element of a land stewardship ethic that includes growing, nurturing, and harvesting trees to meet specified resource objectives while conserving soil, air, and water quality in harmony with other resource management concerns. Reforestation following harvest or revegetating areas denuded by catastrophic fire or other natural disasters are important to ensuring forest sustainability; it is a top priority for national forest management.

Restoring Forest Ecosystems after Large Scale Disturbance

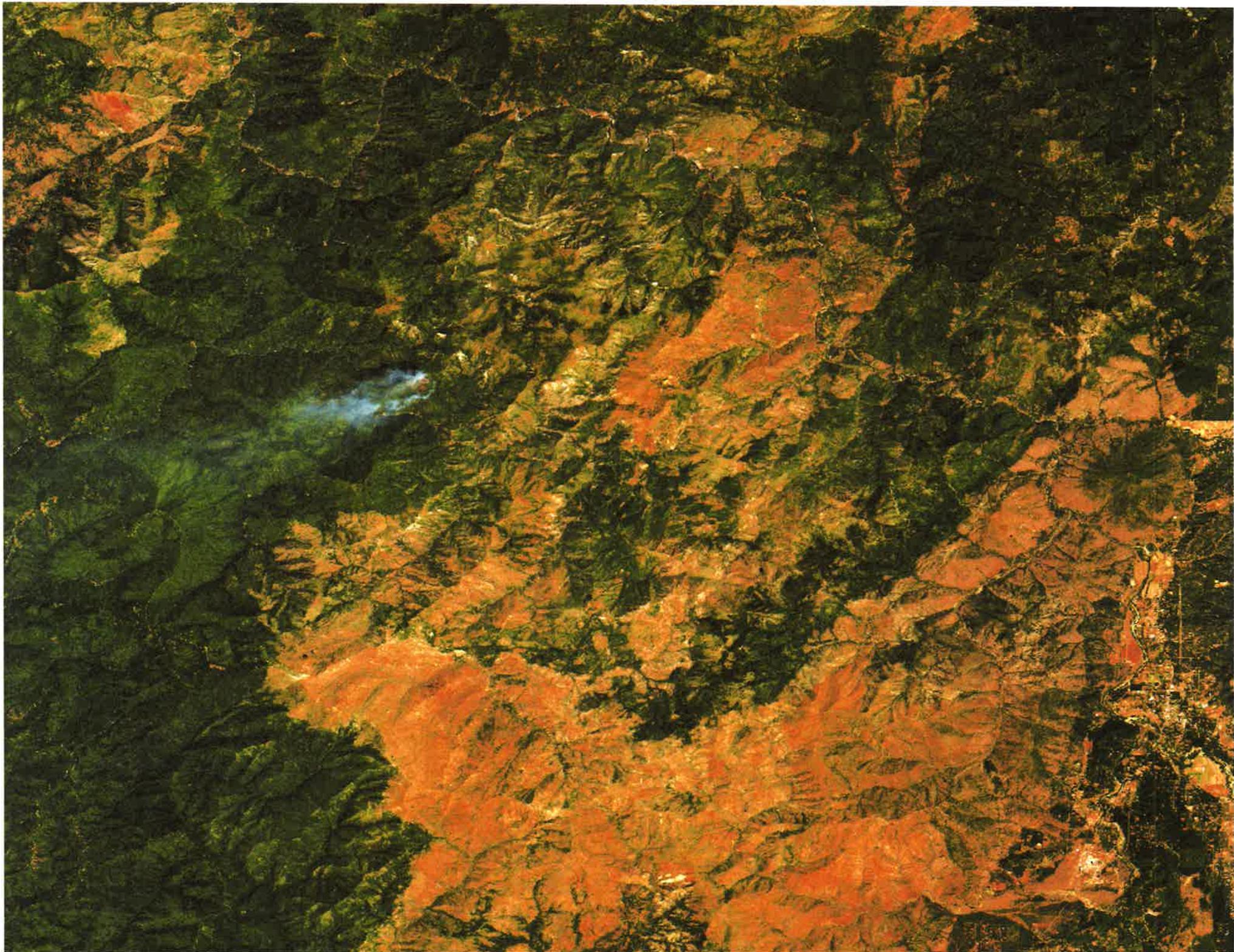
Some recent catastrophic wildfires, severe wind and rain events, and other natural disturbance events have resulted in significant losses to critical wildlife habitat, imperiled fisheries, watersheds, and municipal water sources. These events also threaten the long-term productivity of forest soils, through erosion and changes in soil properties, as well as many other resources.

①

Before







Chetco Bar Camera
Aug 17, 2017 20:50:38







After





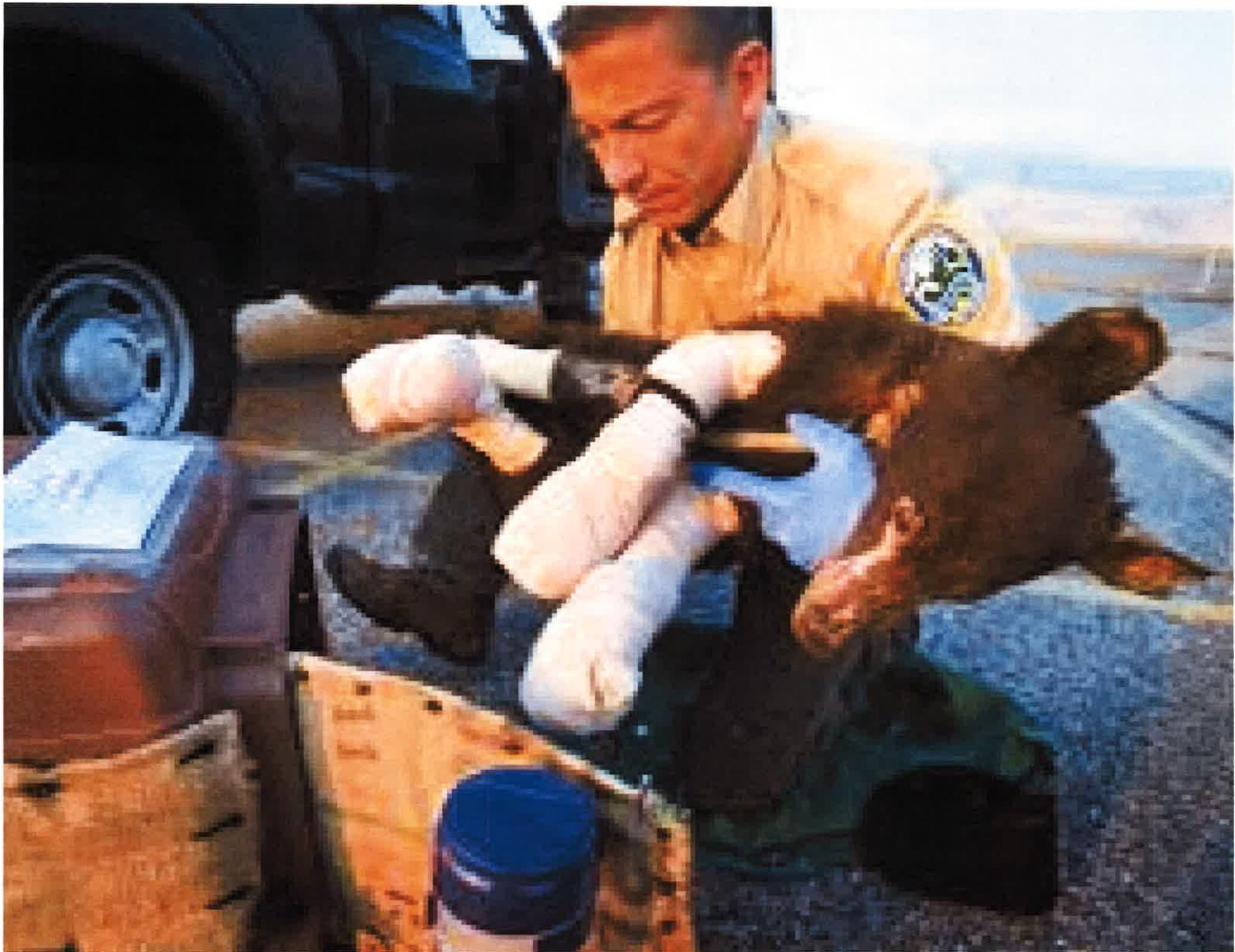




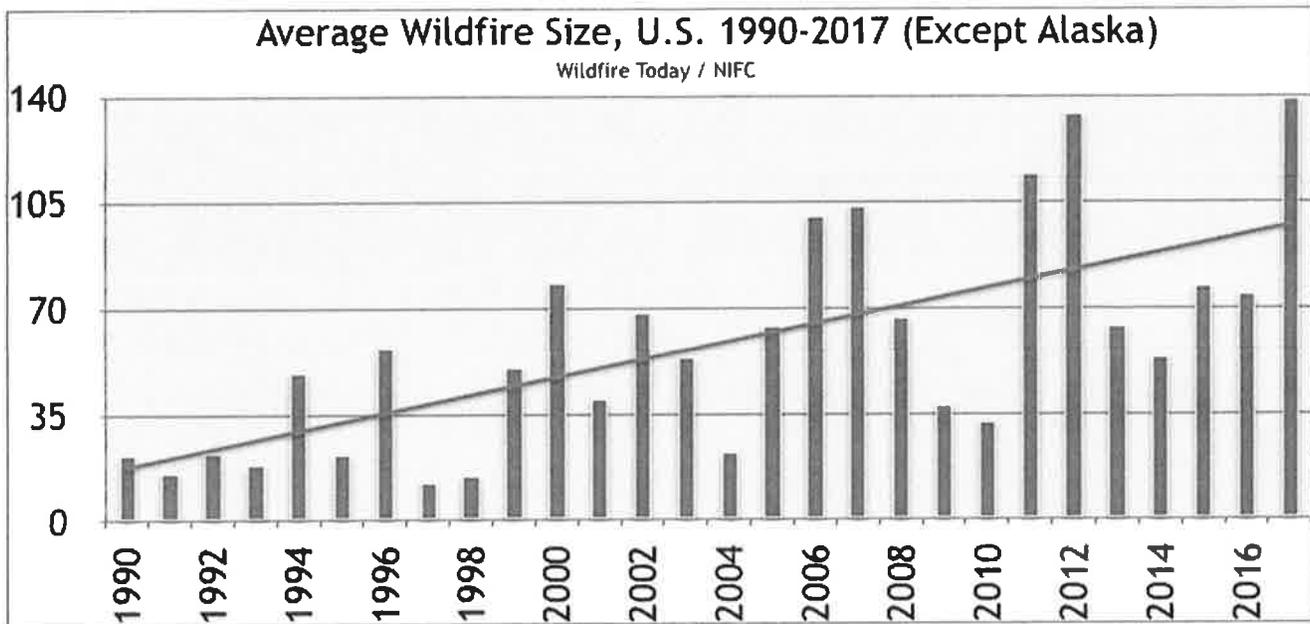












A statistic that is quite interesting is the average size. The linear trend line starts at about 22 acres in 1990 and reaches close to 100 acres by 2017. In fact, the average size in 2017 was 139 acres. There could be a number of reasons for this huge increase:

- Weather that is warmer and drier making fires more difficult to suppress.
- One hundred years of fire suppression has led to forests that are more dense and fires that burn with greater intensity.
- A less aggressive strategy is being used on large fires more often for safety reasons.
- More fires are allowed to burn naturally without full suppression for environmental concerns.
- There may have been a change in the initial attack of new fires, responding with less equipment and personnel.

Another factor to consider is that there was a gradual 30 to 70 percent reduction in the number of large air tankers on exclusive use contracts from 2002 until 2014 when the fleet began to be partially restored.

Share this:

FROM WILDFIRE TODAY (BILL GABBERT)

A House On Fire

Some gentle advice for Forest Service Chief Tony Tooke.

By Jim Petersen

New Forest Service Chief Tony Tooke has his hands full. The West's wildfire-ravaged national forests are falling apart, and so it seems is the U.S. Forest Service, which has been battling an identity crisis and morale problems for years.

Mr. Tooke is well qualified for the nearly impossible task he accepted in October 2017. So was the supremely confident Jack Ward Thomas, who took Washington, D.C., by storm in December 1993.

Jack and I were good friends for many years. He believed to the depths of his soul that he could pull the Forest Service out of its

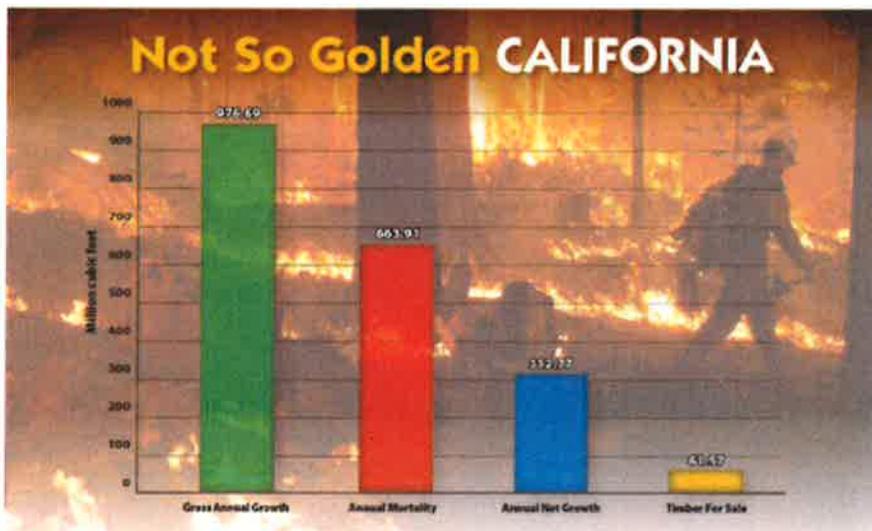
death spiral. I believed he could, too, but we were both wrong. No pun intended, but Vice President Al Gore trumped Jack's every move.

Now it is Mr. Tooke's turn in the barrel. I wish him well. In the hope that this essay lands on his desk, I'm including a series of bar graphs that illustrate the crisis he has inherited. The graphs, which we assembled from Forest Service data, quantify annual gross growth, mortality, net growth and removals in national forests in Idaho, Montana and Washington east of the Cascade Range. It's an ugly scene. Mortality now exceeds gross growth in central and eastern Washington,

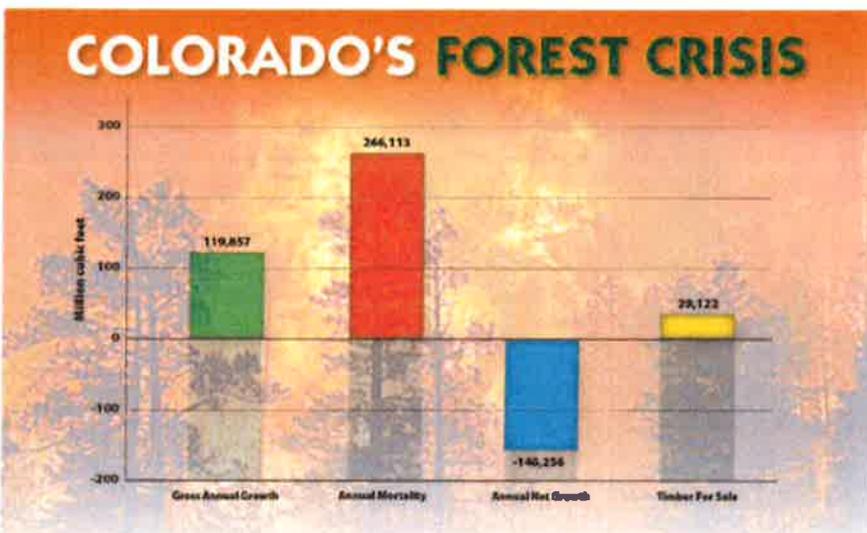
and will soon surpass gross growth in Idaho and Montana.

Colorado has already fallen into a black hole and California is not far behind. We haven't run numbers for Oregon yet, but I have no doubt the situation in central and eastern Oregon is no different than it is in Washington. Arizona and New Mexico have also fallen off a cliff, and from what I've seen in Wyoming, it's more of the same.

Good luck, Mr. Tooke. Short of a miracle, you will leave Washington, D.C., in disgust, just as my friend Jack Thomas did in 1996 in pursuit of the safer environs of academia.



Annual mortality is 68 percent of gross annual growth in California's national forests. More than 100 million dead trees are fueling wildfires of unprecedented size and ferocity. The state's wood processing complex collapsed after the northern spotted owl was listed as an endangered species in 1990.



Annual mortality exceeds gross annual growth by nearly 45 percent in Colorado's national forests. Thinning dead and dying trees would help, but little remains of the state's wood processing complex. The only new mill in the state is sized to process logs from its owner's land.

Yes, I take it as a good sign that the House of Representatives recently passed its version of the Resilient Federal Forests Act—H.R. 2396—by a vote of 232 to 188. Unfortunately, only 10 Democrats crossed the aisle to join the Republican majority. Not a good sign for what lies ahead in the U.S. Senate. What, if anything, reaches President Trump's desk during the current congressional session is anyone's guess.

Meantime, some 70 to 80 million national forest acres in the West are in Condition Class 3, meaning they are ready to burn, or Condition Class 2, meaning they will soon be ready to burn. Still, Congress cannot come to terms with the enormous environmental, economic and social costs associated with owning 190 million acres of forestlands.

Jack and I talked this crisis to death dur-

Congress cannot come to terms with the enormous environmental, economic and social costs associated with owning 190 million acres of forestlands, much of it ready to burn.

ing his post-Forest Service years at the University of Montana. His blunt assessment was that there isn't enough gold in Fort Knox to cover the cost of restoring natural resiliency to every national forest acre needing treatment. Jack was correct. Short of a forest management program designed to restore age-class diversity while restoring natural resiliency, there isn't enough gold in Fort Knox to pay the bill. Restoring age-class diversity requires that some commercially valuable old-growth timber be harvested annually.

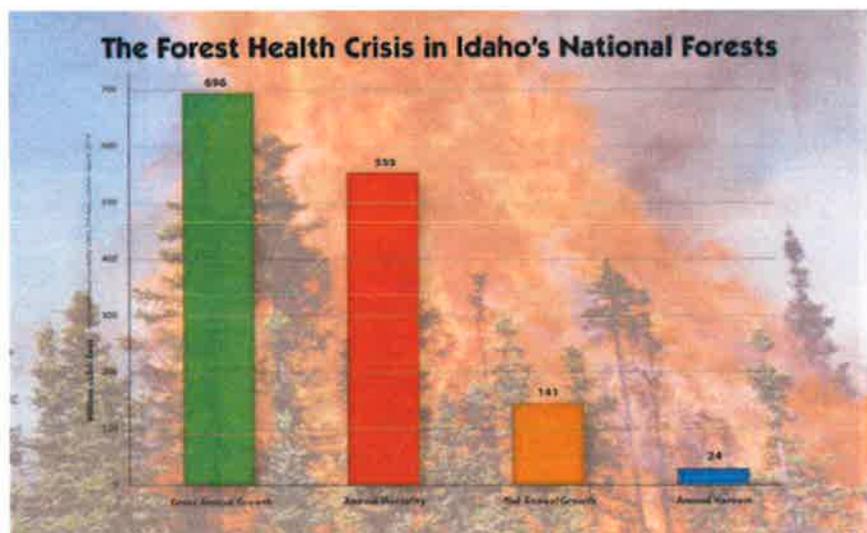
Congress clearly has no appetite for inciting a political firestorm among those for whom old growth has great intrinsic value, so

the focus is on restoring resiliency in mixed fir and pine forests that stretch from the western edges of the Great Plains to the eastern reaches of the Cascades and the High Sierra. This is most of the West.

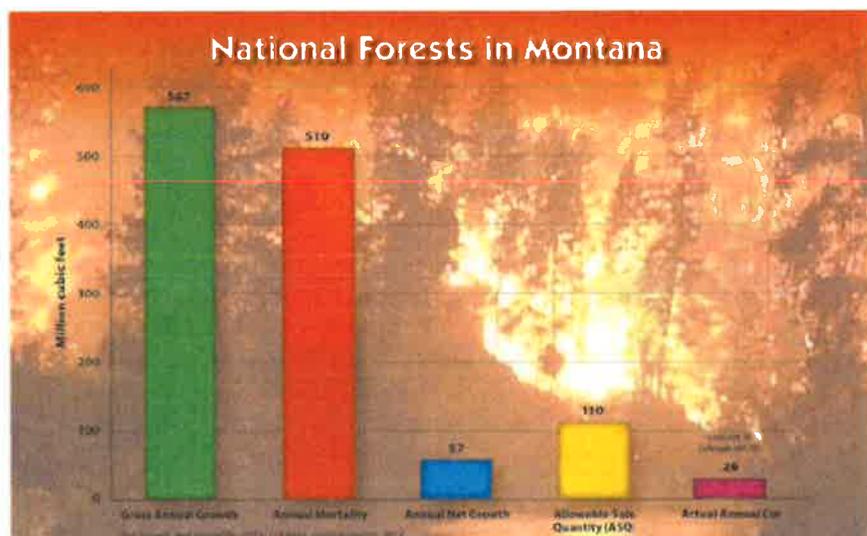
Most conservationists agree that a well-balanced combination of thinning and prescribed fire could restore natural resiliency—the ability of a well-cared-for forest to fend off outsized insect and disease attacks when they occur. But there is yet no broad-based consensus among the protagonists—those who favor active management and those who favor a more passive, nature-based approach—as to how much thinning and how much fire.

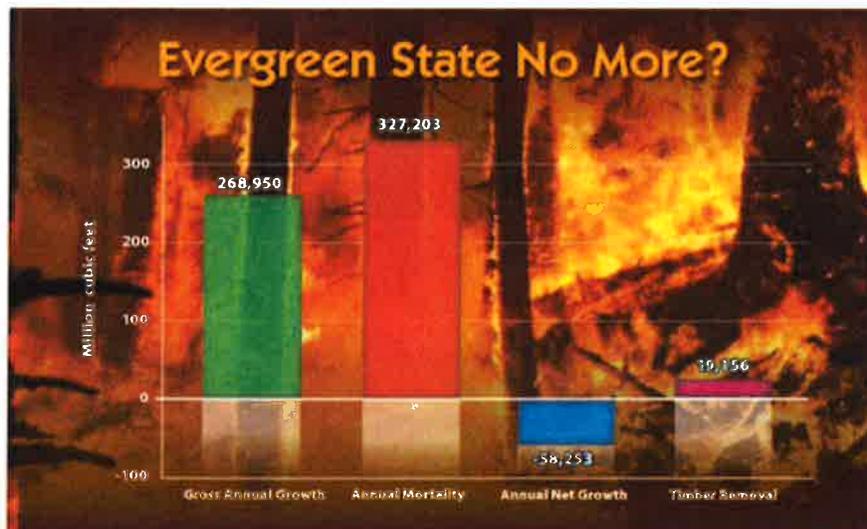
I think this discussion masks the real issue, which is a fear that the Trump administration will find a way to turn the regulatory

Annual mortality in Idaho's national forests is nearing 80 percent of gross annual growth. If 555 million cubic feet that die annually could instead be harvested, it would generate more than 24,000 new wood processing jobs—some three times current employment.



Annual mortality will soon exceed gross annual growth in Montana's national forests. There is insufficient infrastructure remaining to get ahead of the problem. Timber sale appeals are holding up enough volume to supply the state's family-owned mills for more than a year.





Annual mortality exceeds gross annual growth in national forests east of the Washington Cascades by 58.3 million cubic feet. If compressed to a solid block of wood the dimensions of a football field, the block would rise more than one mile into the sky—every year.

clock back to the 1970s, when there were hundreds more sawmills in the West than there are today. That's not going to happen, and here is why:

Most lumber manufacturers who survived the federal government's 1990 decision to list the northern spotted owl as a threatened species have driven on and no longer have much interest in any sort of federal forest management scheme. In fact, several of them now openly oppose any harvest from national forests because it tends to erode the values of their timberlands and log markets.

The exceptions to this conundrum are the landless, family-owned lumber manufacturers in central and eastern Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Arizona, New Mexico, South Dakota, Wyoming and Colorado. These companies are eager to provide unsubsidized markets for small-diameter thinnings, but they are not willing to make multimillion-dollar investments in necessary small-log manufacturing technologies if serial litigants continue to rule federal forest management in the West.

Proof of this unfortunate truth lies in the fact that The Nature Conservancy—arguably the nation's leading conservation group—has yet to find investors with whom it can partner in the construction and operation of a small-diameter wood processing facility in central Washington, presumably the Wenatchee area. The estimated cost to build? Around \$100 million. No wonder TNC hired a fund-raiser for its Seattle office.

The House version of the Resilient Federal Forests Act takes a stab at attracting investors by exempting up to 90 Forest Service restora-

tion projects annually from judicial review. Disputes involving these projects would be resolved via arbitration, not litigation.

This provision has raised eyebrows among conservationists who fear a return to the pre-spotted-owl era when clearcutting was the preferred means of actively managing national forests. I don't share their fear, but

You cannot wrap your arms around 70 to 80 million at-risk acres 200 to 300 acres at a time.

perception is reality, and the reality is that the House version of the Resilient Federal Forests Act will not survive as is in the Senate.



COURTESY U.S. FOREST SERVICE

A conservationist friend shared a summary analysis of H.R. 2396 with me, noting that many of its provisions invite further divisiveness and distrust among conservationists who support collaborative decision making by diverse stakeholder groups but don't trust the Trump administration or the Forest Service. When I read their analysis of H.R. 2396 through their eyes, I can see why they don't trust it. Yet, when I read the same legislation through the eyes of lumbermen who can help conservationists meet their forest restoration objectives, I can see why those lumbermen do trust it.

This is the world that Tony Tooke has inherited—a world in which conservationists, collaborative leaders and their lumbermen partners agree that for ecological and economic reasons the current pace and scale of restoration is much too small. I agree. You cannot wrap your arms around 70 to 80 million at-risk acres 200 to 300 acres at a time.

What to do? As a beginning point, we need to accept at face value the Forest Service's claim that it lacks sufficient staffing to move faster than it is. We also need to separate firefighting from forest restoration work. Sending thousands of Forest Service employees off to fight fires every summer is ridiculous. Nothing gets done in their long absences. Even worse, the cost of fighting wildfires—more than \$2 billion last year—is deducted from the Forest Service's forest restoration budget.

Title X in H.R. 2396 gives the president the authority to declare major wildfires to be natural disasters, ending the so-called "fire borrowing" mess, but it overlooks the fact that the

BELOW: Tony Tooke is the eighteenth chief of the U.S. Forest Service. He has worked for the agency since he was 18. Raised on a farm in Alabama, he holds a degree in forestry from Mississippi State University. Hopes for his success are high, but unraveling the regulatory mess that burdens the Forest Service will take years of diplomacy.

Forest Service says it is seriously shorthanded. So, even with H.R. 2396, prospects for increasing the pace and scale of necessary forest restoration work remain dim.

Good Neighbor Authority, a provision within the 2014 Farm Bill, grants the Forest Service authority to partner with state forestry agencies to get more on-the-ground work done. However, state forestry departments are already stretched thin, so how much additional restoration work can get done West-wide remains to be seen.

H.R. 2396 Titles I through IX attempt to unravel what Jack Thomas called the “crazy quilt” of conflicting rules and regulations assigned to federal resource management agencies with conflicting missions. An unraveling is needed, but how to do it while building trust among conservationists who fear a return to the bad old days?

My sense is that the House simply reached too far in H.R. 2396 for the appetites of anxious conservationists who have yet to agree amongst themselves on a path forward. My research traces the philosophical underpinnings of the current stalemate back to the Civil War. No *one* piece of legislation is going to unwind Jack’s crazy quilt. There is too much water under the bridge.

The collaborative process—which is working—would never have rounded first base had it not been for a few enlightened souls from warring camps who ventured onto the battlefield alone in hopes of finding new pathways forward. Agents of change like lumberman Duane Vaagen, industry lobbyist Bob Boeh, conservationist Mike Petersen, and wilderness advocate Phil Hough all took time to get to know and understand one another’s hopes and needs. Had it not been for them, we’d still be at war with ourselves. We are not, but the apolitical chasm that divides us won’t be bridged on the trajectory of one Hail Mary pass. A more conservative offense is required, with the citizen-led collaboratives doing the downfield blocking and tackling.

Who knows what may happen next. Certainly not me. But this much is certain: The bully pulpit now belongs to Tony Tooke. Here’s hoping he asks the aforementioned four people how they did it. I’d guess that patience and perseverance, not smoke and mirrors, had a lot to do with their considerable successes. ■

Jim Petersen is the founder and president of the nonprofit Evergreen Foundation. He writes from his home in Dalton Gardens, Idaho.