

The Native Forest Council's

Summer 2007

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Number 2

# Forest Voice

Defending Nature, Saving Life since 1988

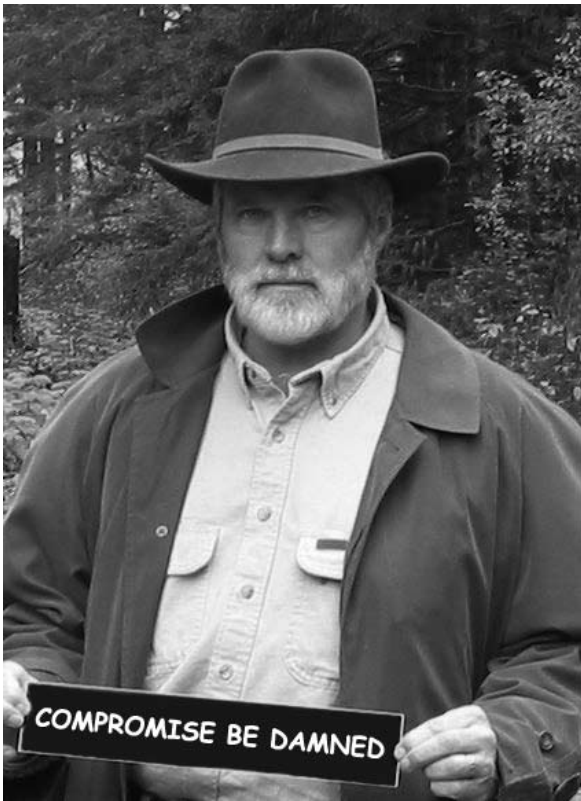
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**Should We Fight Wildfires?**

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## Wild Forest Fires Result in Natural Health

Fire! Strikes terror in people's minds. Fire is an emotionally charged issue. Just ask the people around Lake Tahoe. For people losing their homes, nothing is more emotionally devastating. Lake Tahoe is a high profile forest fire and the timber industry's public relations firms are spinning stories — crying hysterically for more logging to keep the fires from burning peoples' homes.

We all have a right to protect our homes. But what happens when our "Earth Home" is being destroyed at the expense of our "Man Made Home"?

The summer 2007 issue of Forest Voice is devoted to this question.

Timber industry tells us that logging must occur in order to control forest fires that destroy homes and ecosystems. They tell you we need to log after fires to "restore forest health." They give you a dozen other reasons why we need to log our forests to save them. What they won't tell you is that this logging is damaging our forests, not helping them. They won't tell you that logging is setting the stage for hotter, more damaging fires. They won't tell you that logging contributes to global warming — it's the second largest cause.

The conservation community asserts that NATURE KNOWS BEST. Fires are a necessary and integral part of nature that created, and continues to create, HEALTHY forests in the first place.

Despite the evidence of the remarkable job Nature has done in creating, growing and managing forests for thousands of years, INDUSTRY continues to tell us that their profit-motivated management is somehow better for the forests than natural management. It's the arrogance that sickens me the most — along with the dishonesty, fraud and destruction.

While logging interests scream that the fires are the result of inadequate management or logging, most scientists know that logging doesn't stop fires. Logging removes shade and leaves our forests hotter, drier and more prone to fires, not less. Logging strips our lands of publicly owned assets, assets worth far more than what industry takes. The public loses perhaps a thousand times more wealth and value than all the money generated by the liquidation of nature: strip-mining and destroying our native forests, the lungs of the planet on which we depend for life.

So what should we do? Should we continue this industry con-job of forest and forest fire management? Absolutely not! It even encourages arson all too frequently by corporate logging and fire-fighting interests.

Man destroys these "lungs of the planet" forests but cannot grow them. They do replant industrial fiber farms of use only to industry, but crops of trees are not a native or healthy forest. Could their concerns for fire danger and forest health all be just part of an enormous political fraud, fed and orchestrated by industry corporate money and giant PR firms?

### Green weenies & forest loss

Over 96% of America's, and 60% of the world's forests have been logged. Only 17% of the Amazon has been logged yet we are all telling Brazil that they should stop logging, while The Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Defense and the NRDC

and others only say we should save half of our remaining 4%. How can this be? Brazil should stop with little logged, but we shouldn't stop with almost everything logged?

Their repeated capitulations are sellouts, pure and simple, and are morally and ethically reprehensible for allowing — let alone sanctioning — any more loss and destruction, extraction, logging, mining, grazing or drilling. The July issue of the *National Geographic* has an excellent article about the Truth of the Tongass that exposes this truth. I highly recommend you read it. Another great book is one from 1908 called, *Looters of the Public Domain* by Stephen Douglas Puter. We have hundreds of others that make the same point: we've cut too much and the justifications are false.

Teddy Roosevelt first set aside forests that were still standing creating the first national forest reserves because of the rampant dishonesty, greed and destruction by industry a hundred years ago. When he did it, little did he know that the green groups would be duped into unlocking the gates and giving them up, compromising them away, little by little, year after year. Today, 40 million acres of Roosevelt's once great national forests have been strip-mined & clear-cut. The biggest, oldest and best of our nation's forest cathedrals have now been destroyed with the tacit or complicit approval of green groups that feel it's political reality to work with industry and their political lackeys.

Today we operate in a corporate cesspool of political corruption where bribery and graft have become so institutionalized that the American public and even many green groups are no longer outraged.

When did we become such a nation of sheep? Is it too much television? Do we get our news from dishonest infotainment networks? When will we rise up and again implement a democracy movement, a democratic republican democracy movement, or an independent party democracy movement, taking back America from King George? Just like we took back America from a different King George so long ago.

Of course, if we did the judges would say we're outlaws or terrorists and that we're committing criminal acts, breaking the law by doing anything that reduces, or threatens to reduce, corporate profits. Anything that "harms" the corporations. Yes, they'll call us terrorists if we oppose the state terrorism of corporate destruction and its war on nature and nature's services. Services that sustain human existence. It's their institutionalized theft & destruction of Nature that is the real terrorism, and it's aided and abetted by political lackeys and federal agency employees. This should not be. It can and must be stopped and will be when and if citizens with common sense and a moral center get involved in politics. If good people did politics then Politics wouldn't be doing us.

So what am I proposing? What's our way out of this mess? To begin with....

- find out what green groups in your area are doing good work and let them know how you feel, give them your support and oppose those doing the selling out, capitulation and compromising
- find out which bills to oppose or support
- get involved! Contact all your local, regional and national political representatives. Contact all your local TV, radio and newspapers — from the assignment editors to journalists, and share with them your perspectives, issues and concerns
- form your own community group, be it a coalition, an alliance or an association
- research the unseen work of AIPAC and ALEC: just two of the major lobbying groups causing harmful political changes in your community
- do presentations in your community's churches, schools and other gatherings [contact us for materials you can use]
- run for office yourself: city, county, state — and encourage others to do so as well
- volunteer where you can
- get involved, get involved, get involved!

All the major corporate & industry interests are doing all of the above. We must fight back or continue suffering the consequences.



## Forest Voice

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**No Thanks**  
All those who feel it's OK to cut deals that leave us with less native forests, soil, air, and clean water.

**Submission Guidelines**  
We welcome unsolicited submissions that address issues relevant to public lands protection and support the Native Forest Council's mission. If you would like us to return your work, please include a SASE or send an e-mail to tim@forestcouncil.org.

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## Native Forest Council

The Native Forest Council is a nonprofit, tax-deductible organization founded by business and professional people alarmed by the wanton destruction of our national forests. We believe a sound economy and a sound environment must not be incompatible and that current public land management practices are probably catastrophic to both.

The mission of the Native Forest Council is to protect and preserve every acre of publicly owned land in the United States.

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# News and Views

## Erosion of Alaska's North Coast Increasing

The speed of coastal erosion on Alaska's far northern coast has doubled over the past 50 years and coastal cliffs saturated with melting permafrost have crumbled into the sea as the world's climate has warmed, scientists report.

Using evidence from satellite observations and aerial photographs, two geologists at the U.S. Geological Survey have concluded that pack ice shrinking rapidly over the Beaufort Sea has probably caused the waves to surge more powerfully against the weakened cliffs.

## Critics Say Species List is Endangered

In the last six years, the Bush administration has added fewer species to the endangered list than any other since the law was enacted in 1973.

The slowdown has resulted in a waiting list of 279 candidates that are near extinction, from California's Yosemite toad to Puerto Rico's elfin-woods warbler, according to government scientists.



## UN Official Says Cuba Has Solved Its Energy Crisis Without Sacrificing Its Environment

Cuba has solved crippling energy shortages that plagued the island as recently as 2004 without sacrificing a long-term commitment to promoting environmentally friendly fuels, the head of the U.N. Environment Program said Wednesday.

The electric grid still relies too heavily on wasteful gas-flare reactors and heavy polluting diesel generators, but the Cuban government has taken important steps toward developing wind and solar power, as well as ethanol from sugar cane.

## After Lobbying, Wetlands Rules Are Narrowed

After a concerted lobbying effort by property developers, mine owners and farm groups, the Bush administration scaled back proposed guidelines for enforcing a key Supreme Court ruling governing protected wetlands and streams.

The administration last fall prepared broad new rules for interpreting the decision, handed down by a divided Supreme Court in June 2006, that could have brought thousands of small streams and wetlands under the protection of the Clean

Water Act of 1972. The draft guidelines, for example, would allow the government to protect marsh lands and temporary ponds that form during heavy rains if they could potentially affect water quality in a nearby navigable waterway.

But just before the new guidelines were to be issued last September, they were pulled back in the face of objections from lobbyists and lawyers for Industry.

## Judge Rejects Utah Counties' Road Claims in Monument

Two southern Utah counties cannot undo protections limiting off-road vehicle use on the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument by claiming without proof that they have historic rights-of-way, a federal court judge ruled.

In a ruling with broad application to other federal public lands, U.S. District Court Judge Bruce Jenkins threw out claims by Kane and Garfield counties that monument managers disregarded the repealed statute R.S. 2477 that once established "highway rights-of-way" when the West was being settled.

## Great Lakes Fish Advisories Show Pollution On The Rise

Levels of toxic chemicals in Great Lakes fish are alarmingly high, and becoming more serious over time, a report released recently by Environmental Defence shows.

"While fish remains a healthy choice for consumers, toxic contamination levels suggest that we are still treating the Great Lakes as a toxic waste dump," said Aaron Freeman, Policy Director of Environmental Defence.

## Earth's Natural Defenses against Climate Change "Beginning to Fail"

The Earth's ability to soak up the gases causing global warming is beginning to fail because of rising temperatures, in a long-feared sign of "positive feedback."

Climate change itself is weakening one of the principal "sinks" absorbing carbon dioxide — the Southern Ocean around Antarctica.

As a result, atmospheric CO2 levels may rise faster and bring about rising temperatures more quickly than previously anticipated. Stabilizing the CO2 level, which must be done to bring the warming under control, is likely to become much more difficult, even if the world community agrees to do it.



Photo: Lance Iversen San Francisco Chronicle

When a wood house is built in the forest with no attention to fireproofing, the only thing to survive is what was built out of stone or other non-flammable materials... in this case, the entry.

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# Big Blazes Needed

By George Wuerthner

The summer of 2006 was a good year. In that summer alone wildfires burned more than 9 million acres rejuvenating the West's forests and grasslands. Wildfires thinned forests, removed fuel loadings, recycled nutrients, and reinvigorated many forest stands and grasslands throughout the West. All in all, nature did what all the federal funding, loggers and decades of forestry could not — it created far healthier forests.

Fires are not destroyers, but creators. Forests do not live in dire fear of fires, but of foresters, loggers, fire fighters and fire suppression. If this seems backward to you, you're not alone. That's because misinformation about fire behavior and fire ecology is exploited by those who wish to prescribe more logging in our forests. While it's true that some ecosystems such as ponderosa pine forests historically had low intensity frequent blazes, it doesn't mean that fire suppression and the attendant accumulation of fuels will destroy the forest ecosystem. What destroys forests is continual human intervention done in the name of forest health.

**Fires are not destroyers, but creators. Forests do not live in dire fear of fires, but of foresters, loggers, fire fighters and fire suppression.**

Fire history can be misleading if not viewed within a temporal and spatial context. Most fire history studies rely upon fire scars to reconstruct past fire history. There are two reasons why such studies can be misleading. One is the relatively short period of time represented by such records. Most fire scar studies seldom accurately portray conditions more than 200-300 years prior to the present. That's because many places lack enough older trees to put together an accurate record that goes back in time much further.

Second, most fire scar studies occur where there are fire scarred trees. This may seem ridiculously obvious but it hides an important fact. Sites that produce an abundance of fire scarred trees tend to be ridges and other places where fuels are low due to poor productivity. Sites with higher productivity, also tend to have higher fuel loads, and often burn up completely in blazes — leaving no trees, hence no scars to study.

Furthermore, most people use the mean fire interval instead of the standard deviation from these records to characterize a particular forest type. This can lead to some misconceptions about fire frequency.

For example, the mean fire interval in many western ponderosa pine forests is 10-20 years, often even less. But the standard deviation may be as much as 50-90 years. In other words there are some periods when no fires occurred for a half-century or more due to periodic wet periods or other factors. Such natural variation is not unusual. Yet an absence of fire for a period of 50-60 years is in effect no different than the length of time we have had effective fire suppression. This suggests that the idea that there are "abnormal" fuel loadings may be inaccurate or at least an exaggeration. In other forest types, particularly those at higher elevations, the disparity between mean fire interval and the longest intervals between blazes is even greater, effectively negating any effect of fire suppression in these ecosystems. For instance, in Yellowstone National Park, fires typically burned the higher elevations once every 200-400 years. Fire suppression had little or no effect on Yellowstone's fire frequency, fuel loading or the expanse and vigor of the resulting 1988 flames.

Fire scar histories are not necessarily the best indicator of long-term fire records. If you look at longer temporal and spatial dimensions, you can often find that past climatic conditions created situations not much different than today's conditions. Charcoal and pollen studies provide a much longer climatic and fire record than fire scars, and demonstrate that in the past there have been wetter periods with few fires, where fuels grew, followed by drier periods where large widespread blazes were the norm. For example, in the mid-elevation mixed conifer forests of the Sierra Nevada, there was a prolonged drought in the years between 1100-1400 AD. This is the same time period that the Pueblo Indians abandoned many of their southwestern sites

The severe drought conditions fueled large blazes that burned across much of the Sierra Nevada. At other times, moist, cool weather created conditions that in many respects did not differ much from the current situation under fire suppression, with few fires.

Regardless of fuel loading, what drives big blazes isn't fuels. It would be difficult to argue that there was significantly more fuel in the forests of Yellowstone in 1987 than in 1988. So why did hundreds of thousands of acres burn in 1988 and not 1987 or 1986? The reason has to do with fire behavior and spread.

There are certain conditions that create large blazes: extended drought, low humidity, high winds. Without all of these you won't get a big fire — even if there is a ton of fuel. It's not fuel, ultimately, that creates large fires, rather it is these other factors. It's somewhat analogous to driving a car. Just because there's gas in the car, doesn't mean it will go anywhere. You need to simultaneously turn on the ignition, step on the gas, and let out the clutch,

## Fear of Fire



or the car won't move forward.

Extended drought and high winds characterize all big fires. Fighting fires under these conditions is a waste of time and money. Winds carry burning embers a mile or more ahead of the fire front. Winds carry flames through the crowns of trees. Low humidity means fires don't die down at night, as is the case under less extreme conditions. In every instance where there have been large fires, the only thing that put them out is a change in the weather, not the efforts of fire fighters. It will rain or snow and the fires will be "controlled," but what isn't acknowledged by fire fighters is that most of these fires would go out on their own anyway.

A laconic passage from a fire fighter's journal written in the 1930's illustrates this point. "Finally got the fire under control today. Had a hell of a time breaking camp in the rain."

**there is some evidence to suggest that logging can actually exacerbate fire spread**

The fact that this summer's blazes went through regrowing clearcuts and thinned forests alike demonstrates that reduction of fuels doesn't matter when drought and wind are combined into an unstoppable force. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that logging can actually exacerbate fire spread under these conditions. Young regrowing trees have a large crown to root ratio. With a small root system, and a high demand created by many needles, small trees dry out sooner than larger trees. But a dry green tree is even more explosively flammable than a dead tree. Dry green trees still have volatile resins in them, and they burn very well if ignited. But this only happens under extreme drought conditions. Under anything less than extreme drought the trees are too green to burn — giving the impression that logging can prevent fires.

Even thinned forests may not prevent big blazes. Thinned forests dry out sooner, making them more likely to burn. Plus wind can drive flames farther through a thinned forest than in a dense unlogged stand, helping to spread crown fires. Again this only happens under extreme conditions. Under less than extreme conditions, a thinned forest might appear to be a fireproofed site, giving one a false sense of security.

There are reasons why we should not want to reduce the intensity or spread of large fires any more than we should be trying to eliminate 100-year floods. The low intensity small fires that are relatively common in most forest ecosystems are like the annual spring flood on most rivers. They are



Photo: George Wuerthner

[www.wuerthnerphotography.com](http://www.wuerthnerphotography.com)

predictable, and “low intensity.” While important, they are not the events that really shape a river’s channel and flood plain. It is the 100-year flood that does most of the ecologically important work of shaping rivers and their channels. Big blazes are like the 100-year floods, and they are really the only ecologically significant fires.

### Why Logging Is Not The Answer

Even if one decided that it was desirable to reduce the big blazes through logging — assuming that is really possible — there are reasons why logging may be far worse for the forest than the fires themselves.

Just as the real lasting impact of a nuclear bomb is not the area directly destroyed by the bomb, but all the radioactive fall out that affects a far larger area, logging creates a lot of collateral damage. Most logging in the West requires roads. Roads are one of the biggest sources of sedimentation that directly impacts rivers and fisheries. While sediment rates can be high after a blaze, within a few years sediment levels usually return to pre-fire levels. On the other hand, logging roads remain in use for years, if not decades, and continue to be a source of sedimentation and slope failure.

Roads are also a major vector for the spread of exotic weeds and other species. The establishment of weeds is a long-term threat to any ecosystem, and logging roads facilitate this spread.



Logging roads also increase access for hunters, trappers, and poachers, affecting the distribution, age structure and numbers of target species. Logging also removes the woody debris and snags that would otherwise provide home for many wildlife species from cavity nesting birds to ants.

Logging removes the biological legacy that promotes a new forest’s growth. Even the charred snags remaining after a fire provide some shade and hasten the establishment of new tree seedlings. And when these snags fall into streams they provide a long-term source for fish habitat and bank stabilization material.

Another problem with forest manipulation is how it affects natural processes. Just as hunters don’t select the same animals that other native predators kill, logging never emulates natural selection. No matter how we attempt to thin a forest, we won’t be taking out the trees that would be killed by nature. How human manipulation will affect the long term health and genetic diversity of a forest is seldom discussed, but it could have serious consequences.

**Logging removes the biological legacy that promotes a new forest’s growth.**

Finally, even if fuel reductions worked, and even if foresters somehow were so smart they could effectively emulate natural selection in terms of the age, condition and size of trees removed, to really make any kind of ecologically significant difference in fire proofing our forests would require treating hundreds of millions of acres — an estimated 190 million acres according to the Bush regime’s own estimates. Not only would this be prohibitively expensive, but it would take decades. Long before you could treat all the forests that one deemed in need of fuel reductions, new fuels would have accumulated in the areas treated early on in the project, negating any real effect.

What’s needed is for us to stand out of the way. Let the forest burn — through a much expanded prescribed burning program combined with a much reduced fire suppression effort. No fires in wilderness or non-urbanized areas should be suppressed. All fire fighting should be directed towards turning fires away from property and structures or other sensitive areas, but the rest should be permitted to burn — it will likely happen anyway.

I know of many species endangered due to logging

and its aftermath, but I know of no species endangered by large blazes. Forests and wildlife have been dealing with periodic large blazes for thousands of years. If fuels are too high, a number of good fire summers will change that. We must quit suppressing fires, logging forests, and overgrazing grasslands. With big blazes, we can let natural processes reset the ecological clock — only then will we have truly healthy forests.

**I know of many species endangered due to logging and its aftermath, but I know of no species endangered by large blazes.**

In reality, rather than a disaster or a catastrophe, the summer of 2006 was one of the best years in a long time.

*George Wuerthner is a full-time freelance writer and photographer with 33 books to his credit. In addition to his photography and writing, George occasionally teaches field ecology classes, photo workshops, and guides natural history wilderness tours through his company Raven Trails. Find out more at [www.wuerthnerphotography.com](http://www.wuerthnerphotography.com).*

**“There is no doubt that big, thick-barked trees are most resistant to fire, and foresters have noted since the early decades of the century that plantations were particularly vulnerable to fire. Susceptibility was reduced with the advent of slash disposal. However, even with slash disposal, densely stocked plantations are more vulnerable to fires than healthy oldgrowth.”**  
-David Perry, Ph.D.

## Fire. Smokey. Now.

### A Review by Kera Abraham *Eugene Weekly*

*Wildfire: A Century of Failed Forest Policy*  
Edited by George Wuerthner. Foundation for Deep Ecology by arrangement with Island Press, 2006. Paperback, \$45. Also available: the smaller *Wildfire Reader*, with no photos, \$27.50.

Reader advisory: This hefty, beautifully illustrated book — about as wide as a 25-year-old Doug fir stump — is likely to piss off the following: timber companies, loggers, Forest Service firefighters, the Oregon Board of Forestry, OSU College of Forestry administrators, herbicide companies, Columbia Helicopters and everyone else invested in the Old Forestry view that people should “manage” nature’s wild forces in order to serve humanity’s material needs.

In that line of thinking, wildfire is bad; it steals valuable timber that could have been logged and converted into useful things like paper and houses. Thus the development of a “fire-military-industrial” complex linking the Forest Service to industry and siphoning billions of tax dollars to fight fires on public lands.

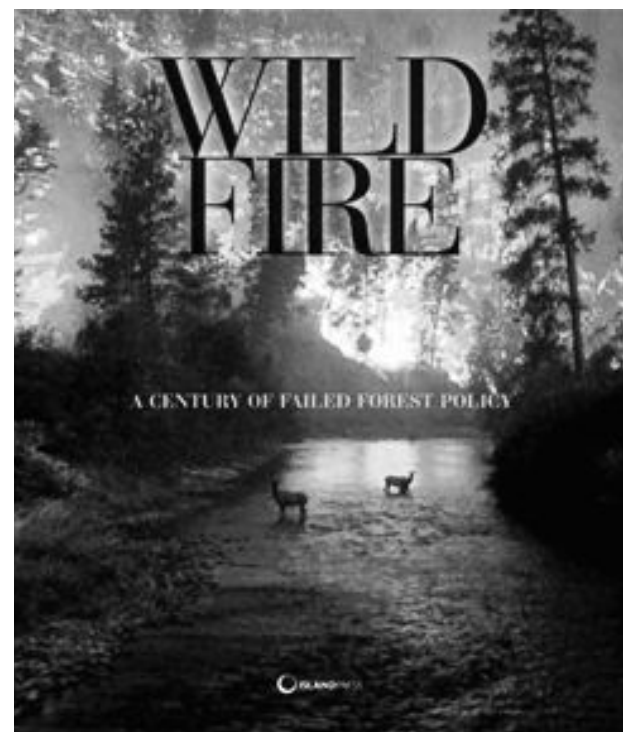
Today, ecologists recognize that fire suppression does incalculable damage to forests that have evolved with wildfire, hijacking their natural processes and helping turn them, slowly but

surely, into tree farms. Which, not incidentally, is convenient for timber companies hankering to log in public forests, and for land grant universities such as OSU that get a cut of the timber revenue.

In *Wildfire*, a project of the *Foundation for Deep Ecology*, more than 25 fire ecology experts — including Eugene’s Timothy Ingalsbee — propose that wildfires are good, and that people’s attempts to control them ultimately backfire. “While this book is about fire policy and fire ecology, it is also a discussion of a much larger philosophical debate over the ultimate role and influence humans should have on natural landscapes,” editor George Wuerthner states in the introduction.

**Today, ecologists recognize that fire suppression does incalculable damage to forests that have evolved with wildfire**

EW was privy to an email string between Big Timber allies reacting to this book. “Makes a feller retch,” former OSU forestry professor Mike Newton wrote. “These guys have money,” replied Bob Zybach of Oregon Websites and Watersheds, a timber think tank of sorts. “I plan to finger and smudge a copy in the bookstore, and then not buy it,” added Lebanon tree farmer Mike Dubrasich, who administers the right-wing forestry blog *SOSForests.com*.



Their reactions only confirm the deep schism in forestry circles over how to handle wildfire. Those who subscribe to the old utilitarian view are sure to hate *Wildfire*; those who are deep ecologists, or open to their ideas, are likely to find it a valuable reference. The photos are gorgeous, the writing passionate and the mission clear: Fire Smokey the Bear, and let the forests burn, baby.

# “Healthy Forests” and Wildfire Control: Accumulating Scientific Evidence

By Dr. Thomas Power

Even as the Bush Administration and the U.S. Forest Service push forward with their plans to use timber harvests to improve the “health” of our National Forests and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, scientific evidence accumulates that thinning and logging a forested landscape is likely to increase rather than decrease fire dangers and push forests even further away from their natural ecological conditions.

**Scientific evidence accumulates that thinning and logging the forested landscape is likely to increase rather than decrease fire dangers**

Almost no one disagrees with the idea that vegetation including trees immediately around homes need to be carefully managed to reduce the dangers that the landscaping we do around our homes might bring natural wildfire right to our doorsteps. That maintenance of our yards and lots along with the maintenance of our homes themselves is the most effective way of reducing home loss in the face of wildfire.

But the Bush Administration and some of the leadership of the Forest Service want to use logging techniques in places far removed from homes and communities to reduce the threat of wildfire. The basic idea is that most of our forests are far too dense. There are way too many trees per acre. This, we are told, not only makes them “unhealthy,” but also reduces their productivity for wood production and makes them prone to frequent and severe wildfires that damage the forests even further. Cutting down many or most of those trees is the proposed solution.

But the evidence is mounting that this is not the case. Studies of actual fire behavior in Northern California, Colorado, and Oregon indicate that removing trees, “thinning” the forest, by itself actually increases the severity of forest fires and the damage they do to forests.

Some of the fires in 2002 were so huge that they provided a natural laboratory to study what impact previous forest treatments had on how much damage the forest fires did to trees. Despite the usual picture often painted for us of fires simply blackening thousands and thousands of acres,

totally destroying all the trees and every other living thing, forest fires actually have very diverse impacts, usually creating a mosaic of heavily burned as well as relatively lightly burned landscapes. By studying the variation in tree mortality in these large fires and matching that up with previous human manipulation of those forestlands, the scientists could get a picture of what, for instance, previous thinning did to control the severity of the damage done by the fires.

What they found in both Oregon’s Biscuit Fire and Colorado’s Hayman Fire was that areas that had not been thinned or subject to prescribed burns before the recent fire lost about half of their trees in that fire. In areas that had been thinned, 80 to 100 percent of the trees were killed. Thinning the forests made them more vulnerable to wildfire.

This was not entirely surprising to the scientists. Thinning the forest opens the forest up to more sunlight and wind. That increases the temperature and lowers the humidity, drying out the forest more and allowing the higher winds to carry any fire that starts further and hotter. In addition, the thinning activity disturbs the ground, baring mineral soil for a new crop of shade intolerant young trees, shrubs, and invasive weeds.

**Most of the dense forests that the Bush Administration and some in the Forest Service want to thin to return them to “health” are not unhealthy at all.**

In addition, the thinning typically leaves behind much of the harvested trees: limbs with needles and small non-marketable trees litter the ground with fuels. When wildfire hits, it has all of the components to be a very hot fire with plenty of ladder fuels to kill almost all of the trees.

That is not an inevitable outcome. However, avoiding that outcome would be very costly. For instance, the studies show that thinning is not a permanent solution to an overly dense forest. Opening the forest up just triggers the growth of new seedlings and other vegetation. Unless the forest is entered on a regular basis, every decade, say, the thinning will simply have recreated the problem it sought to cure. But such regular and repeated thinning would be outrageously expensive.

An alternative is to following the thinning with a

prescribed burn. In the Biscuit Fire, areas that had been thinned and then treated with prescribed burns lost only 5 percent of their trees, compared to 80-100 percent for thinning alone or 50 percent for those areas not treated at all. But prescribed burns are also expensive to carry out and are not controllable enough to be used near homes.

This may make our public forests sound like a hopeless mess, condemned to a continued unhealthy and unproductive status. But other scientific evidence indicates that this is not the case. Most of the dense forests that the Bush Administration and some in the Forest Service want to thin to return them to “health” are not unhealthy at all. Forest scientists have been studying the fire histories of our forested landscapes in more and more detail to try to understand their densities and fire behaviors in the centuries before we began grazing cows, harvesting trees, and suppressing fires in them. What they are finding is that a significant part of the forest landscape regularly had very dense stands of trees that every few centuries burned in large natural conflagrations. It was only the lower elevation forests that featured park-like mixes of large, almost inflammable, trees and open grasslands.

This is not a pessimistic story. It means that we need to focus our forest fire protection where our homes, communities, and lives are threatened. We do not have to spend tens of billions of dollars trying to save our forests from themselves. The forests do not need it, thank you, and those billion dollar efforts would not work anyway. If we are careful where and how we live in forests and learn to accept fire, both prescribed fire and natural fire, as a natural part of a healthy forested landscape we can both protect ourselves and enjoy the benefits of diverse natural forests.

*Thomas Power is chairman of the Economics Department at the University of Montana in Missoula and author of “Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search for a Value of Place.”*

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*“The superior man seeks what is right; the inferior one, what is profitable.”*  
— Confucius

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Photo: Brett Cole

[www.wildnorthwest.org](http://www.wildnorthwest.org)

## Fire Wars Home and Abroad

By FUSEE  
July, 2004

Flaming battlefields across the landscape. Occupied areas not controlled as promised. Insurgent conflagrations raging at will. A massive battle campaign initiated on intelligence known to be false or incomplete. Congressional approval for this regime change gained largely through partisan bullying and intimidation. A vast uncooperative territory invaded and placed under a military-styled command. Crony companies winning lucrative contracts with little attention to their expensive bids. Contractors filling jobs traditionally done by public servants. Low-level participants acting on implied but not actual orders so that they become culpable and higher ups protected because such orders would violate standard procedures. Dissenting voices within the ranks gagged and purged. Dissenting voices outside viciously attacked and their patriotism questioned. Locals remain skeptical, critical, unsupportive and even hostile to the policies and goals of the occupying administration. Sound like Iraq? Yes, but these problems could also be applied to federal policies for managing wildland fires in the western U.S.

**The few “proactive” programs (such as logging large trees) feed favored cronies, but do not address the root fuels problems, and make fire conditions worse.**

Five elements and their consequences make our wildland management policies hauntingly similar to Iraq, and may just as equally attract heightened public scrutiny and criticism. First, the “Let’s roll” attitude of the land management agencies has alienated many. The agencies seem to have little humility and much imperious demeanor and hostility against those who question their authority. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) pushed by the Bush Administration gives the agencies more power to conduct business with even less public involvement, oversight, or accountability. Long-term, sustainable ecological restoration can-

not be gained at the expense of democratic participation.

Second, the partisanship and phony coalition building during the Congressional consideration of the HFRA antagonized many who could have become excellent allies in a extensive coalition to deal with the wildfire crisis. Alternative viewpoints were ridiculed and suppressed rather than objectively considered, and loyal opponents were bulldozed over. This leaves many fire professionals and public stakeholders without stakes in the process and indifferent to the outcome.

Third, there is a disjunct between on-the-ground conditions and their flawed descriptions in the HFRA proposal. While the proposal almost exclusively focused on fuel loads, many scientists believe that climate and weather effects on fuel moisture may be the main factor driving large wildfires. When intensively managed forests and plantations burn as readily as unmanaged forests, it is right to question the rationale for extending the plantation model of agroforestry as a means of fuels management. Likewise, the coarse-scale maps used to prepare condition class assessments have been inappropriately used by politicians to alarm the public about possible “wildfires of mass destruction,” but the data has yet to be properly ground-truthed. It is apparent that HFRA proponents have misused the data to push their predetermined policy.

Fourth, there continues to be extravagant money flows to reactive rather than proactive actions — with no end in sight. The few “proactive” programs (such as logging large trees) feed favored cronies, but do not address the root fuels problems, and make fire conditions worse. Meanwhile, just like the war in Iraq, the government continues to lowball the budgets for fire suppression, requiring supplemental funding requests. The taxpaying public will become restive and sour on all of those involved in wildland fire management, including ground-level firefighters, when wildfire disasters do not decrease after billions and billions are spent on logging and firefighting.

Fifth, a crisis is being used to advance political agendas and subsidize crony companies with subsidized and discounted public natural resources or to secure lucrative contracts. The public could

become furious when they wake up and realize that those in power used a crisis to further their own aims rather than honestly address the issues.

**The public could become furious when they wake up and realize that those in power used a crisis to further their own aims rather than honestly address the issues**

Ground-level wildland firefighters must begin speaking out against these five obstacles to safe, ethical, and ecological fire management. Otherwise, the public may begin to believe that firefighters are part of the problem, not the solution.

*FUSEE, Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology, promotes safe, ethical, and ecological wildland fire management. They inform and empower fire management workers and their citizen supporters to become torchbearers for a new paradigm in fire management. FUSEE can be found online at [www.fusee.org](http://www.fusee.org).*

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***“I think the environment should be put in the category of our national security. Defense of our resources is just as important as defense abroad. Otherwise what is there to defend?”***  
**— Robert Redford**

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# NATURE'S CYCLE OF

For millions of years, wildfire has been a natural, beneficial and essential element of our western forests. A native forest is constantly evolving, with the death of one tree giving rise to the life of many other trees, plants and organisms. There is no waste in a forest.



1) A healthy western native forest.  
10) After a century or so, the forest is ready for the next blaze to begin yet another cycle.



2) A fire starts, possibly created by a lightning strike.



3) Wildfire burns organic matter such as branches, needles and other debris, releasing vital nutrients, fertilizing forest soils. High heat bursts resin-sealed seed cones of trees, like the knobcone pine, while smoke kills pathogens in the soil.

The most important action with wildfire is to protect your home. "The most effective way to accomplish this is to create a defensible area 200 feet around the home." Simple, yet effective, as keeping gutters cleared of debris, mowing lawns, pruning low hanging branches, and removing combustibles away from the home. A metal roof is a better choice than a wooden roof with a metal roof.



4) Many large trees are very fire-resistant, surviving wildfire with only a few fire scars.



5) Wildfire kills some trees to create standing dead snags, which are important for many species of birds, mammals, and amphibians as well as a primary food source for these animals.

Until the late 1800's, our western native forests had experienced an almost entirely natural wildfire cycle — with the intervals between fires ranging from a few years to several centuries. Yet rampant logging, grazing, and fire suppression have altered and, in many cases, broken the natural cycle of wildfire in our forests.



## ZERO CUT ON



# FIRE AND REBIRTH



again reaches maturity, awaiting the next cycle of regeneration.

As a native forest “grows on itself,” it is nothing without soil — wildfire acts as the main agent for enriching soils. Absent the intervention of humans, wildfire’s cycle of fire and rebirth in our western forests is perfect. As with almost every one of nature’s processes, the best approach to take with wildfire is to stand out of the way and let nature take its course.



9) Within decades, seedlings grow into a young, naturally regenerating forest.

When we can take to live homes from burning. In the fire plain, the only way this is to manage an old house, in the “home” essential, steps such as clearing debris, mowing high hanging branches, storing firewood, and replacing a roof can drastically reduce damage from wildfire.



8) Over the years snags decay, further enriching the soils while providing beds for new tree growth, called “nurse logs.”



7) Up to a century later, snags fall and continue to provide soil, nutrients, animal habitat and food, prevent erosion by stabilizing forest soils, and retain moisture in the forest.



6) Snags provide shade and windblocks for a new generation of seedlings sprouting up in profusion after a burn.



Charred wood provides shade and windblocks for a new generation of seedlings sprouting up in profusion after a burn. (snags provide crucial habitat for mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds (as well as home for insects and other creatures).

Industry and government claim that all wildfires are a “catastrophe” and that the solution is to continue (or even expand) the very practices that have disrupted the fire cycle in the first place. Reckless activities such as post-fire “salvage” logging, “fuels reduction” logging and continued widespread fire suppression prevent our forests from returning to their natural state.

# The Return of NREPA: Thinking Big in the Northern Rockies

By Paul Richards

Every season, citizens of the world thank those who had the courage and foresight to designate Yellowstone, Glacier, Bob Marshall, Absaroka-Beartooth and other national parks and wilderness areas. The Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness in Idaho and the Lee Metcalf Wilderness in Montana bear the names of conservation heroes dedicated to protecting public wildlands.

National parks, wilderness areas, and other wildlands are the engines that drive the economy of the northern Rockies states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. People want to live here because they love being close to wildlands and wildlife.

**National parks, wilderness areas, and other wildlands are the engines that drive the economy of the northern Rockies states**

What makes Montana Montana? Idaho Idaho? Wyoming Wyoming? In addition to designated parks and wilderness, the Northern Rockies contain millions of acres of unprotected and undesignated roadless wildlands.

In addition to scenic beauty, these pristine public wildlands provide clean water for our cities and farms, unrivaled fishing and hunting, and the world's best educational and recreational opportunities. Kept unmolested, they guarantee the region's economic future and environmental health.

These public wildlands must be kept in "as is" condition. This land was wild 100 years ago, it must be wild 100 years hence. Thankfully, legislation before Congress (H.R. 1975) retains the status quo for these wildlands. First written over 22 years ago by the world's leading conservation biologists, the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act, or NREPA, brings common sense to national forest issues.

Instead of continuing millions in logging subsidies that destroy our public wildlands, NREPA protects

roadless wildlands, establishes biological corridors between them, and provides good jobs by restoring wildlands previously damaged by logging and roadbuilding.

The chairman of the University of Montana's Economics Department has repeatedly stated that the greatest economic values associated with our region's wildlands lie in maintaining their wildness. They are only going to become more valuable as the years go by.

Populations in those counties with public wildlands are growing in leaps and bounds. McMansions are going up everywhere. Just ask any realtor about the extremely high value of land adjacent to Forest Service land. On the other hand, data show those counties without public wildlands are losing population.

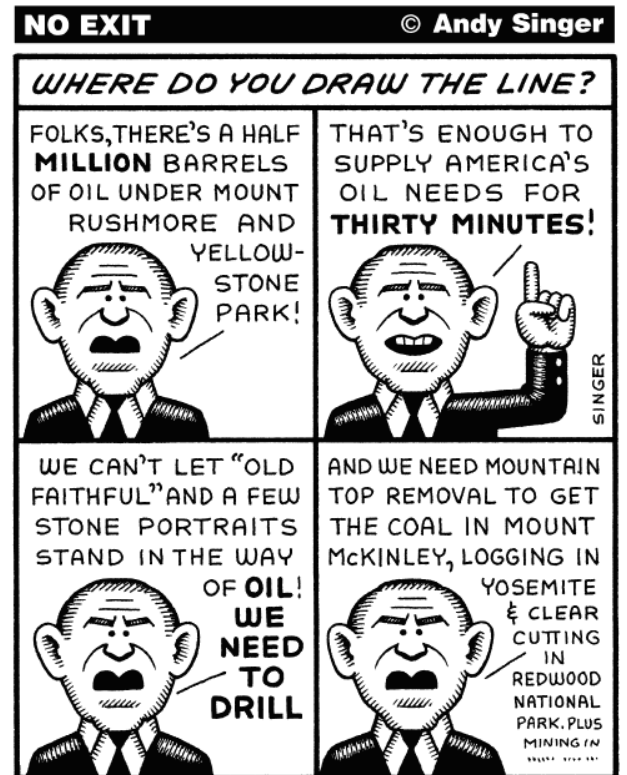
With such a massive boom in private land development, it becomes imperative to better manage our public lands. NREPA will protect 7 million acres of wilderness in Montana, 9.5 million acres of wilderness in Idaho, 5 million acres of wilderness in Wyoming, 750,000 acres in eastern Oregon, and 500,000 acres in eastern Washington. Included in this total is over 3 million acres in Yellowstone, Glacier and Grand Teton National Parks.

**Just ask any realtor about the extremely high value of land adjacent to Forest Service land.**

When NREPA is passed, over 1 million acres and 6,300 miles of unused roads will be restored to roadless conditions, providing employment for 2,100 workers. NREPA will save taxpayers at least \$245 million that would otherwise be spent subsidizing logging these unprotected roadless areas.

NREPA contains no designation regarding any private land and does not affect grazing leases.

Under NREPA, the Northern Rockies future is assured. Like Glacier and Yellowstone, these public



wildlands will become financial cornerstones for those communities lucky enough to be nearby.

Prominent outdoors writer Bill Schneider has computed that NREPA protects less than one percent of the five-state Northern Rockies region. After passage of NREPA, Schneider estimates that 95 percent or more of our federal lands will remain non-wilderness.

Last year, 188 members of Congress sponsored NREPA, the most sponsors of any wilderness bill in the history of the Wilderness Act, but the bill went nowhere due to hostility from the House leadership.

This year, the House leadership has changed and chances for NREPA's passage have increased dramatically. Schneider says NREPA offers a productive way to "quickly end the war for wilderness and move on."

To read the legislation, please go to: [www.wildrockiesalliance.org](http://www.wildrockiesalliance.org).

More information about the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act can be found at [www.wildrockies.org/nrepa](http://www.wildrockies.org/nrepa).

After 22 years, NREPA's time has come.

*Paul Richards, a former Montana legislator and candidate for U.S. Senate, currently sits on the board of directors of the Southwest Montana Wildlands Alliance. He can be reached at: paul@prmediaconsultants.com*



*"Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph"*  
- Haile Selassie

# Beware the Biomass Opportunists

By Victor Rozek

A hundred years ago, you could buy a bottle of mysterious liquid guaranteed to cure nearly any malady from arthritis to insomnia. No matter what the problem, the remedy was always the same. But of course it was a scam and purchasers took to calling it snake oil. The timber industry also has a magic cure for maintaining forest health: it's called logging. No matter what the issue — insect infestation, fire prevention, salvage, arson, disease prevention, old-growth management — the answer is always the same: log it.

**The timber industry also has a magic cure for maintaining forest health: it's called logging.**

Now energy production is being touted as the latest "cure" which requires logging. The logging industry is eyeing the forest as a source of biofuels. It proposes to "thin" forests and gather huge amounts of woody biomass, burn it, and convert it to electrical power. There's just one problem: According to the best scientific estimates, if we cut every tree on the continent, we'd recover about one year's worth of energy! The most optimistic estimates project less than 1 percent of our nation's energy demands could be met by using trees as a source of biofuels.

If there is no future in creating alternative energy from thinning, what could possibly be the draw? And why then would anyone want to invest in such a boondoggle?

Simply because biomass extraction offers the timber industry an opportunity to reassert its control over public lands. Logging of old-growth forests has been limited by scientific finding, scarcity, and law. But the creation of a pseudo-alternative energy source offers industry opportunists three highly profitable benefits — all at the expense of American taxpayers: access to logging on public lands, fat government subsidies, and generous tax breaks.

## Rethink Tax Breaks For Private Timberland

By Roy Keene

*Eugene Register-Guard*

Congressman Greg Walden and other timber industry supporters seek to increase federal forest logging to bolster budgets and make our forest "safer and healthier." Lane County commissioners, having exhausted other funding methods, are also considering pressuring the government to increase logging. Walden claims to be "open to any (funding) ideas anybody has."

OK, here's one: Instead of simply attempting to increase logging in the public forests, why don't tax crusaders lean on Oregon's huge private forest harvest to begin fairly paying its dues?

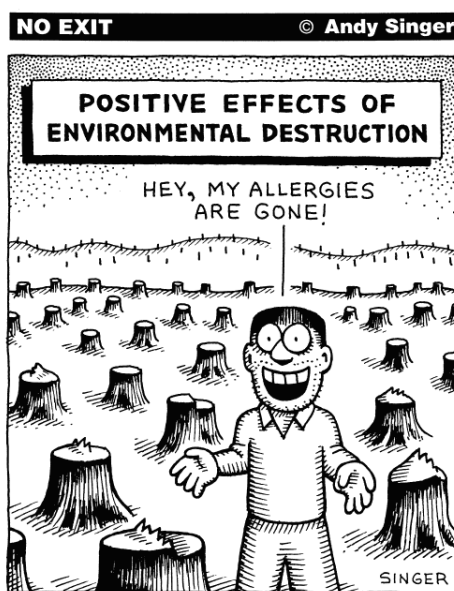
Eighty percent of Oregon's annual timber harvest comes from private forests. In Lane County, 85 percent of the harvested timber is logged from corporate lands. How these closer-to-home forests are logged and taxed has a far larger environmental and economic impact on us than federal forest management.

A few years ago, a group I worked with explored taxation as a method to restrict massive clear-cutting and the denuding of watersheds. In the process, we reviewed a tax subsidy report by the Oregon Department of Revenue. This report stated that Oregon's private forest owners receive more than a billion dollars biennially in property tax reductions as "favored individuals and businesses, thereby resulting in higher taxes for all other Oregonians."

The largest share of this relief was granted to industrial ownerships. Our group (including an accountant and several Oregon State University foresters) computed Lane County's portion of

Thinning is just the latest Trojan horse employed by timber companies to gain access to previously inaccessible lands. You'd be amazed at what begins to look like fuel load when your business demands an endless supply of raw material. There are many, many documented instances of the timber industry taking the biggest and healthiest trees in the name of thinning. Mistakes are made. Laws are circumvented, restrictions ignored. Deals are cut with the Forest Service to make thinning operations more profitable by including the harvest of mature, essentially irreplaceable trees. Purchasable politicians add midnight riders to unrelated legislation granting access to protected lands. In other words: business as usual.

Consider that the proposed plants will have to be supplied by an endless stream of log trucks that will travel further and further as areas near the facilities are cleared. The carbon dioxide they release will more than offset any energy conservation savings. And once the easily accessible material has been collected, the logging will begin in earnest because the plants are insatiable and will have to be continuously fed to justify the investments and subsidies. In the process, the forest will be decimated by countless miles of road building, and the forest floor — the precious understory which provides nourishment to the system — will



these foregone taxes to be more than \$75 million annually.

Legislated in 1977, this timber tax relief was granted to "encourage forestry and the restocking of forestlands to provide present and future benefits by enhancing the water supply, preventing erosion, providing habitat for wildlife, providing scenic and recreational opportunities and providing for needed products."

Ironically, over the ensuing decades, some of Oregon's richest watersheds were quickly cut over, often by out-of-state timber companies. Many were left as muddied and slash filled eyesores. Salmon runs declined and log exports boomed. Numerous domestic mills, unable to compete with log export prices, closed.

**Oregon's private forest owners receive more than a billion dollars biennially in property tax reductions**

In 1999, House Bill 3575 was stealthily passed, granting forest owners of more than 5,000 acres another unearned scoop of tax relief by gradually abolishing their timber harvest taxes. A tiny snippet, buried in *The Oregonian* newspaper, reported this first year of ramp-down relief to have cost the state education fund \$58 million. In 2004 this tax fell to zero, and the final financial impact to state education went undeclared.

Over the past 30 years, the good forest stewardship promised for private timber tax relief has rarely materialized. This huge subsidy continues on — obscured from the public, unaddressed by our

be torn asunder by heavy machinery. And all to produce a negligible amount of energy. All in the name of "forest health," we are told.

This is not about forest health: Nature is a better healer than extractive industry. This is not about alternative energy: wood is a poor source of biofuels and there are many better alternatives. This is an issue of science and an issue of trust. And the problem is that the proposal lacks scientific credibility and the proposers have exhausted our trust.

For 6 years the nation's forests have suffered at the hands of an environmentally hostile administration and its corporate allies. Beyond a desire to suspend environmental regulations, they share a brazenly disregard for science. The denial of global warming, the suppression of scientific studies, the muzzling of scientists who dare speak the truth, the replacement of resource managers with stooges from extractive industries; all exemplify a dangerous petulance that presumes if we just deny the facts, we can also avoid the consequences.

Scientists tell us that the carbon dioxide level is the highest in 650,000 years. Credible researchers are warning that a rapidly heating planet will be a hellish place to live. It is time to stop the senseless and suicidal neglect of our one and only planet. What is needed now is not only bold action but right action; not another resource grab orchestrated by opportunists to benefit the few at the expense of the many.

We need serious investment in viable alternative energy sources, not more snake oil which will exacerbate the problem it claims to address. Forests provide many crucial benefits which support and protect human life. They produce oxygen, filter and clean drinking water, cool the planet and attract rainfall, provide dwindling animal habitat, and store vast amounts of carbon that would otherwise accelerate global warming.

We don't need to log them. Now more than ever, we need standing forests to protect us.

*Victor Rozek lives in Eugene, Oregon, and is a former editor of the Forest Voice.*

policy makers and protected by a legion of lobbyists. Expect these people to rebut this opinion or try to obfuscate the whole issue.

When the public benefits provided to the timber industry are considered, this huge chunk of tax relief appears even more inequitable. We provide them with publicly funded roads, power, policing, firefighting, research and labor. We endure their slash burning, toxic spraying, mill emissions, heavy truck traffic, viewshed destruction and continuing pressure to log public lands — lands that need restoration, not more logging.

Decades ago when big timber was a major employer, our tolerance for these subsidies was, perhaps, understandable. But now that it barely makes the top 10 in economic contributions, why continue to treat them as "favored individuals?"

Lane County commissioners claimed that a county income tax is "not only fair, it is right." Is it fair to let 30 years of largely unearned tax relief on private forest lands continue unquestioned? Is it right to simply default to taxing public forests with more logging? Our congressmen and commissioners should ask the Oregon Department of Revenue to re-examine private timber tax policies. This update should calculate the annual tax revenues, based on the real market value of land and timber. Then contrast this amount with what is now collected. What a concept: calculating taxes due on large forest ownerships the same way real property belonging to other Oregonians is taxed!

Then we can better determine how "fair and right" current forest taxes and policies are.

*Roy Keene of Eugene, Oregon, has worked as a forester and real estate broker for 30 years.*

# Is Big Business Buying Out the Environmental Movement?

By Phil Mattera  
Corporate Research Project

In the business world these days, it appears that just about everything is for sale. Multi-billion-dollar deals are commonplace, and even venerable institutions such as the *Wall Street Journal* find themselves put into play. Yet companies are not the only things being acquired. This may turn out to be the year that big business bought a substantial part of the environmental movement.

That's one way of interpreting the remarkable level of cooperation that is emerging between some prominent environmental groups and some of the world's largest corporations. What was once an arena of fierce antagonism has become a veritable love fest as companies profess to be going green and get lavishly honored for doing so. Earlier this year, for instance, the World Resources Institute gave one of its "Courage to Lead" awards to the chief executive of General Electric.

**This may turn out to be the year that big business bought a substantial part of the environmental movement.**

Every day seems to bring another announcement from a large corporation that it is taking steps to protect the planet. IBM, informally known as Big Blue, launched its Project Big Green to help customers slash their data center energy usage. Newmont Mining Co., the world's largest gold digger, endorsed a shareholder resolution calling for a review of its environmental impact.

Home Depot introduced an Eco Options label for thousands of green products. General Motors and oil major ConocoPhillips joined the list of corporate giants that have come out in support of a mandatory ceiling on greenhouse gas emissions. Bank of America said it would invest \$20 billion in sustainable projects over the next decade.

Many of the new initiatives are being pursued in direct collaboration with environmental groups. Wal-Mart is working closely with Conservation International on its efforts to cut energy usage and switch to renewable sources of power. McDonald's has teamed up with Greenpeace to discourage deforestation caused by the growth of soybean farming in Brazil.

When buyout firms Texas Pacific Group and KKR were negotiating the takeover of utility company TXU earlier this year, they asked Environmental Defense to join the talks so that the deal, which ended up including a rollback of plans for 11 new coal-fired plants, could be assured a green seal of approval.

Observing this trend, *Business Week* detects "a remarkable evolution in the dynamic between corporate executives and activists. Once

fractious and antagonistic, it has moved toward accommodation and even mutual dependence." The question is: who is accommodating whom? Are these developments a sign that environmental campaigns have prevailed and are setting the corporate agenda? Or have enviros been duped into endorsing what may be little more than a new wave of corporate greenwash?

## An Epiphany about the Environment?

The first thing to keep in mind is that corporate America's purported embrace of environmental principles is nothing new. Something very similar happened, for example, in early 1990 around the time of the 20th anniversary of Earth Day. *Fortune* announced then that "trend spotters and forward thinkers agree that the Nineties will be the Earth Decade and that environmentalism will be a movement of massive worldwide force." *Business Week* published a story titled "The Greening of Corporate America."

The magazines cited a slew of large companies that were said to be embarking on significant green initiatives, among them DuPont, General Electric, McDonald's, 3M, Union Carbide and Procter & Gamble. Corporations such as these put on their own Earth Tech environmental technology fair on the National Mall and endorsed Earth Day events and promotions.

A difference between then and now is that there was a lot more skepticism about corporate America's claim of having had an epiphany about the environment. It was obvious to many that business was trying to undo the damage caused by environmental disasters such as Union Carbide's deadly Bhopal chemical leak, the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska and the deterioration of the ozone layer. Activist groups charged that corporations were engaging in a bogus public relations effort which they branded "greenwash." Greenpeace staged a protest at DuPont's Earth Tech exhibit, leading to a number of arrests.

**The insistence that companies actually substantiate their claims put a damper on the entire green product movement.**

Misgivings about corporate environmentalism grew as it was discovered that many of the claims about green products were misleading, false or irrelevant. Mobil Chemical, for instance, was challenged for calling its new Hefty trash bags biodegradable, since they required extended exposure to light rather than their usual fate of being buried in landfills. Procter & Gamble was taken to task for labeling its Pampers and Luvs disposable diapers "compostable" when only a handful of facilities in the entire country were equipped to do such processing.

Various companies bragged that their products in aerosol cans were now safe for the environment when all they had done was comply with a ban on the use of chlorofluorocarbons. Some of the self-proclaimed green producers found themselves being investigated by state attorneys general for false advertising and other offenses against the consumer.

The insistence that companies actually substantiate their claims put a damper on the entire green product movement. Yet some companies continued to see advantages in being associated with environmental principles. In one of the more brazen moves, DuPont ran TV



ads in the late 1990's depicting sea lions applauding a passing oil tanker (accompanied by Beethoven's "Ode to Joy") to take credit for the fact that its Conoco subsidiary had begun using double hulls in its ships, conveniently failing to mention that it was one of the last oil companies to take that step.

At the same time, some companies began to infiltrate the environmental movement by contributing to more moderate groups and getting spots on their boards. They also joined organizations such as CERES, which encourages green groups and corporations to endorse a common set of principles. By the early 2000s, some companies sought to depict themselves as being not merely in step with the environmental movement but at the forefront of a green transformation.

British Petroleum started publicizing its investments in renewable energy and saying that its initials really stood for Beyond Petroleum — all despite the fact that its operations continued to be dominated by fossil fuels.

This paved the way for General Electric's "ecomagination" P.R. blitz, which it pursued even while dragging its feet in the cleanup of PCB contamination in New York's Hudson River. GE was followed by Wal-Mart, which in October 2005 sought to transform its image as a leading cause of pollution-generating sprawl by announcing a program to move toward zero waste and maximum use of renewable energy.

In recent months the floodgates have opened, with more and more large companies calling for federal caps on greenhouse gas emissions. In January, 10 major corporations — including Alcoa, Caterpillar, DuPont and General Electric — joined with the Natural Resources Defense Council and other enviro groups in forming the U.S. Climate Action Partnership. A few months later, General Motors, arguably one of the companies that has done the most to exacerbate global warming, signed on as well.

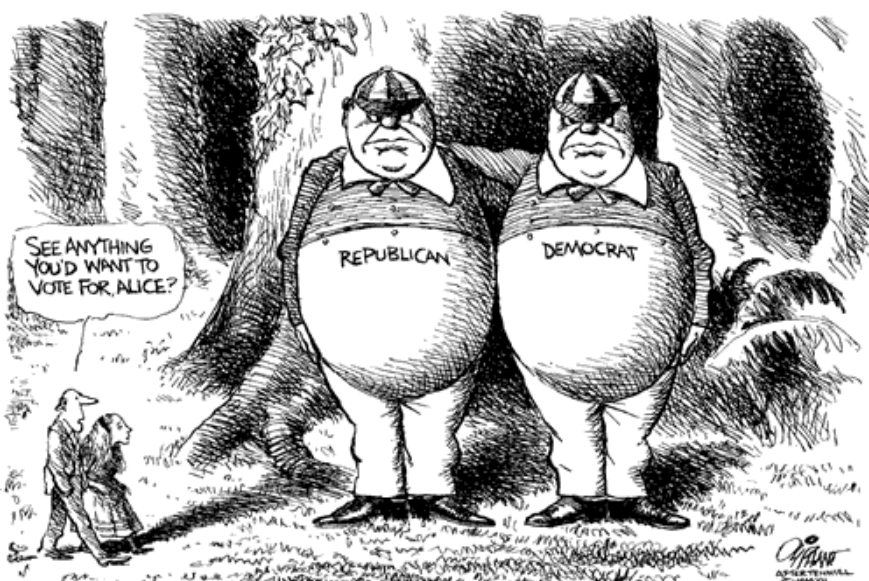
## A Cause for Celebration or Dismay?

Today the term "greenwash" is rarely uttered, and differences in positions between corporate giants and mainstream environmental groups are increasingly difficult to discern. Everywhere one looks, enviros and executives have locked arms and are marching together to save the planet. Is this a cause for celebration or dismay?

**At the same time, some companies began to infiltrate the environmental movement itself by contributing to the more moderate groups and getting spots on their boards.**

Answering this question begins with the recognition that companies do not all enter the environmental fold in the same way. Here are some of their different paths:

**Defeat.** Some companies did not embrace green principles on their own — they were forced to do so after being successfully targeted by aggressive



environmental campaigns. Home Depot abandoned the sale of lumber harvested in old-growth forests several years ago after being pummeled by groups such as Rainforest Action Network. Responding to similar campaign pressure, Boise Cascade also agreed to stop sourcing from endangered forests and J.P. Morgan Chase agreed to take environmental impacts into account in its international lending activities. Dell started taking computer recycling seriously only after it was pressed to do so by groups such as the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition.

**Diversion.** It is apparent that Wal-Mart is using its newfound green consciousness as a means of diverting public attention away from its dismal record in other areas, especially the treatment of workers. In doing so, it hopes to peel environmentalists away from the broad anti-Wal-Mart movement. BP's emphasis on the environment was no doubt made more urgent by the need to repair an image damaged by allegations that a 2005 refinery fire in Texas that killed 15 people was the fault of management. To varying degrees, many other companies that have jumped on the green bandwagon have sins they want the public to forget.

**Opportunism.** There is so much hype these days about protecting the environment that many companies are going green simply to earn more green. There are some market moves, such as Toyota's push on hybrids, that also appear to have some environmental legitimacy. Yet there are also instances of sheer opportunism, such as the effort by Nuclear Energy Institute to depict nukes as an environmentally desirable alternative to fossil fuels. Not to mention surreal cases such as the decision by Britain's BAE Systems to develop environmentally friendly munitions, including low-toxin rockets and lead-free bullets.

In other words, the suggestion that the new business environmentalism flows simply from a heightened concern for the planet is far from the truth. Corporations always act in their own self-interest and one way or another are always seeking to maximize profits. It used to be that they had to hide that fact. Today they flaunt it, because there is a widespread notion that eco-friendly policies are



**The real purpose of the environmental movement is not simply to make technical adjustments to the way business operates (that's the job of consultants) but rather to push for fundamental and systemic changes.**

totally consistent with cutting costs and fattening the bottom line.

When GE's "ecomagination" campaign was launched, CEO Jeffrey Immelt insisted "it's no longer a zero-sum game — things that are good for the environment are also good for business." This was echoed by Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott, who said in a speech announcing his company's green initiative that "being a good steward of the environment and in our communities, and being an efficient and profitable business, are not mutually exclusive. In fact they are one in the same." That's probably because Scott sees environmentalism as merely an extension of the company's legendary penny-pinching, as glorified efficiency measures.

**Chevron Wants to Lead**

Many environmental activists seem to welcome the notion of a convergence of business interests and green interests, but it all seems too good to be true. If eco-friendly policies are entirely "win-win," then why did corporations resist them for so long? It is hard to believe that the conflict between profit maximization and environmental protection, which characterized the entire history of the ecological movement, has suddenly evaporated.

Either corporations are fooling themselves, in which case they will eventually realize there is no environmental free lunch and renege on their green promises, or they are fooling us and are perpetrating a massive public relations hoax. A third interpretation is that companies are taking voluntary steps that are genuine but inadequate to solve the problems at hand and are mainly meant to prevent stricter, enforceable regulation.

In any event, it would behoove

enviros to be more skeptical of corporate green claims and less eager to jump into bed with business. It certainly makes sense to seek specific concessions from corporations and to offer moderate praise when they comply, but activists should maintain an arm's-length relationship to business and not see themselves as partners. After all, the real purpose of the environmental movement is not simply to make technical adjustments to the way business operates (that's the job of consultants) but rather to push for fundamental and systemic changes.

Moreover, there is a risk that the heightened level of collaboration will undermine the justification for an independent environmental movement. Why pay dues to a green group if its agenda is virtually identical to that of GE and DuPont? Already there are hints that business views itself, not activist groups, as the real green vanguard. Chevron, for instance, has been running a series of environmental ads with the tagline "Will you join us?"

Join them? Wasn't it Chevron and the other oil giants that played a major role in creating global warming? Wasn't it Chevron that used the repressive regime in Nigeria to protect its environmentally destructive operations in the Niger Delta? Wasn't it Chevron's Texaco unit that dumped more than 18 billion gallons of toxic waste in Ecuador? And wasn't it Chevron that was accused of systematically underpaying royalties to the federal government for natural gas extracted from the Gulf of Mexico? That is not the kind of track record that confers the mantle of environmental leadership.

In fact, we shouldn't be joining any company's environmental initiative. Human activists should be leading the effort to clean up the planet, and corporations should be made to follow our lead.

*Phil Matterna is research director of Good Jobs First and head of its Corporate Research Project.*

***"Man will survive as a species for one reason: He can adapt to the destructive effects of our power-intoxicated technology and of our ungoverned population growth, to the dirt, pollution and noise of a New York or Tokyo. And that is the tragedy. It is not man the ecological crisis threatens to destroy but the quality of human life."***

**— Dr. René Dubos**



# Government Agents, Keystone Saboteurs and the Soccer Mom Judge Green Sabotage as “Terrorism”

By Michael Donnelly

*Whenever the ends of government are perverted, and public liberty manifestly endangered, and all other means of redress are ineffectual, the people may, and of right ought to reform the old, or establish a new government. The doctrine of nonresistance against arbitrary power, and oppression, is absurd, slavish, and destructive of the good and happiness of mankind.*

—New Hampshire Constitution Bill of Rights, Article 10

*“The message to the community is we will not tolerate acts of violence to affect public debate.”*

— Federal Judge Ann Aiken

With the hectoring tone of a petty hall monitor, Clinton-appointed Judge Ann Aiken let out what the Operation Backfire/Green Scare prosecutions are really about. In an era of state-sponsored terrorism as “liberation,” where the United States has over 700 military bases in over 140 countries, a US judge actually deems the minor league violence of a handful of young, misguided idealists “terrorism” and scolds the larger, non-indicted community those activists came from — this truly belongs to Orwell, Kafka, Cheney or Gonzales.

**In an era of state-sponsored terrorism as “liberation,” .. a US judge actually deems the minor league violence of a handful of young, misguided idealists “terrorism”**

Just what “community” is the judge chastising/profiling? The Eugene, Oregon, community of radical environmentalists in particular, eco-activists in general and/or anyone who ever justified destroying the property of those who they viewed as oppressors. We’re not even talking about those like Golda Meir or Osama bin Laden who justified not just property destruction, but attacks on the persons of their enemies. All that ever happened in the Operation Backfire cases is property damage. Not a single person was hurt in any of the arsons.

The SUV-driving, suburban soccer mom-with-six kids judge has made a number of strange comments from the bench. She’s gone so far as to tout Al Gore



as an alternative model of activism! She told folks who burned a feral horse slaughtering plant that they “should have started a fund and bought and fed the horses.” She told defendants that once they serve their time, they cannot join animal protection or other activist groups, but the Sierra Club or Audubon Society would get an exception!

**Judge Aiken and the Federal Prosecutors have violated ex post facto as at the time of the arson, these penalties did not yet exist**

But, none is more telling than her pronouncement putting “the community” on trial. She’s even warned that “Civil Disobedience has no place in a Democracy” — tell it to the Founders.

## Traitors or Freedom Fighters?

Speaking of the Founders, don’t we all, come grade school, get fed the righteous story of the 1773 Boston Tea Party, the most famous case of property damage in an attempt to affect public debate? (At least the Green Scare defendants didn’t disguise themselves as an oppressed/occupied minority like Sam Adams and gang.) Yet, a couple centuries later, we now have judges mirroring the Tea Party’s target, King George III, whose response presaged another mad leader named George, “I desire what is good. Therefore, everyone who does not agree with me is a traitor.”

But lecturing “the community” on just what the power structure will “tolerate” is but one, and not the most important one, of Judge Aiken’s prejudicial notions. The most important is her determination that ecosabotage constitutes “Terrorism.” The determination allows for upward enhancement sentences to be handed down. While a simple arson with no personal injuries usually merits a median sentence of 43 months in Federal cases, the “terrorism” determination allows for “enhancement” additions of up to 20+ years! It also means harsher prison conditions for those sentenced.

## Ex post facto and bad bargains

Another analogy to the U.S. Revolution is that one of the reasons for the revolt was the use of ex post facto laws by the British. An ex post facto law is one that retroactively changes the legal consequences of acts committed before enactment of the law. Article 1, Sections 9 and 10 of the U.S. Constitution bans retroactive consequences in criminal cases, as does the Fourteenth Amendment.

Yet, the upward enhancement penalties the defendants are sentenced with under the sentencing code found in U.S.S.G. 3A1.4 did not exist when the crimes were committed. Originally, only crimes related to “international terrorism” qualified for the enhancements under the Clinton-signed law. In 2001, the guidelines were adjusted to allow for enhancements if convicted of the “federal crime of terrorism.” None of the offenses the defendants have been found guilty of under 18 U.S.C. §§ 844(f)(1), 844(i), and 1366(a) are explicitly “federal crimes of terrorism,” nor did they occur after the 2001 amendments.

By the common standard dating back to the landmark case *Calder v. Bull*, Judge Aiken and the Federal Prosecutors have violated ex post facto as at the time of the arson,

these penalties did not yet exist nor was property damage defined as a “federal crime of terrorism.” Thus, it qualifies with Justice Chase’s four points defining prohibited ex post facto:

“I will state what laws I consider ex post facto laws, within the words and the intent of the prohibition.

1st. Every law that makes an action, done before the passing of the law, and which was innocent when done, criminal; and punishes such action.

2nd. Every law that aggravates a crime, or makes it greater than it was, when committed.

3rd. Every law that changes the punishment, and inflicts a greater punishment, than the law annexed to the crime, when committed.

4th. Every law that alters the legal rules of evidence, and receives less, or different, testimony, than the law required at the time of the commission of the offence, in order to convict the offender. All these, and similar laws, are manifestly unjust and oppressive.”

— Justice Samuel Chase, *Calder v. Bull* 1798

*“The individual cannot bargain with the State. The State recognizes no coinage but power, and it issues the coins itself.”*

— Ursula K. Le Guin “The Dispossessed”

**The first two defendants to be sentenced by Aiken both got “terrorism enhancements” even though both had cooperated with authorities**

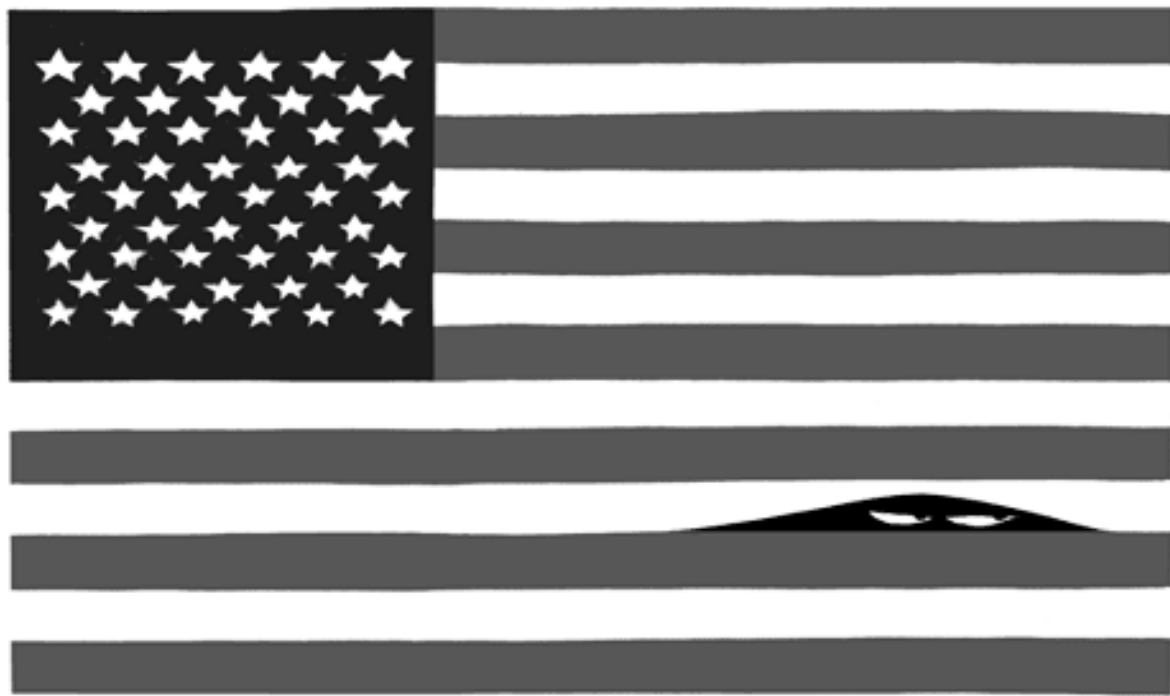
The first two defendants to be sentenced by Aiken both got “terrorism enhancements” even though both had cooperated with authorities and named their comrades. Stan Meyerhoff, who participated in many of the arsons, including the burning of SUVs at a dealership, a minor fire at a police substation and a fire at a genetic-engineered tree farm was handed down a 13 year sentence — 30 months less than the “reward” the Feds offered for his snitching, but with the added “enhancement,” about 10 years more than the typical arson case.

As a defined “terrorist,” Meyerhoff will spend his time in a special high-security prison, where he is likely to face attacks as a first offender and snitch, — a prospect acknowledged, yet dismissed, by the judge who told those in the courtroom to write their legislators and “we all have to become prison reform activists.” Some activists, on the other hand, angrily noted, “Stan deserves it,” referring to his cooperation.

The second to be sentenced, Kevin Tubbs, received 12 years and seven months — again reduced because he informed on others. Tubbs pleaded guilty to 53 counts of arson and two attempted arsons. Judge Aiken completely dismissed Tubbs’ claim that he acted in urgent desperation given the fate of animals and the environment.

In contrast, Michael Fortier, who participated in the Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people, served 10 years and is now in the Federal Witness Protection Program. Fortier was ironically released in January 2006 on the same day that many of the eco-sabotage defendants were indicted.

Sentencing will come one by one for the rest of the Eugene informant defendants and the non-cooperating 4 next week. Out of the 22 charged; one is dead, 4 on the run and one, top informant Jacob “Jake” Ferguson is free and without any charges, though he participated in more arsons than any of the others.



## THE STATE OF THE UNION

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One major informant, Lacey Phillabaum, has begun serving her sentence, the length of which has been left undetermined pending the outcome of her pro-prosecution testimony at the trial of Briana Waters, the sole defendant to fiercely claim innocence and demand a trial. Waters' trial is the single remaining chance of exposing the government's shady provocateuring in the case. One of the main reasons for the huge sentences faced is to prevent just such an exposure.

### Government Agents and Keystone Terrorists

As one who knows some of the defendants, including some of the informants, I cannot write about this case without expressing my personal feelings or speaking to my experience during those days. Though I find the arsons wrong-headed and extremely counter-productive, I truly believe that the fingerprints of government agents are all over this. I was there when one person who is not amongst the defendants and who has disappeared completely was agitating for ever more violent actions. He, a friend of Ferguson, even claimed many such actions himself — though all such claims have failed to stand up to any scrutiny. I warned some of the very folks charged to “not get talked into anything stupid.” I obviously failed.

**“terrorism” has been redefined so as to be meaningless other than as a hammer to smash dissent**

That the first ELF action in the U.S. was the arson at the Detroit Ranger Station, in my backyard, where we had already won, has always concerned me. At Detroit's Opal Creek and Breitenbush, the decades-long sustained effort to protect the Ancient Forests there had paid off. Same with the 48-hour-later arson at the Oakridge Ranger Station where activists had just won the battle over logging at Warner Creek. My questions for Ferguson would be “Why were these targets chosen?” And, “Who pointed you towards them?” (Sadly, I believe I already know the answers.)

The bottom line on all this is:

- the forest protection movement which suffered a previous deadly blow on April 2, 1993, has for all practical purposes been finished off;
- same with Earth First! (which is now more concerned with the issues of transsexuals than any eco-issue — I'm not kidding — check their website!);
- “terrorism” has been redefined so as to be meaningless other than as a hammer to smash dissent;
- and, all progressive movements have to now be even more cautious and suspicious within their own ranks — a mind-set that preordains failure.

The Feds say that all these folks are “terrorists,” yet can you imagine the Feds cutting the same deal with Muhammad Atta that they did with Jake Ferguson? No charges and an estimated \$150,000 in payments to implicate his fellow jihadist? Can you imagine real terrorists (or even a Tony Soprano) allowing a paid informant to walk free in their hometown like Ferguson is in Eugene? Unlike Fortier, Ferguson doesn't even have to hide out in a protection program. He's calmly walking the streets. These facts alone should lay to rest the terrorist claims and the on-going insult to all who have suffered at the hands of real terrorists — state-sponsored or otherwise.

Some terrorists! Unlike, say the Weather Underground, who hid out (underground, of course) for decades and never snitched on their comrades or silently took their sentences; these folks come off looking, as one of Leonard Peltier's former attorneys noted to me recently, like “a college club” with no internal discipline, much less incontrovertible basic values.

I understand the frustrations of these folks. I understand their fear for the planet we all love. I'm sure most everyone reading this can understand the underlying sense of desperation. Even so, their actions really made little sense to me — then or now in the case of the informants, given the enhanced sentencing even for those who snitch. But, I can certainly make sense of the Government's heavy-handed response and their agent provocateuring in the first place.

*Michael Donnelly has long been involved in Forest protection efforts. He has always opposed property damage or personal assaults as means to further the cause. He can be reached at [pahtoo@aol.com](mailto:pahtoo@aol.com).*

**UPDATE:** At the time of publication, the following sentences had been handed out:\*

1. Stanislas Gregory Meyerhoff (age 29) 13 years, received the terrorism enhancement
2. Kevin Tubbs (age 38) 12 years, 7 months, received the terrorism enhancement
3. Chelsea Dawn Gerlach (age 30) 9 years, received the terrorism enhancement
4. Nathan Fraser Block (age 26) 7 years, 7 months, received the terrorism enhancement
5. Joyanna L. Zacher (age 29) 7 years, 7 months, received the terrorism enhancement
6. Suzanne Nichole Savoie (age 29) 4 years, 3 months, received the terrorism enhancement
7. Kendall Tankersley (age 30) 3 years, 8 months
8. Darren Todd Thurston (age 37) 3 years, 1 month
9. Daniel Gerard McGowan (age 33) 7 years, received the terrorism enhancement
10. Jonathan Mark Christopher Paul (age 41). Judge Ann Aiken began to sentence Paul to 4 years, 3 months, but an objection from his attorney has postponed the sentencing to July 3.

To be sentenced in the Western District of Washington: Lacey Phillabaum and Jennifer Kolar

\* information from [www.eugeneweekly.com](http://www.eugeneweekly.com)

# My Brother's Not A Terrorist

By Caroline Paul  
May 27, 2007

My brother is considered one of the biggest domestic terrorists in the country. You probably haven't heard of him, and I think that's odd.

He has devoted his life to stopping animals' suffering. To this end, he has broken the law. He crept into animal labs to free dogs. He dismantled corrals to release wild mustangs. He went undercover to film the treatment of minks. He put himself between whales and whalers despite warnings that he would be jailed.

And nearly 10 years ago, he burned down a horse slaughterhouse in Redmond, Oregon. It is for this final act that the U.S. government considers him among the ranks of Osama bin Laden, Eric Rudolph and Ramzi Ahmed .

“This is a classic case of terrorism,” the federal prosecutor said earnestly to the judge during a hearing in my brother's case.

My brother, Jonathan Paul, has pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Eugene, Oregon. He will find out June 5 whether the judge considers his actions deserving of the “terrorism enhancement” to his sentence.

Nine other members of the Earth Liberation Front and the Animal Liberation Front, who pleaded guilty to different charges, are being sentenced as well. The first, sentenced Wednesday, was deemed a terrorist. If a terrorism enhancement is imposed, my brother's recommended sentence could go from less than three years to more than 14 years.

Don't let me give you the impression that I think arson is something to be taken lightly. I was a San Francisco firefighter for 13 years. I was angry and dismayed that my brother chose arson as a route to stop animal suffering. But “a classic case of terrorism”?

Federal laws define terrorism as one of a laundry list of offenses committed for the purpose of coercing the government to change its policies. But the case involving my brother represents the first time that terrorism enhancements have been sought when all the evidence shows that the defendants took steps to make sure no one would be endangered.

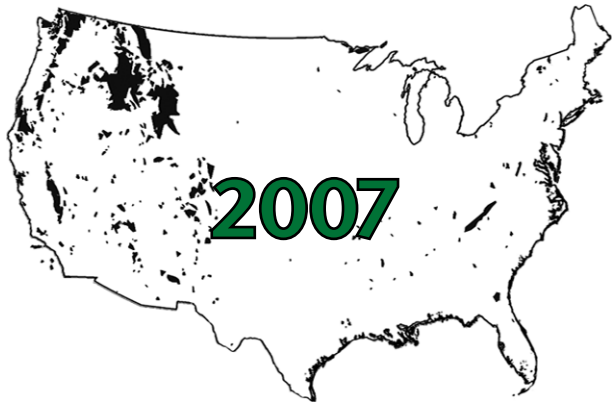
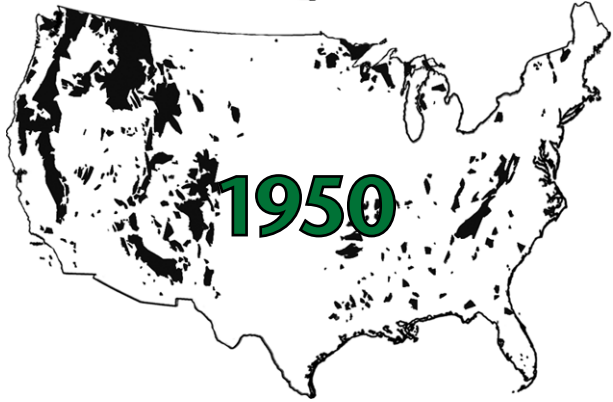
Clearly the government is trying to expand — or more accurately, dilute — the definition of a terrorist to encompass those who engage in property damage. Past terrorism cases also have involved targets with government links. But the Cavel West Slaughterhouse was a private Belgian corporation; its horse meat went to Europe and Japan. The prosecutor has argued that some of the horses were wild mustangs, sold by the federal Bureau of Land Management, and that therefore there was a clear intent to disrupt government policy.

There's a legal term for this. It's called “over-reaching.”

How much safer do we feel now that these animal rights activists, who never have hurt or intended to hurt a single human being, might be confined to a maximum-security prison? Could it really be true that the most powerful country in the world feels “coerced” by a bunch of bunny huggers? Or is it possible that the government just wants to crow about convicting another “terrorist” while the main one is still at large?

*Caroline Paul is a writer in San Francisco. She wrote this for the Los Angeles Times.*

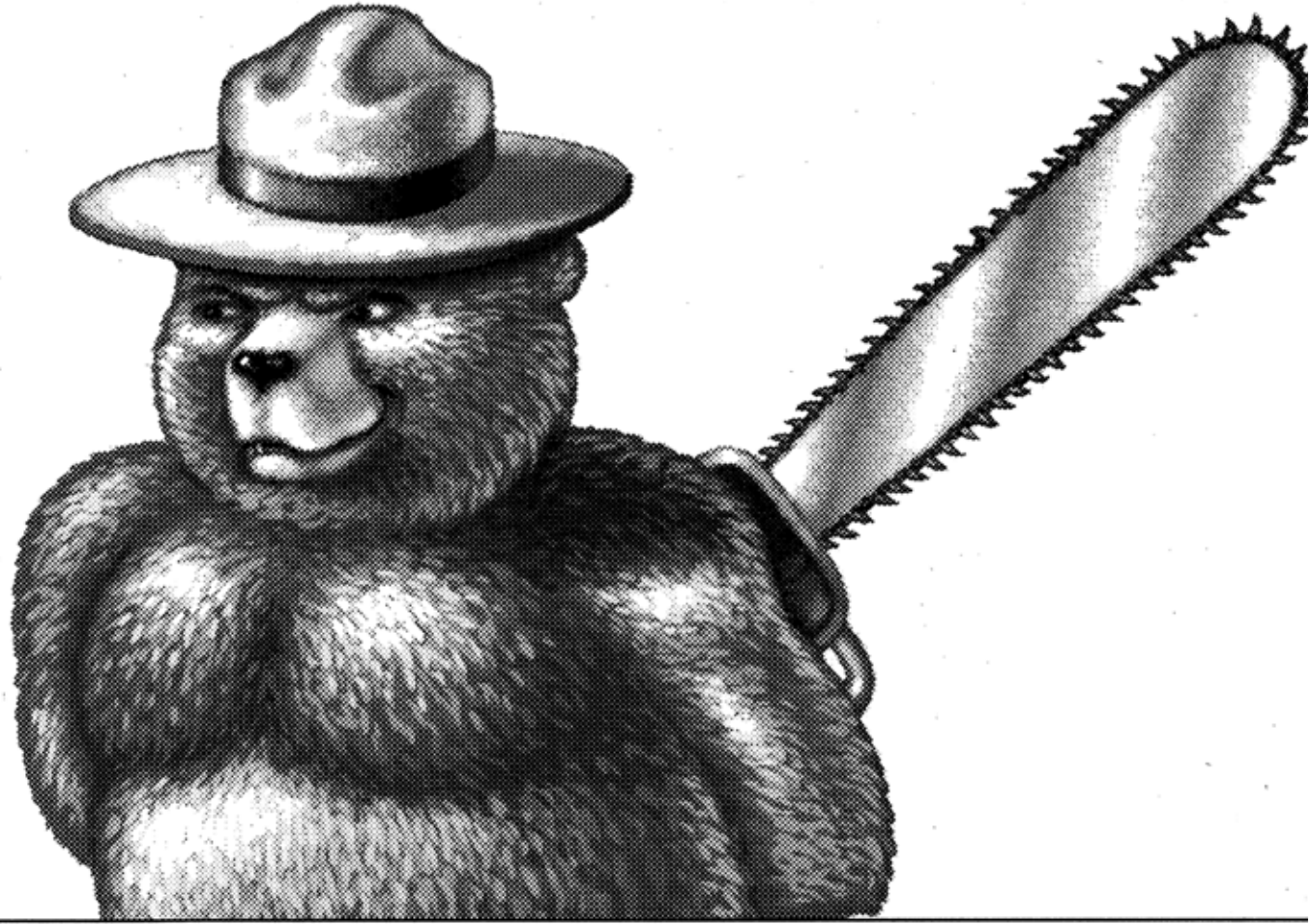
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