

Exhibits:

1. Running Backwards report <https://bit.ly/RunningBackwardsV2>
2. Documentation of timber sales losing money: May 21, 2019 article by economist Dr. John Talberth titled Destructive Federal Timber Sale Program Loses Nearly \$2B a Year <https://sustainable-economy.org/destructive-federal-timber-sale-program-loses-nearly-2-billion-a-year/>
3. ScientistLetterOpposingLoggingProvisionsInBBB_BIF4Nov21 aka “200 scientists oppose” <https://bit.ly/368ckKk>
4. March 2022 Summary of NREPA H.R.1755 pdf
5. NREPA map 2022 pdf
6. Video of a feller buncher taking down trees. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kR-VTcN5Mes> – start at 2:10 and end at 2:30 – 20 seconds
7. Photos of clearcuts taken by Steve Platt
8. House Report “Solving The Climate Crisis” page 430 <https://climatecrisis.house.gov/report>

I moved to Idaho in 1977 and have lived there for 44 years. From 1978-1981 I lived in a cabin in the backcountry with no running water or electricity. After that, I moved to a ranch along the Salmon River surrounded by a national forest that was my nearest neighbor for 38 years along with all the wildlife it supported.

I began advocating for the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act 32 years ago, in 1990.¹ A forest is the best existing technology to store carbon. And it’s free, meaning, no cost. So, in addition to protecting species and habitat, by keeping carbon sequestered in 23 million acres of national forest in the Northern Rockies bioregion, NREPA is also a climate solution.²

But the climate emergency hasn’t stopped the U.S. Forest Service from facilitating taxpayer-subsidized commercial logging for timber industry profit, which they’ve been doing for decades under multiple presidents in both parties.

Logging is a huge emitter of carbon.³ And most commercial logging is mechanized, so it’s not about jobs. A single operator of heavy equipment called a feller buncher can saw through a living tree trunk and add the newly dead tree to a pile of logs in the time it took me to type this paragraph.

¹ H.R.1755 NREPA map and summary

² House report “Solving The Climate Crisis” p. 430 <https://climatecrisis.house.gov/report>

³ Running Backwards report <https://bit.ly/RunningBackwardsV2>

The Forest Service loses nearly \$2B a year on timber sales.⁴ Yet the agency continues to facilitate felling mature trees under the guise of “thinning,” “forest health,” “salvage,” “fuel reduction,” and the ever-popular “restoration”—all euphemisms for commercial logging.

Before the Infrastructure Law was enacted, more than 200 independent scientists wrote a letter asking House committee chairs to remove the logging provisions.⁵

Logging in U.S. forests releases more than 723 million tons of CO₂ annually. This is comparable to annual CO₂ emissions from burning coal in the U.S.

Today this Subcommittee is seeking information about wildfires and communities and whether the Forest Service is alleviating or contributing to the problem.

The independent scientists wrote:

“We have watched as one large wildfire after another has swept through tens of thousands of acres where commercial thinning had previously occurred due to extreme fire weather driven by climate change. Removing trees can alter a forest’s microclimate, and can often increase fire intensity. In contrast, forests protected from logging, and those with high carbon biomass and carbon storage, more often burn at equal or lower intensities when fires do occur.”

In other words, “thinning” often *increases* fire intensity, while protected forests are more likely to *lower* the intensity should a fire occur.

Our forests have had an evolutionary relationship with fire for millions of years. When today’s humans “manage” a forest, they often clearcut, leaving the non-profitable branches, bushes, saplings, and limbs to dry out. So, clearcuts are tinderboxes.⁶

Logging conducted under the guise of “thinning” degrades the forest and emits 8 times more CO₂ into the atmosphere per acre than wildfire and insects combined.⁷ Forest degradation accelerates climate change, which causes more extreme climate-driven weather events.

Wildfires ARE getting worse, not because we have too many trees, but because of climate-driven weather events accelerated by removing trees under the guise of “thinning” or “fuel reduction.”

⁴ May 21, 2019 article by economist Dr. John Talberth “Destructive Federal Timber Sale Program Loses Nearly \$2B a Year” <https://sustainable-economy.org/destructive-federal-timber-sale-program-loses-nearly-2-billion-a-year/>

⁵ ScientistLetterOpposingLoggingProvisions <https://bit.ly/368ckKk>

⁶ Platt clearcut photos

⁷ Harris et al. 2016 <https://cbmjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13021-016-0066-5>

Independent scientists NOT funded by the Forest Service, the timber and wood products industry, or the companies that sell feller bunchers tell us that the most effective way to protect homes is to harden them with fire-resistant materials and ember-proof vents and create defensible space.

When other scientists promote removing trees beyond 100 feet of defensible space from a home or community, the headline becomes “Scientists Disagree.” This confuses the public.

Let me clear up the confusion. When a scientist tells you that the solution is to remove more trees from our national forests, look for who is paying that scientist.

I’m calling on Congress to do four things:

1. PASS NREPA.
2. REPEAL the provisions in the Infrastructure Law that subsidize logging.
3. ALLOCATE some of that money to harden homes and create defensible space—and use the rest to help American families.
4. PASS A LAW requiring the Forest Service to prioritize and incentivize preservation.

Preserving large landscape national forest ecosystems and all the carbon they store will significantly advance the goals of 30 x 30. 2030 is only 8 years away.

I know it’s not easy to overcome the timber industry’s influence, money, and decades of misinformation. But we must preserve the carbon stored by living trees in forest ecosystems to ensure the survival of species including our own.

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