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Testimony on *Failed Federal Forest Policies: Endangering Jobs, Forests and Species*
May 21, 2012

I am Mitch Friedman, a biologist and Executive Director of Conservation Northwest. I have been involved in federal forest issues since 1985. I believe that the path forward on federal timber policy is clear and full of opportunity if we apply the leadership and resources to follow it.

In the mid 1980's, prior to founding Conservation Northwest, I was a organized many protests against logging of ancient forest, including the first protest to protect spotted owls. My past is also full of appeals and lawsuits on these issues.

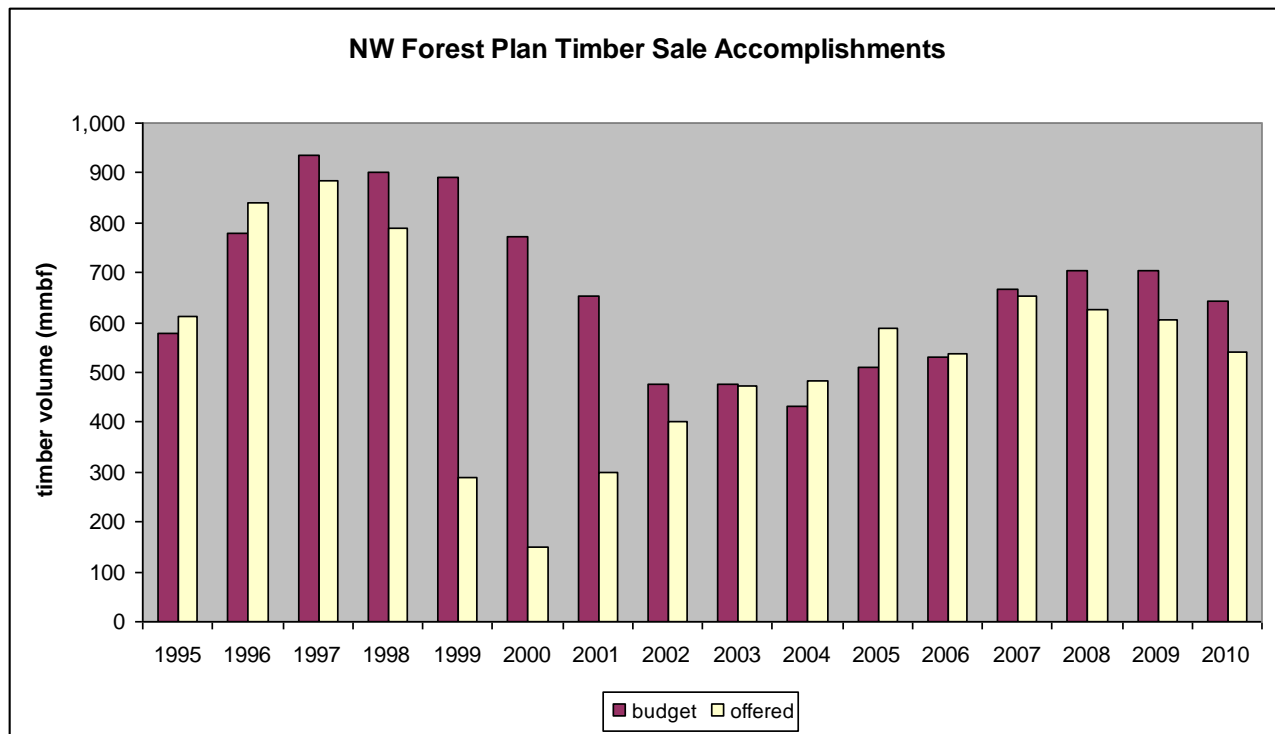
About a decade ago, we at Conservation Northwest changed our approach. We observed that few people, even in the timber industry, any longer favored logging old growth. We took the opportunity to explore common ground to benefit ecological and human communities.

Conservation Northwest engaged fully in one of the first novel collaborations in the West, here on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. A group of dedicated and diverse stakeholders transitioned the Forest Service away from clearcutting big, old trees by promoting beneficial thinning projects in stands of second growth. Appeals and lawsuits ended, timber flowed, ecosystems and recreation benefited: A win-win-win.

Conservation Northwest is based in Bellingham and employs field associates in rural forest communities throughout the region. We have at least scrutinized most major national forest projects across the state for two decades. Today we are most heavily invested around the Colville National Forest, where we are a core partner in the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition. This collaboration is behind the success of about 30 projects over eight years without environmental controversy. This work is now expanding thanks to a million dollar/year grant from the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program.

The collaborations we are involved in are real. They include people with whom we once battled but have reached accords in how we view forests and management. Collaboration builds trust and a culture of problem solving. When confronted with a new challenge, the process involves civil and genuine effort to identify common interests, evaluate science sometimes with the aid of experts, and eventually reach agreement and action. **I have witnessed collaborative groups reach agreement to address objectives like wildfire fuels management, spotted owl habitat, threats to forest and watershed health, and even wilderness protection.** I invite you to take a field trip to see projects created by the Pinchot Partners or Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition, and observe how collaboration is working.

My experience is not the exception, but is now typical across the region. Federal forests in the West are producing as much timber as they are budgeted for, and doing so with much less controversy or litigation expense than in past. This graphic compares budgeted targets and volume offered for the Forest Service and BLM in WA, OR and CA over a fifteen year period.



If Congress provided more funds, the agencies could produce more controversy-free timber, notwithstanding protections for owls, salmon and other important values. Conservation Northwest and other groups will soon release a commissioned study that provides detailed estimates of uncontroversial timber available on Northwest federal lands. **Federal timber volumes can be increased substantially without reducing environmental safeguards, cutting special areas, building new roads, or otherwise harming our natural heritage.**

If Congress wants more timber cut from federal land, you need only invest more funds and allow ecological protections and collaborative groups to guide those funds into most beneficial projects.

On the other hand, efficiency can be improved in federal environmental analysis and contracting procedures to provide better return on investment for the Treasury and communities. The agencies have become somewhat risk averse, and are generally following the same NEPA approach for popular restoration projects as they would to clearcut old growth. Many stakeholders want reform and innovation, and are working for it through pilot projects under authorities like the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act, Proof of Concept, and others. **I am confident that efficiency can be increased without reducing collaboration or robust protections for water, wildlife and other public resources.**

With regard to constraints on timber production and jobs in the region, the 800 pound gorilla is the market. The economy remains sluggish and housing starts are a third of their boom level. British Columbia continues to dump subsidized softwood. Domestic timber prices are therefore so weak that some federal timber sales have no bidders.

The strong markets are overseas. Private lands are now being logged very aggressively to meet demand in China, Japan, and other Pacific markets. Almost 20% of the logs cut in Washington and Oregon are exported whole, a volume that is 2.5 times that cut from federal lands here. Those exported logs are from private lands and touch the hands of few American workers.

I get the concerns of mill owners and workers. But the reasons that loaded trucks bypass them on the way to export yards do not include protections for spotted owls or other natural resources. I think it is wise for the committee explore ways to boost economic activity and timber jobs. The best opportunities for doing so are addressing raw log exports and investing more in programs like the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act that help communities by improving our forests and watersheds.

Policy should be based on a review of what is working. **Presently we have less conflict and controversy on our federal lands than we've had in decades. That is the result of land management policies that protect our assets and collaborations that identify common ground and build long term community equity.**

By staying the course on these successful principles while also exploring ways to improve returns on federal investment, we can provide a strong foundation for growth in timber jobs as the economy recovers, and improve the health of our forests and rural communities while protecting the landscapes, streams and wildlife that make our region great.