

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2009

The Honorable Nick Rahall
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
National Parks, Forests and
Public Lands Subcommittee
1440 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rahall and Chairman Grijalva:

Two weeks ago, Sierra Pacific Industries announced it was closing its Quincy, California (population 2,000) mill citing “the reduced availability of national forest timber resulting from litigation” as the main reason 150 hardworking men and women will lose their jobs. In addition, there are over 200 jobs indirectly associated with the mill's operation that will also be affected. This closure is especially cruel because this community is the site of the famed Quincy Library Group, which was a working group, composed of industry, environmental and community officials that were formed to stabilize the local economy, preserve jobs, protect the environment, reduce the threat of fire, and provide needed money for local schools and roads. This mill closing is a serious blow to all of these goals.

Although it is not reflected in press coverage of our economic problems, the 1.08 million people in various segments of the wood and paper industry represent a larger share of U.S. employment than the automobile industry (828,500 as of November, 2008). Therefore, we respectfully request that National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee hold an oversight hearing on the decline the U.S. timber industry and the continuing loss of timber-related jobs. We ask that this hearing take place as soon as possible to find solutions for a problem that disproportionately affects rural Western communities. The lives and well-being of the families where mill closures are happening are at stake.

For decades timber communities throughout the West have been mired in a permanent economic recession, hemorrhaging high paying timber jobs and shackled with double digit unemployment numbers year after year. Promises made during the Clinton and Bush Administrations for sustainable timber yields have never been kept and the only thing outpacing the job losses in these communities is the dangerous build up of fuel loads in our national forests. The very laws and regulations that were created to protect these lands are now the greatest danger to our forests and the communities located near them.

A hearing on the problems facing the U.S. timber industry is the first step in bringing a proper balance back to our land management practices. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Wally Henger

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