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Testimony on:
Restoring Public Access to the Public's Lands:
Issues Impacting Multiple-use on Our National Forests

September 19, 2011

My name is Michael Wood. I am the Business Agent for United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Carpenters Industrial Council Local 3074 and I represent the saw mill workers in Plumas County, which is where I live.

Plumas County is on the northern end of the Sierra Nevada where 75% of our county's land is national forests. We are under attack and need your help. The attack is not in the form of planes or missiles, but rather policies and directions of the Forest Service that will destroy our way of life just as effective as a nuclear strike. I know this sounds a bit over the top, but consider this: A wasteland laid bare by a nuclear strike would look pretty similar to an area after a huge, entire stand replacing fire. The impact would be the same. Our vibrant ecosystem and the rural economies that depend on tourism and timber would be laid to ruins. That sounds like an attack to me.

I probably just raised the hair on the back of the neck of a few people, but I am very frustrated with all the talk and no action, and worried about what will come. I hear over and over that the wish of the forest service is to do more forest thinning treatments to prevent such calamities. Randy Moore says that the pace and scale must be increased five-fold. Sounds great, but in reality their preferred options are so minimal that they could only be completed with appropriated dollars which could cost the tax payers millions, or at best break even. So that wish probably won't be fulfilled considering the budget constraints we are facing, so the work won't get done at the desired pace and scale and were back to just letting it burn. Just this year projects were held up because of the delayed federal budget.

Two years ago I sat before this committee to testify that the major factor in the loss of jobs for the millworkers that I represent was the lawsuits brought against the Forest Service by environmental groups. Much has happened since then. The Courts have handed down rulings that should enable the Forest Service to proceed with projects at a scale that would save our forests, our jobs and our rural economies. Last year a summary report of "Fuel Treatment Effectiveness in the Herger Feinstein Quincy Library Group Pilot Project Area" was published and, although the Pilot Project is far from being completed due to delays caused by litigation, the study proves that the methods used provide the most effective treatment for creating a fire resilient forest. The Pilot Project also provides the volume of saw logs and biomass that is necessary to sustain an industry

that is needed to do more work toward the ultimate goal of a healthy, fire-resilient, productive forest. Also, the Forest Service has implemented a collaborative effort to bring stake holders together so their objections could be considered during the process of planning rather than in the courts.

Wow. With these principles in place it seems that we should be able to get to work fixing the forest and creating jobs. Not so. Case in point is the Keddie Ridge Project which is currently in the objection period. “Option E” would generate 15 million board feet of saw logs, and generate 252 jobs with a “Potential Employee Income” of \$9.1 million. The Forest Service has preferred “Option A”, which would produce 10 million board feet, generating 189 jobs with a “Potential Employee Income” of \$6.8 million. That is one-third less volume, jobs and taxable earnings.

What is odd is that although this project is in the HFQLG cutting circle which provides for a 30-inch diameter limit, the Forest Service preferred the option that is generally not over a 24-inch diameter.

What is disturbing is the Forest Service’s preferred “Option A” would produce a deficit in “Percent Above Value” of -3% and require appropriated funds, instead of “Option E” with a positive 18% that would put money into the treasury.

What is really disturbing is that they call “Option A” the “collaborative option” implying all parties worked together, when actually it seems to have been crafted between two parties through consultation and coordination, instead of collaboration, without regard to our social and economic concerns written in letters to the agency during the “collaboration” process.

What this says to me is that the Forest Service will disregard the social and economic aspects of their projects in order to appease other powers so as to not cause a law suit. To give some credit, Randy Moore did state in a meeting one month ago that they recently hired one social/economic specialist for the region for the first time. They have tens of thousands of specialists for all aspects of the biological forest, and one brand new social-economic specialist. I think the odds are against me and jobs and economies.

The Congressional Declaration of National Environmental Policy declares that it will be the policy of the government to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans.

Unfortunately, this principle, this Policy, and the welfare of Americans have been booted off the forest’s overgrown path, like we are not part of the ecosystem. Either it is through tighter cattle grazing restrictions, closure of existing roads, restricting travel in the forest or planning forest thinning projects with minimal treatments, the actions of the Forest Service is choking our rural communities.

It seems that all the hard working men and women in the timber industry, the businesses in their communities and the schools their children attend, are of minimal concern. It also seems that

the intent of the environmental groups, let's just call them corporations, is to allow only enough harvesting so as to not generate any revenue for either the US Government, local government, or the industry. And it seems they have convinced the Forest Service to adopt this tactic and disregard their own founding policy, which is "to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

We are in a time of our country's history when the nation is in dire need of jobs, especially in our mountain communities where the unemployment rate is the highest in the state. We are in a time when the forests are overstocked and unhealthy due to fire suppression and 20 years of minimal timber sales. We are in a time when water is becoming a precious resource but not getting to the state's rivers and reservoirs because all the trees may be soaking it up. We are in a time when our local governments cannot afford basic services such as schools and roads, and our national government must cut spending and generate revenue.

How can all these dire economic and ecological needs not be considered by the Forest Service? How can it be so hard to give emphasis to a robust timber industry with all the benefits that it provides? The timber industry will improve forest health by thinning, which improves the trees ability to withstand insects and drought. A thinned forest allows the snow pack to get to the ground instead of melting and vaporizing from the limbs of the trees, providing water later in the season for downstream users. Less trees also means less transpiration, which will provide more water to metropolitan and agricultural areas. A robust timber industry will diminish the frequency and intensity of wild fires, which will improve air and water quality. We will sequester carbon and promote more carbon sequestration. We will provide lumber and panel products for our country under some of the strictest environmental guidelines in the world, rather than having products shipped in from other countries were the concern for the environment is not important. These forestry products would generate revenue for the Federal Treasury. Jobs will be created. Statistics from the Department of Agriculture show that for every \$1 million invested in forestry products, 39.7 jobs were created, which is the highest ratio of any industry. The robust timber industry needed to process our unhealthy forests would provide jobs for thousands of people and create desperately needed taxable income for the State and Local governments. And it's renewable. The scale and intensity of the projects should be as such so they do not have to be re-entered for 30 to 50 years, because we just can't get to it all in time.

Let' see, that's a lot of win-win-win-win-win-win, but who's counting. Apparently not the Forest Service.

We live in this area so we can work, play, and enjoy being in a rural community nestled in the mountains. And so it goes for the hundreds of thousands of people living in mountain communities.

We enjoy our liberty to use our lands. It is the most cherished and inalienable right of all Americans. Like freedom of speech and the pursuit of happiness. We are the stewards of the land and should be able to utilize our assets to promote our well being and preserve our environment. We have doctrines that support that belief. I believe that my concerns are shared by many others

living in the mountains, and even the people in the metropolitan areas but most of them just don't realize it yet. I ask for your help to assist the Forest Service in realigning itself with its founding mission and consider the social and economic concerns of the human element.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Wood