

**OPENING STATEMENT FOR THE
HONORABLE SCOTT McINNIS, CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORESTS AND FOREST HEALTH
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON ECO-TERRORISM AND LAWLESSNESS ON THE NATIONAL
FORESTS**

February 12, 2002

Today the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health is conducting a hearing to explore the growing threat of eco-terrorism and lawlessness on our National Forests. The hearing's principal focus will be on the violent and increasingly frequent attacks of environmental terrorist groups like the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front. We will also hear from a panel of witnesses focusing on the very real problem of timber theft and the intimidation of federal land managers on the National Forests. Some may try to argue that one set of issues is more important than the other, but the fact is, both sets of issues are very serious and both merit the examination of this Subcommittee. I look forward to this important dialogue.

For the better part of a decade, ELF, ALF and other rogue elements in the environmental movement have used brute-force-intimidation and violence to promote an agenda that can only be described as radical. They attack government buildings and homes and businesses and research labs with firebombs, Molotov-cocktails and timed detonation devices. When it comes to their extensive violence on the national forests, ELF's objective is as simple as it is unsettling: to create an overpowering aura of fear and anxiety that scares the American people off of *their* forests.

Today, some 10 years and many millions of dollars in destruction after its emergence, the Earth Liberation Front has partially succeeded in achieving that objective in some parts of the country. People who legitimately work, live and play in these wild places now have no choice but to look over their shoulder in fear of shadowy terror groups like ELF.

Colleagues, the individuals that make-up these terror groups are not cut from the same fabric as the nature loving hippies of my youth. It would be a serious mistake for anyone to dismiss these hard-liners as just misguided college kids, or trust fund babies with nothing better to do. These people are hardened criminals. They are dangerous. They are well funded. They are savvy, sophisticated and stealth. And if their violence continues to escalate, it is only a matter of time before their parade of terror results in lost human life.

Up until the present, ELF's and ALF's campaign of terror has largely succeeded in avoiding the long arm of justice. Nearly every act of eco-terrorism committed in the last decade remains unsolved, and too often the trail leading to ELF and ALF has grown cold. If there is a message today for local, state and federal law enforcement, it is this: domestic environmental terrorism must continue to be a national priority. These cases need to be solved.

But while the perpetrators of eco-terrorist attacks have escaped justice more often than not, there are promising signs that the tide is beginning to turn, and the noose is beginning to tighten. Just yesterday, a man was sentenced to 18 years in prison for firebombing seven large homes under construction in the Phoenix area in 1999 and 2000. Earlier this year, two known members of the Animal Liberation Front were

sentenced to prison terms after police officers caught them making a bomb in a parking lot after midnight. Last year, a man believed to be associated with ALF was sentenced to 22 years in prison for his role in firebombing a Eugene, Oregon car dealership.

For law enforcement, these are substantial accomplishments. For members of ELF and ALF still intent on terrorizing American communities, these long prison sentences provide an ominous warning of what happens when you get caught.

Just as ominous for the ELF's and ALF's of this world is the fact that every mainstream environmental organization I contacted in conjunction with this hearing - groups like the National Wildlife Federation, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society and many others - publicly eschewed and condemned the tactics of militant environmental groups. These public statements make it clear that the Earth Liberation Front and other like-minded organizations are on an island all by themselves. ELF's self-styled Robin Hood mystique is under assault from every direction, even from individuals who have spent their lives promoting environmental protection and stewardship.

After the Vail fire in October 1998, a statement released by Craig Rosebraugh, then Spokesperson for ELF who has been subpoenaed to testify here today, warned America that the "Elves were watching." Well, Mr. Rosebraugh, I can tell you today that, when it comes to ELF and ALF, the FBI is watching, state and local law enforcement is watching, Congress is watching, the mainstream environmental movement is watching, and the public is now fully engaged and watching too.

It is with this that I would like to remind those in attendance that this is not the time or the venue for outbursts or protests. I know that many of you are passionate about the issue before this panel today, but this Subcommittee, our witnesses and those in the audience will observe proper decorum. Those who feel compelled to disrupt today's proceeding will be immediately removed.

Thank you. Now I recognize the gentleman from Washington, Mr. Inslee.

###