

Committee on Resources

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House Resources Committee Field Hearing
At
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Good morning Mr. Chairman, My name is Lee Bledsoe. I am the Pulp and Paperworker's Resource Council (PPRC) Special Projects Director of the Southeast Region, and a member of the Paper, Allied Industrial, Chemical, and Energy Workers International Union (PACE) and an elected member of the Shop Committee of PACE Local 3-0400. I work for Koch Cellulose Brunswick Operations in Brunswick, Ga.

I would first like to thank the Chairman and members for the opportunity to speak here today. I would also like to thank the House Resources Committee for their hard work and leadership in the passage of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the Presidents Healthy Forest Initiative. This is a beginning to help ease the fire danger faced by many of the nations forests. I urge you now to insure the funding of the act. Unless it is adequately funded this project will wither on the vine without doing the good intended.

One of the problems facing the forest industry in the south is the over zealous implementation of the Endangered Species Act. I believe that sometimes emotion overpowers the intellect when talking about an endangered species. Litigation, and the delays caused by it, have tied the hands of the forest managers, and sometimes do more to harm a species than would have been done had a forest project been allowed to proceed. This is also one of the problems facing the private landowner. We have all heard the horror stories of people losing the use of their land because someone has deemed a rat more important than the people who own the land and are good stewards of that land. In some areas of the south the restrictions caused by the Red Cockaded Woodpecker have reduced timber harvest by 90%, with no proof the reduced timber harvest has helped the woodpecker.

The use of sound science can enhance man's ability to save a species. I urge you to pass HR 2602; an act designed to mandate the use of sound science and peer review to identify the need for critical habitat for an endangered species.

Another problem facing the forest industry in the south, in my opinion, is the improper use of the Harbors and Rivers Act. This act was created in the 1890's to prohibit impediment of a navigable waterway. In some areas of the south the U. S. Corps of Engineers has deemed that cutting trees and placing them in front of the harvesting equipment to minimize the impact of that equipment on the soil violates the act. Common sense dictates that this is an unreasonable use of federal power, however the threat of jail or fines can intimidate anyone, most especially some one just trying to do the job they were hired to do in a timely, cost efficient, and environmentally sound manner. The Harbors and Rivers act needs to be clarified to prevent this unreasonable use of Federal Power.

The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) as implemented by the EPA is another unreasonable deterrent to normal silviculture. To say that the possible runoff from the normal cutting of trees into a stream after a rain is a new pollutant source is ridiculous. I know of instances in my area where land owning timber companies, working with Environmental groups have left a 300 foot buffer instead of the 25 foot buffer required by law. Forcing national standards on local situations ties the hands of the foresters who may be willing to go the extra mile in some cases. It may sound trite, but foresters really are "good people doing the right thing". The TMDL legislation needs to be modified to allow local control of a situation.

One of the largest concerns not only for our foresters but for everyone who drives, is the high cost of energy. The House has done its job by passing the Presidents Energy Bill. I now ask you to convince the members of the Senate to do their part and help reduce our dependency on foreign oil by moving the energy bill through the senate. Several years ago I spoke with one of then Senator, now Governor of Alaska Frank Murkowski's aids and he really put the Artic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) into perspective for me. The acreage in the ANWR is approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ the acreage in the state of Georgia. The footprint of the oil production area was less than $\frac{2}{3}$ the acreage of the hunting club I am a member of, which occupies 2% of the acreage in one of 159 counties in Georgia. Therefore, I believe that passage of the Presidents Energy Bill will reduce the cost of energy, and provide adequate safeguards for the environment.

I have mentioned litigation in my statement today. I believe there are numerous preservationist (as opposed to environmental) organizations in America today, whose leadership make six figure salaries. I believe that it is in their best interests to continue to seek donations, maintain the status quo, and continue to do harm to our nations forests by creating gridlock. We need a long-term solution to the nations forestry problems, and litigation only slows the solution. It costs a tremendous amount in terms of time and money to fight to do the right thing for our forests.

Again I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.