

# Committee on Resources

---

## Witness Testimony

---

Testimony on  
Oversight Hearing on  
Management of the Stanislaus National Forest  
SHARLENE E. WINN REED  
Executive Director  
United Forest Families  
Before the  
House of Representatives  
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health  
September 13, 1997

United Forest Families is a non-profit, grassroots organization founded in 1992. We are based in Tuolumne County, however, our membership is spread through-out California and parts of Nevada. The Stanislaus National Forest provides jobs and money for many of our members and our communities. Our primary goal is to protect, enhance and increase jobs and job opportunities. From job security we hope to achieve and encourage economic stability for our communities.

The Forest products industry provides well-paying jobs with benefits and security. Timber is a renewable resource which our Country depends on. Tourist based jobs are generally not well-paying and usually offer no benefits or security. Our communities depend on livingwage jobs. Though many people flock to our areas to recreate and retire, our communities should not become a haven only for those who have the money or want an "untouched" experience. National Parks were created for these "untouched by man" experiences. National Forests provide much more then recreational value. They were intended for resource management as well.

Regarding the Stanislaus National Forest we believe with proper management it can provide the timber we need and still offer opportunities for other varied interests. our members also enjoy hiking, fishing , hunting and the beauty God has given us with these lands. Timber production and cattle grazing can be complimentary to these things if handled correctly and viewed as an intrinsic part of the forest ecosystem management plan. The biggest threat to timber and cattle is not the inability of the land but the unwillingness of some to allow multi-use.

We feel the timber program is being stymied by unnecessary red-tape and those who would like to see this program done away with entirely. The rules regarding timber management should be based upon commonsense, good forestry practices and sound science. Our forests are capable of producing the majority of our timber needs. Through selective harvesting, fuels reduction and salvage of dead and dying trees we could greatly increase the volume produced yearly with no negative impact and in fact this would greatly improve over-all forest health.

At present it is estimated that the Stanislaus National Forest manages less then 10%of the capable, available and suitable timber land base for timber production on a yearly basis. We believe that green sales should be re-emphasized in land management practices. If we continue with only fire salvage management we will

remain at least one step behind. Green sales and thinning would help avert catastrophic fires in the future. It makes more economic sense to avoid wildfires where possible then to spend millions of dollars fighting them and even more to rehabilitate the land. This does not include the cost to wildlife or the lives, of firefighters that are lost. Some things are irreplaceable and others, like timber are renewable. Common sense tells us advance planning is the right thing to do and much less expensive then reacting to an emergency, catastrophic fire.

We highly recommend more aggressive fire salvage plans. In addition, insect salvage should be reemphasized. Twelve month delays in salvaging fire killed timber is not acceptable. Working families, timber dependent communities and local schools suffer. Many trees marked for retention in salvage areas will most likely later die. Too many valuable conifers have been left for snags, supposedly to enhance wildlife habitat. There are thousands of trees that will not be salvaged due to their deterioration over time. The shortage of snags in salvage and past burned areas following harvest will not be a problem. one recommendation in the interim spotted owl guidelines suggests leaving seven snags per acre in some areas. If you would - imagine one acre of land and that this was your land, would you leave 7 dead trees on this land? What about the fire hazard?

The California Spotted Owl is an area that has been under controversy for quite a while now. On August 6,1997 Sharlene Reed addressed the California Spotted Owl Federal Advisory Committee. Following is a written account of her comments to this committee.

While we wait for this committee to be allowed to do the job they were given they must wade through pages of comments that have nothing at all to do with the task they were given. We need this area to be finished so that we may get on with the business at hand.

In the Central Sierra National Forests the management, or lack of it, is disgraceful. Not only for the danger it places our Forests in, but the lack of faith it shows in those employees who would do the job that they have been charged with, if they were allowed. Based on the Stanislaus National Forest Land Management Plan less then one third of it's lands are considered managed acreage. This acreage is capable of producing enough timber for harvesting to keep people and communities working. If you compare total growth to the planned harvest amounts you realize why fire danger is so high. The planned harvest amount is nearly double what was actually put out for bid this past year. Is the planned harvest amounts a goal? Or just numbers on a piece of paper.

In closing, United Forest Families believes that a main issue in regards to forest management is the amount of forest fire fuels that are being added to our National Forest lands every year. Controlled burning cannot and will not address the incredible tonnage of wildfire fuels being added to National Forest lands every year. The . increasing fire danger, which adds to declining forest health, should be an indicator that the dramatic decline in timber harvests should be re-thought. Not only should thinning be increased immediately, but timber management including thinning, selective harvesting and salvage of both insect and fire damaged trees should begin at once.

The vast majority of National Forest stands cannot be safely control burned without thinning first being done. All trees, no matter there size or age, are vulnerable to fire. Our National Forest lands are heading for disaster, unless timber management is hugely re-emphasized not de-emphasized.

We ask the Committee Members to not let our National Forests burn to the ground. We lost 40,000 acres of old-growth timber to fire in Yosemite National Park in last years Ackerson Fire. Locking up our National

Forests is not the answer!

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to address your committee.

## ATTACHMENT I

**TABLE 1. STATUS OF CENTRAL SIERRA TIMBERLANDS**

Landowner	Gross Mgmt Acres	Total Suitable Acres	Reserved Acres <sup>1</sup>	Low Intensity Acres <sup>2</sup>	Managed Acres
El Dorado National Forest	596,724	457,981	99,443	70,052	237,563
Stanislaus National Forest	895,500	584,400	255,858	101,425	227,117
Sierra National Forest	1,275,200	563,000	234,000	49,400	279,142
Sequoia National Forest	1,119,000	679,000	388,386	60,215	230,399
Parks (National, County & State)	1,128,000	615,000	615,000	0	0
Private	2,652,000*	1,115,000	0	167,250**	1,115,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>7,666,424</b>	<b>4,014,381</b>	<b>1,592,687</b>	<b>448,342</b>	<b>2,089,221</b>

\* Does not include acres of non-productive land for El Dorado, Placer, and Nevada Counties.

\*\* Assumes 15% retention of late seral stage forest under Board of Forestry proposed rules.

<sup>1</sup> These areas will not be managed - are mostly old-growth or will be used to create old-growth.

<sup>2</sup> These areas will be managed to maintain or create old growth/late seral stage conditions.

## ATTACHMENT II

**TABLE 2. CENTRAL SIERRA - ANNUAL PROJECTED GROWTH & HARVEST**

Landowner	<u>Inventory in MMBF</u>		<u>Volume in MMBF</u>	<u>Volume in MMBF</u>
	Available Suitable	Unavailable Reserves	Total Growth	Planned Harvest
National Forests: <sup>1</sup>				
El Dorado	8,960	2,198	199.0	137.2
Stanislaus	6,630	8,033	319.9	88.0
Sierra	8,739	4,993	176.6	88.0
Sequoia	4,690	5,858	154.0	75.0
National, State & County Parks <sup>2</sup>	0	13,057	261.5	0
Private <sup>2</sup>	11,866	0	252.3	258.9
Totals	40,885	34,139	1,363.3	647.1

<sup>1</sup> Information for National Forests, was taken from Draft or Final Land Management Plans.

<sup>2</sup> Information for National Parks was taken from Bolsinger's 1978 report entitled "Forest Area and Timber Resources of the San Joaquin Area, California." Volumes on Parklands were assumed to be comparable to volume per acre on reserved Forest Service lands.

## ATTACHMENT III

California Spotted Owl Federal Advisory Committee

## Public Comments - August 6, 1997

Good morning, my name is Sharlene Reed and I am the Executive Director for United Forest Families, a grassroots organization based in Tuolumne County. Our membership extends from the foothills of the Sierra's to the valley and into Nevada. You have many people presenting scientific findings and their opinions on them, we will focus on the people and communities and how this effects them.

Our primary focus is economic stability for our members and their communities. This stability is based upon jobs - well-paying jobs. And what happens here today affects these people, their jobs and their communities.

Interim rules have been in effect for too long. While there is still no finalized plan it appears that those whose intent was stopping logging have succeeded in many areas. And this has not necessarily been in the best interest of the owl or other wildlife. A healthy forest provides the best habitat and it continues to be proven that a managed forest is a healthy forest.

In the forest closest to our base, the Stanislaus, 300 million board feet of fuel per year is added, for comparison this equals approximately 80 thousand truckloads. Although this forest does not contain the threatened or endangered species of the owl they have implemented rules to supposedly avoid this listing from happening. When fuels reduction is 10% or less per year, fire becomes a when, NOT IF, occurrence. In the last 10 years approximately a quarter of a million acres in our area has been lost to catastrophic fires. This is in addition to the 900 million board feet that burned next door in Yosemite. Included in our area was part or in some cases all, of 8 SOHA's (Spotted owl Habitat Areas) that burned. A catastrophic fire doesn't help the owl, appeal to the hiker or contribute to the economy. Control burning alone will not stop this from happening. Forest thinning must occur as well.

Our research has shown that owls do extremely well in second growth forested areas. They tend to go where food is abundant and closed canopy areas do not provide this food. I have personally seen owls follow logging operations. They followed from landing to landing because the slash piles were good habitat for the small animals they feed on. With active logging going on they nested and raised their young. Forest thinning must be profitable for timber companies to continue with their jobs. No business can operate at a loss and stay in business. on the Stanislaus National Forest only 25% of their nearly 1 million acres is available for active timber management. More then 3/4 of this forest is Already covered by set asides. With incentives for good management this area could provide excellent habitat and contribute to a stable economy for generations to come. The effects of any rules on local communities must be considered.

In the Southern Sierra 5 out of 9 mills have closed in the last 3 years. These closures affect more-then the 1,000 plus families out of work, it takes a toll on thousands more as their paychecks are no longer contributing to the economy. Finally the effect is felt by those who buy lumber - since 1991 lumber prices have nearly doubled - adding \$5,000 or more to the cost of a new home. You don't need to live in a timber community to feel that.

Also, while we do not always agree with the U.S. Forest Service, many of our local Forest Service employees are trying hard, even with their hands at times tied. At times by those members of the public who do not understand our Country's need to produce a sustainable, renewable resource. And at other times by their own co-workers, who have forgotten just what a National Forest is for.

My family has been in the timber and cattle industry in the same area for 4 generations now. We must be doing a pretty good job since we are still making our livings this way. Like myself, many of our members have been in this industry for generations and have been stewards of the land long before any group made it politically correct.

# # #