Endangered Forests Endangered Freedoms

America's 10 Endangered National Forests

National Forest Protection Alliance | GREENPEACE

Foreword

Dr. Edward O. Wilson

The past two years have witnessed a renewed clash of two opposing views on the best use of America's national forests. The Bush administration, seeing the forests as a resource for economic growth, has proposed a dramatic increase in resource extraction. Operating on the premise that logging is important to the national economy and to jobs in the national forests, it evidently feels justified in muting or outright overriding the provision of the 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA) that explains forest plans "provide for diversity of plant and animal communities."

In contrast, and in defense of NFMA, environmental scientists continue to argue that America's national forests are a priceless reservoir of biological diversity and an aesthetic and historic treasure. In this view, they represent a public trust too valuable to be managed as tree farms for the production of pulp, paper and lumber.

Scientists have reached a deeper understanding of the value of the National Forest System that needs to be kept front and center. Each forest is a unique combination of thousands of kinds of plants, animals and microorganisms locked together in seemingly endless webs and competitive and cooperative relationships. It is this biological diversity that creates a healthy ecosystem, a self-assembled powerhouse that generates clean water and fresh air without human intervention and free of charge.

Each species of a forest, or any other natural ecosystem, is a masterpiece of evolution, exquisitely well adapted to the environment it inhabits. The flora and fauna of the world are the cradle of humanity, to which we, no less than the rest of life, are closely adapted in our physical and psychological needs. Each species and its descendant species lives, very roughly, one million years before suffering natural extinction. Worldwide, the four horsemen of environmental ruin – habitat destruction, invasive species, pollution and unsustainable logging – have increased the rate of extinction by as much as one thousand-fold, thereby shortening the average lifespans of species by the same amount.

At least one percent of America's native plant and animal species have already vanished, mostly during the past century, and one-third are classified as vulnerable or endangered. The great majority of all native species, including those still relatively safe, have undergone large reductions in abundance, geographic range and most likely genetic diversity.

Much of this loss is due to the replacement of biologically rich natural forests with tree farms. From the standpoint of species diversity and resilience, these cultivated woody crops rank as no more than cornfields. While tree farms can easily be expanded on private lands, national forests, which are priceless reservoirs of most of our nation's biological diversity, cannot. The euphemism used by the Bush administration and the timber industry to justify this practice, the "Healthy Forests Initiative," does no justice to the broad needs of the United States, present and future. It has the look of hypocrisy, "of tribute paid by vice to virtue," as Oscar Wilde once defined that word.

America's national forests are the common property of its citizens. They are a public trust of incalculable value. They are the potential source of limitless future knowledge, possessing scientific, economic and cultural value. They are part of America's deepest history, reaching back through past geological eras. They should be freed from commercial logging altogether and should be cut only when deemed ecologically necessary to return native species or to reduce hazardous fuels near homes and communities. The time has come to free national forests from political partisanship, and to use their treasures to benefit all Americans, now and for generations to come.

Endangered Forests Endangered Freedom

10 Endangered National Forests at Risk from the Bush Administration

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A Message From Greenpeace Executive Director

For over three decades, Greenpeace has been a force in the struggle to protect our planet. Since 1990, we have turned much of our attention to the Earth's endangered forests. Not only is deforestation one of the greatest tragedies of our time, it is also one of the most preventable ones. Due to illegal logging, mining and other destructive practices, these last, large, intact forests are now threatened with extinction.

Greenpeace has been fighting to save forests from Siberia to the Amazon. Here at home, we are fighting to halt President Bush's all-out assault on America's public lands. In the temperate rainforests of the Tongass or the greater Yellowstone ecosystem, in the majestic Sequoias and the sacred Black Hills we see our precious wild places being served up as a reward to multinational corporations. Over a century's worth of forest environmental safeguards are on the Bush administration's chopping block, as a "thank you" for industry campaign contributions.

President Bush is planning to open up our national forests to unprecedented logging, mining, oil drilling and other development. He hides these acts of destruction from the American public under misleading names, such as the "Healthy Forests Initiative." Anyone who has seen the clearcuts, streams poisoned by mine waste and grasslands scarred by oil and gas development knows better. America's precious – and irreplaceable – wild places are being sacrificed at an alarming rate.

Repeated studies have shown that healthy forests provide far greater economic benefits than do logged ones. Healthy ecosystem qualities such as clean air and water, fish, wildlife and recreation, generate far more jobs and economic benefits for our communities than timber dollars ever could. In fact, the federal government loses taxpayer's money on every tree it sells.

Since September 11th the president has been talking about patriotism. For him, patriotism is a convenient notion used to wage war on another country. For me, patriotism is the American spirit of standing up for what is right. It is protecting our lands, livelihoods, health and heritage.

Greenpeace is honored to be working along with the National Forest Protection Alliance in researching and publishing this report of *Endangered Forests, Endangered Freedoms*. As you read it, know that these forests belong to you, the American public, and think about what these forests will be reduced to after the chainsaws come through.

The trees and their ecosystems pose a challenge as to whether or not we have the grace to leave them be or the arrogance to destroy them. The late author and conservationist, Edward Abbey, said that wilderness needs no defense – it just needs more defenders. It is my hope that after reading this report, you will be outraged enough to stand beside us, and help defend our wilderness.

John Passacantando
Executive Director
Greenpeace

Executive Summary

"Endangered forests" are the most valuable forests on the globe from which industrial resource extraction would cause irreparable harm. Representatives of Greenpeace, Forest Ethics, the Natural Resources Defense Council, World Wildlife Fund, World Resources Institute and the Rainforest Action Network consulted with a broad array of stakeholders to draft the first Endangered Forest Definitions, released in April 2001.

These forests are critical to maintaining biological diversity, protecting wilderness and serving as the core habitat of endangered plant and animal species. The term "endangered forest" is meant as a tool for consumers of wood and paper products – these forests are "NO BUY" forests. Many companies have committed to protecting these forests through their purchases, including Home Depot, Lowe's, Staples and Kinko's.

This report provides an in-depth, on-the-ground review of 10 particularly endangered national forests. NFPA received 22 nomination forms from forest protection groups and activists. Along with the 10 endangered forests, three forests received special mention and nine were designated as threatened. In the nominations, activists provided biogeographic descriptions of each forest, and assessed nine criteria based on a scale of one to five.

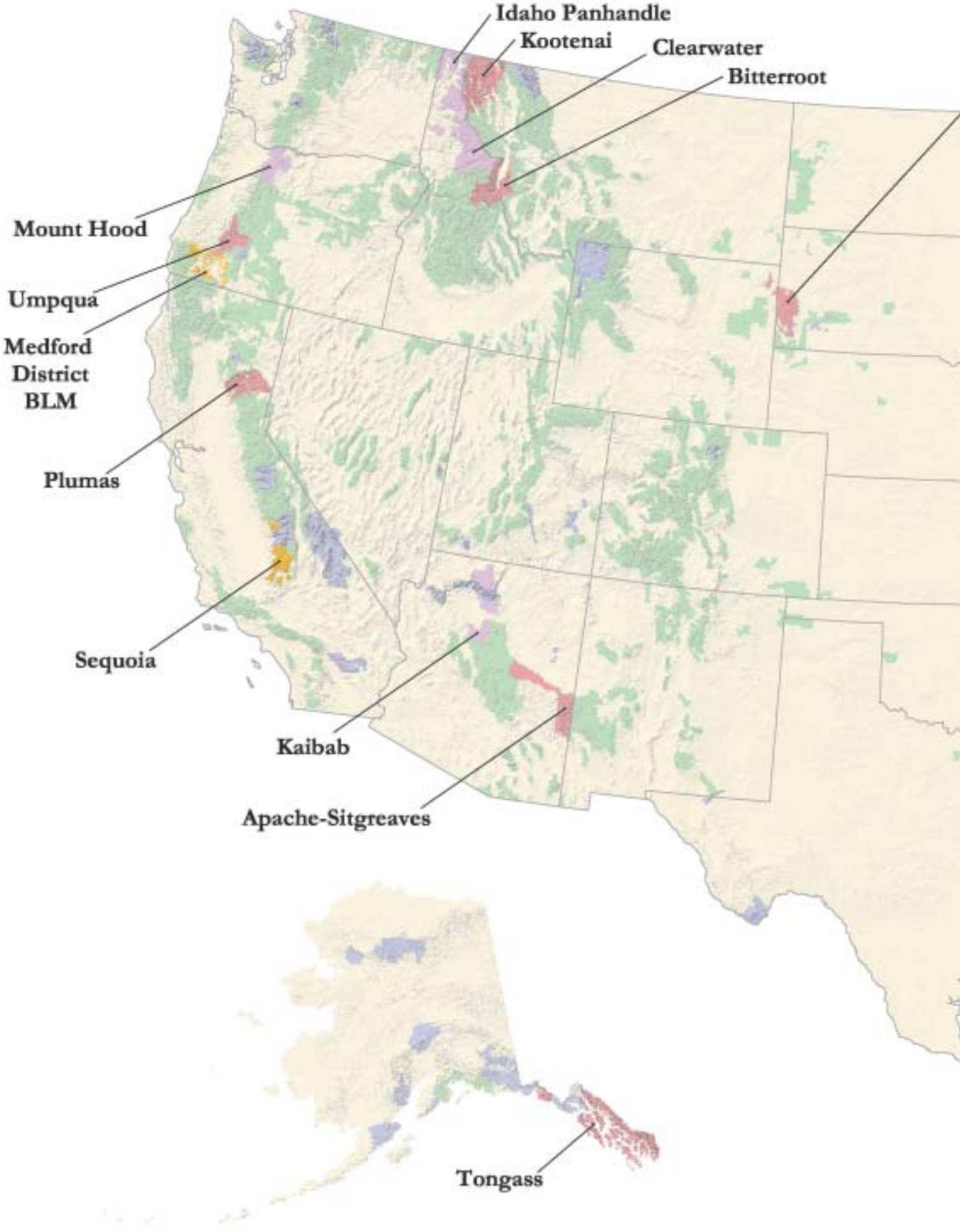
Our major findings, which are detailed in the body of the report, include:

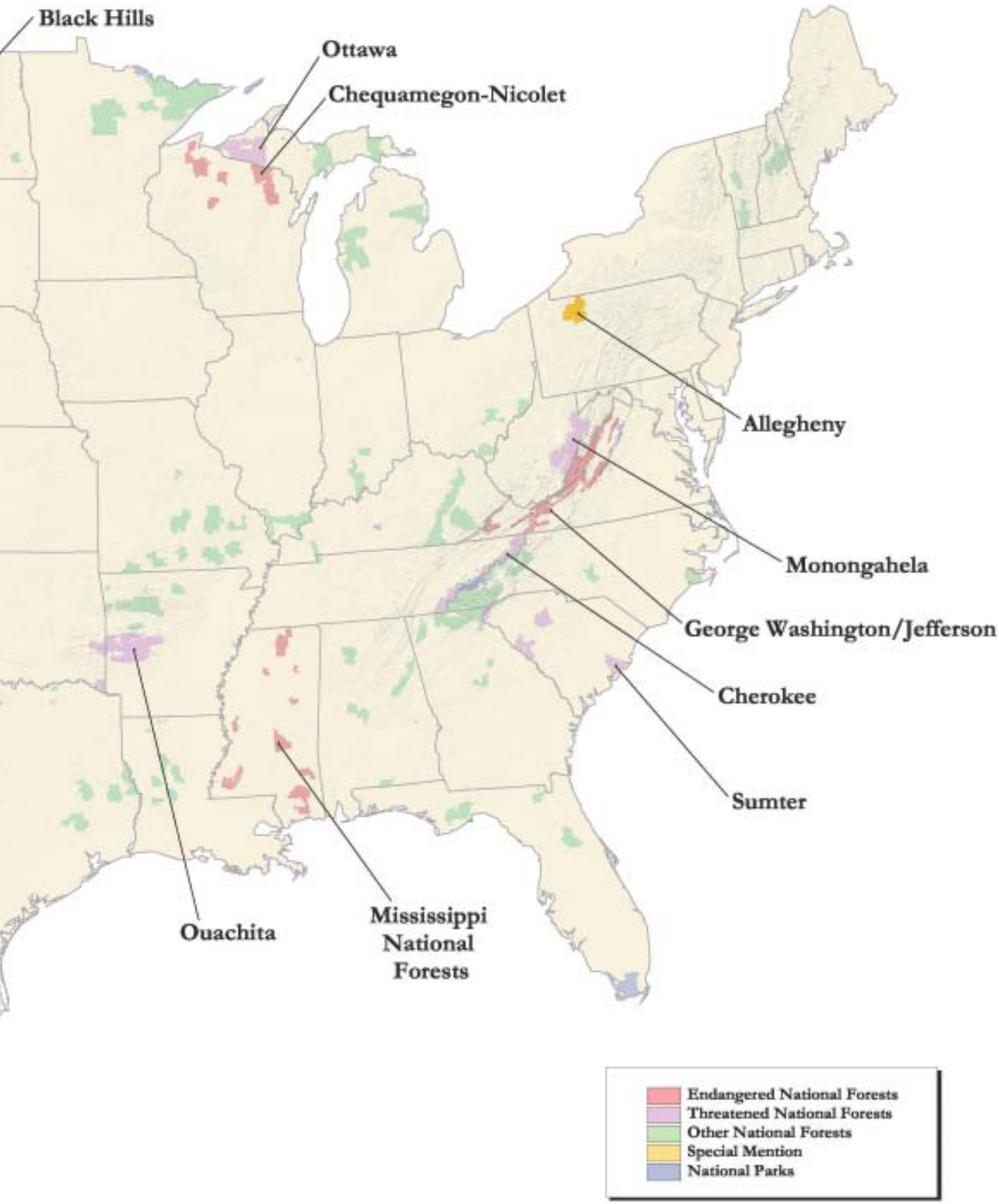
- Commercial logging remains the biggest threat to the national forest system. Timber sales are increasingly disguised behind post-fire salvage and fire prevention operations, forest health initiatives and restoration programs. The Bush administration and the U.S. Forest Services (USFS) have manipulated the public's fear of fire to undermine environmental laws and public process in pushing commercial logging and thinning agenda – these very same activities are what have created younger, denser and more fire-prone forests.

- All 10 of the endangered national forests will be affected by the Bush administration's attempts to undermine the National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act – key environmental laws that have safeguarded public participation in balanced national forest management for decades. All 10 are also at risk from Bush's attempts to gut the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

- A geographic shift in the federal commercial timber sale program from western to eastern national forests continues. Several forests in the Great Lakes, Gulf coast and southeastern United States all see their timber sale volumes increasing.

With the onset of the Bush administration and its host of industry-friendly political appointees, the USFS has made an about-face on virtually every important issue affecting the protection of our national forests. *Endangered Forests, Endangered Freedoms* provides insight into the grim reality of what is happening to our nation's natural heritage.


Idaho Panhandle
Kootenai
Clearwater
Bitterroot
Mount Hood
Umpqua
Medford
District
BLM
Plumas
Sequoia
Kaibab
Apache-Sitgreaves
Tongass


Black Hills
Ottawa
Chequamegon-Nicolet
Allegheny
Monongahela
George Washington/Jefferson
Cherokee
Sumter
Ouachita
Mississippi National Forests
Endangered National Forests
Threatened National Forests
Other National Forests
Special Mention
National Parks

Death By A Thousand Cuts

Since George W. Bush's inauguration in January 2001, the government has enacted an aggressive and comprehensive plan to weaken or eliminate environmental protection for our national forests. The appointment of industry lobbyists to pivotal government positions, coupled with newly appointed chairs of key House and Senate committees, has set the stage for the most significant rollbacks of environmental laws in United States history. At risk is the ability of our national forests to maintain the vast array of plant and animal life that depends on them for survival, and the fundamental right of American citizens to participate in federal land management decision-making.

From day one, the Bush administration has attacked our nation's bedrock environmental laws, aggressively working to increase logging and other types of resource extraction on America's national forests. The logging, oil and gas, grazing and mining industries are cashing in on the $71 million in campaign contributions made to the President and the Republican Party during the 2000 elections. Whether hand-picking logging industry lobbyist Mark Rey to oversee the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), blaming wildfires on environmental regulations or bypassing public participation, the administration's goals are clear: Do whatever it takes to reward corporate contributors by increasing logging, drilling, mining and grazing on our national forests.

Cutting the 'Public' out of 'Public Lands'

Already, the Bush administration's allies in Congress are undermining laws established to guarantee citizen oversight of public lands, giving the logging industry the power to destroy endangered species habitat and ignore environmental laws and regulations. Under the guise of "improving forest health" or "reducing fire danger," the Bush administration is quietly selling off our public lands to logging and mining interests.

The Forest Service is charged with managing the 192 million-acre National Forest System – lands held in public trust for the American people. However, their mandate to serve the public is being usurped by corporate lobbyists and industry associations. One of the most ominous and telling changes is a recent proposal to limit the ability of the public to submit comments on proposals affecting land management. In recent years, the Forest Service has been inundated with e-mails, phone calls and postcards from the public demanding greater protection for our national forests. Such public involvement is critical in preserving a balanced, long-term approach to the management of our national forest system. In a chilling move that stifles democracy, a new proposal buried in the "National Forest System Land and Resources Management Planning Rule" would have the Forest Service disregard all petitions, e-mails, postcards and letters that are not unique and original.

Flying Below the Radar Screen

Many of the changes proposed by the Bush administration are being carried out at the agency level. They are subtle yet significant changes designed to alter the original intent of laws passed by Congress, while keeping the laws structurally intact and thus not directly engaging Congress. Changes to the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) have perhaps the greatest potential to lead to permanent damage. NFMA requires that each national forest operate according to a management plan that ensures the balanced use of resources, and guarantees public participation and oversight. As such, it is one of the strongest protections against industry abuse of public lands. The Forest Service is now proposing to exempt forest management plans from scientific environmental review and public

comment, both currently required by law. Additionally, proposed changes would gut critical safeguards for wildlife populations by eliminating the requirement to maintain viable populations of native species.

The Bush administration also intends to alter the landmark National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which requires federal agencies to study and disclose the impacts of proposed activities. A new plan will broaden the definition of "categorical exclusions (CE's)," which were originally designed to exempt activities like routine maintenance of trails and visitors' facilities from extensive bureaucracy. New Bush CE's would include the logging of up to 50 acres of standing green trees, or salvage logging up to 250 acres of dead or dying trees. Under this policy, the timber industry could be granted logging rights in most areas of our national forests, with no environmental review and no public participation so long as the projects conform to the above prescriptions.

The Healthy Forests Initiative

Taking advantage of a national tragedy, President Bush unveiled the so-called "Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI)," at the peak of the 2002 wildfires in southern Oregon. The HFI uses fire, or more accurately the threat of fire, as a smokescreen to give the logging industry increased access to our national forests. The initiative removes environmental protections provided by NFMA, NEPA and the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, as well as state and regional conservation plans. In the name of fire prevention, the HFI prevents citizens from challenging logging and other destructive projects on land managed by both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The HFI represents one of the greatest threats to our national forests since the infamous 1995 Salvage Rider that opened millions of acres of national forestland to logging.

The scandal of HFI is that the Forest Service authorizes logging in remote, intact forests in one part of the country to pay for the thinning of fire prone forests in another part of the country. In short, the Forest Service is cutting intact, naturally fire resistant forests that have long been coveted by the timber industry to pay for "fuel reduction" near fire prone communities.

Obviously, increased logging far away from affected communities will do nothing to protect homes and rural communities from forest fires. The HFI only serves to make fire-resistant, intact forests more prone to future fires. Conservationists have long advocated that the Forest Service prioritize reducing fuel loads around communities and help homeowners fireproof their buildings, rather than using scarce funds to subsidize commercial logging of valuable trees in remote wild forests. The Forest Service's own scientists have shown that the most effective way to protect homes and communities from fire is by reducing fuels within 100-200 feet of homes, or up to a quarter mile around residential communities.

In the end, the HFI is merely a well-funded, well-coordinated public relations strategy aimed at using the fear of fire to increase logging. Key congressional leaders and administration officials like Agriculture Secretary, Ann Veneman, and Interior Secretary, Gale Norton, have consistently used the threat of fire to advocate streamlining or eliminating public review. Throughout the West, the

administration has blamed severe wildfires on citizen opposition to the logging of national forests, hoping to persuade the American public that the only way to save our forests is to destroy them.

Dismantling the Roadless Area Conservation Rule

National forest system roadless areas contain some of our nation's most prized wilderness lands, providing prime fish and wildlife habitat, countless recreation-based jobs and abundant clean drinking water. In January 2001, after decades of scientific deliberation and an unprecedented amount of public support that generated over two million comments, President Clinton signed the Roadless Area Conservation Rule protecting 58 million acres of intact forest from most roadbuilding and commercial development.

Since the election of President Bush, however, the Forest Service has repeatedly delayed implementation of the Roadless Rule and failed to defend it in court against industry attack. They are now attempting to dismantle the rule altogether, throwing open some of America's last pristine wildlands to commercial logging and roadbuilding.

Gutting the Northwest Forest Plan

The Bush administration is using its "forest health" mantra to gut protections granted to the Pacific Northwest's last ancient forests by the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP). The NWFP was instituted in 1993 as a compromise to end contentious battles between the logging industry and an increasingly outraged public over the destruction of the Pacific Northwest's last old-growth forests. The plan created Late Successional Reserves to protect ancient forest habitat and the species which depend on it, and developed an Aquatic Conservation Strategy to protect streams, rivers and wetlands to "maintain and restore" watersheds.

The NWFP has reduced logging by 80 percent in the spotted owl region of Washington, Oregon and northern California. This prompted the Bush administration to amend the plan to reduce protections for threatened salmon habitat, allow more old-growth logging and remove the requirements that agencies gather scientific data to ensure that logging does not endanger populations of old-growth dependent species.

Undermining the Sierra Nevada Framework Plan

The Bush administration is replacing the conservation-based "Sierra Nevada Framework Plan (SNFP)," adopted in 2001 after eight years of study, with a plan that would significantly accelerate logging on the 11 national forests in California's Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. Under their proposal, only 40 percent of the 11.5 million acres of national forest land in the Sierras would be protected. In addition, annual logging could more than quadruple to 750 million board feet, California Spotted Owl reserves would be removed and trees up to 30 inches in diameter could be cut.

Conceived in response to wildfire hazards caused by decades of intensive logging and fire suppression, the SNFP advocates commercial thinning to reduce "fuel loads," create "defense zones" around residential areas and cut 34,000 acres of firebreaks throughout the Sierra Nevada Range. The SNFP limits logging to trees under 20 inches diameter, mandates that no more than half of the trees be removed from any area and sets aside California spotted owl reserves. It is an attempt to safeguard

old-growth forest ecosystems and keystone species like fisher, goshawk, and spotted owl while ensuring the protection of human life and property. The Bush plan does away with these safeguards and opens up the entire range to clearcut logging.

Stewardship Contracting

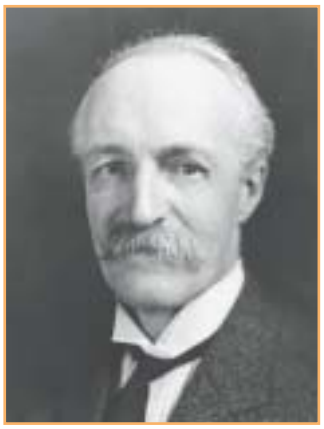
Under the Bush administration's "Stewardship Contracting" program, the timber industry is allowed to evade environmental restrictions and regulations by being granted the right to log large, commercially valuable trees on national forest land as compensation for thinning less valuable ones. Through this program, the Forest Service plans to turn over management of large tracts of national forests to private logging companies through long-term land management contracts, the first step towards privatization of public forests.

Under the provisions of the program, "Stewardship Contracts" are exempt from monitoring requirements, giving timber company officials unprecedented authority.

"I think we agree, the past is over." – George W. Bush

"To announce that there must be no criticism of the president, or that we are to stand by the president, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but also treasonable to the American public."

President Theodore Roosevelt
(1901 – 1909)



"When I got home at the end of 1890 ...The nation was obsessed by a fury of development. The American Colossus was fiercely intent on appropriating and exploiting the riches of the richest of all continents."

Gifford Pinchot
First Chief of the Forest Service

"The battle we have fought, and are still fighting for the forests is a part of the eternal conflict between right and wrong, and we cannot expect to see the end of it. ... So we must count on watching and striving for these trees, and should always be glad to have anything so surely good and noble to strive for."

John Muir,
Preservationist, Founder of Sierra Club

"I'm the commander – see I don't need to explain – I do not need to explain why I say things. That's the interesting thing about being the president. Maybe somebody needs to explain to me why they say something, but I don't feel like I owe anybody an explanation."

President George W. Bush
(2000 – present)

"Dense, overgrown forests and range lands have grown like a cancer. They need to be treated."

Gale Norton
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior

"Claims that our forests are being overcut are simply not true. Not one forest in the entire national forest system has come close to meeting the timber harvest levels called for in its forest plan."

Mark E. Rey
Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Apache-Sitgreaves

National Forest

Summary

Under combined management with the Apache NF since 1974, Arizona's 818,000-acre Sitgreaves National Forest (SNF) is perhaps the most heavily roaded and logged national forest in the Southwest. The SNF starkly illustrates many of the problems facing southwestern national forests, as well as the alarmingly poor ecological health of most of them. It offers a good opportunity to highlight the destructiveness of post-fire salvage logging, and to counter the Bush administration's propaganda concerning the need to log for fire prevention.

The Forest

The SNF encompasses much of the Mogollon Rim in north-central Arizona. Averaging approximately 7,000 feet in elevation, it is characterized by gentle terrain interspersed with steep drainages. Pure ponderosa pine forest – the second largest contiguous ponderosa pine forest in the world – dominates much of the rim. Mixed-conifer forest is found within canyons and drainages, and pinyon-juniper forests dot the lower elevations and exposed ridgetops. The headwaters of the Salt River and Little Colorado River are each partially contained within the SNF.

The large, old trees and lush grasses characteristic of a healthy ponderosa pine ecosystem provide habitat for a number of rare and imperiled species, including the northern goshawk. Unfortunately, the environmental destruction caused by logging, grazing and fire suppression has created an uncertain future for the goshawk in the SNF. Recent research conducted by the Arizona Game and Fish Department finds the raptor to be in steady decline in the SNF, and predicts localized extinction within 40 years in the absence of migration from more healthy populations. The SNF is also home to important wintering areas for southwestern bald eagles.

The Threat: Historical Logging

The SNF has been intensively logged and grazed for nearly a century. Logging greatly accelerated on the Sitgreaves following World War II, and peaked during the late 1980s at nearly 100 million board feet per year. The area was so heavily logged that widespread condemnation of the timber program came not only from the conservation community, but also from the state game agency, and even within the Forest Service itself.

Arizona's timber industry, having logged most of the accessible ponderosa pine forest by the 1980s, turned to clearcutting of mixed-conifer forests in steep canyons and other previously unlogged areas. This led to the listing of the Mexican spotted owl as a threatened species under the ESA. As a result, all Forest Plans in the Southwest Region were amended in 1996 to provide protections for the spotted owl and the goshawk. These plans established uneven-based management as the norm, therefore there is currently no clearcutting on the Sitgreaves.

Essentially all old-growth has been logged off the Sitgreaves. Some personnel within the Forest Service have acknowledged this fact for nearly 15 years. The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) noted in 1988 that "the Sitgreaves NF has little to no remaining old-growth," and that this old-growth is "generally limited only to unlogged steep canyons." AGFD objected to the "liquidation" of "any existing old-growth forest."

Past logging on the SNF has produced incredibly high road densities, and the USFS has failed to aggressively promote and implement desperately needed road closures. Little more than one

1. Pacific Biodiversity Institute, 2002: Analysis of Land Ownership and Prior Land Management Activities Within the Rodeo and Chediski Fires, Arizona

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percent of the SNF is roadless, with two narrow canyons less than 5,000 acres in size being the only inventoried roadless areas on the forest. As noted in a 1985 Sierra Club hiking guide, "you can't hike a quarter-mile without hitting a road" in the SNF.

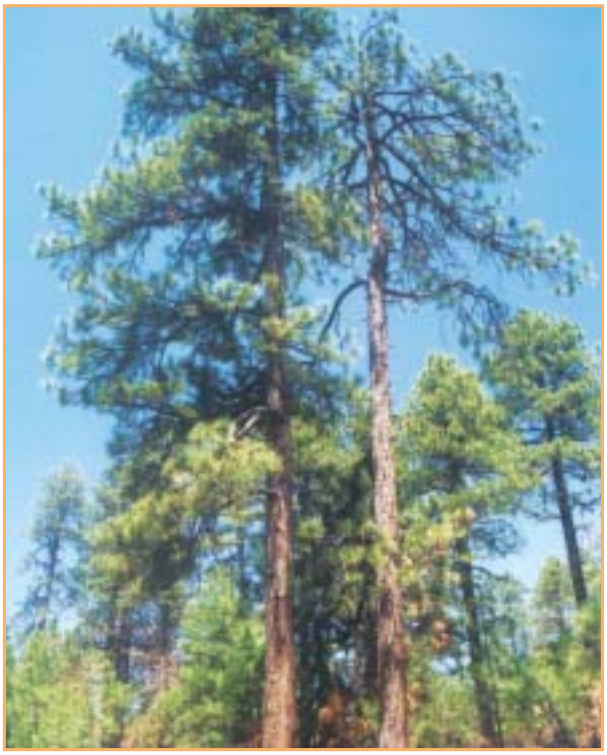
"Forest Health" and Salvage Logging - The Rodeo-Chediski Fires

Logging levels on the SNF have been relatively low in recent years, but all logging has been justified by "forest health" or "fire prevention" rhetoric. The most pressing current logging efforts revolve around salvage of the Rodeo-Chediski fire area.

The combined effects of aggressive fire suppression, the logging of nearly all old-growth forest, and intensive domestic livestock grazing have directly led to large fires like Rodeo-Chediski, which burned nearly 500,000 acres in 2002, including well over 100,000 acres in the SNF. Currently, the Forest Service is planning post-fire timber salvage sales within the Rodeo-Chediski area on two separate tracks. In December, the Forest Service released three categorical exclusions authorizing "public safety" salvage logging of 25 million board feet on 25,000 acres. Outside of the "public safety" zone, the Forest Service will be proposing salvage logging on another 100,000 acres. The additional proposed logging could easily top 100 MMBF.

Stewardship Contracting

The SNF has become a guinea pig for stewardship contracting. Mark Rey recently announced that that the Department had approved a 150,000-acre stewardship contract on the Apache and Sitgreaves National Forests. The Forest Service plans on "thinning" 15,000 acres per year under this contract.



CONCLUSION

Timber industry supporters like Congressman Rick Renzi (R-AZ), a champion of the HFI, are quick to blame fires like Rodeo-Chediski on environmental appeals stopping forest "management." It is not a lack of "management" that is responsible for creating this situation, but many decades of mismanagement and greed.

Opportunistic politicians and the timber industry fail to acknowledge that the Rodeo-Chediski fires burned through some of the most intensively logged and roaded national forest lands in the Western United States. A 2002 report finds that "the circumstances surrounding the Rodeo-Chediski fires add to the overwhelming evidence that building more roads through our national forests will not help prevent wildfires," and that "logging that focuses on the removal of large trees will lead to situations similar to what developed in the area burned by the Rodeo-Chediski fires."[1]

Bitterroot

National Forest

Summary

The Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) offers a glimpse of the best and worst among western national forests. Roughly half the forest contains some of the most pristine wilderness in the Northern Rockies, but the remainder is severely damaged from past logging and road building.

The BNF was the site of the nation's largest wildfires in 2000, and the focus of the Bush administration's first major attempt to thumb its nose at environmental laws and public process. The BNF provides a useful lesson in USFS accountability, and bears strong testimony to the real motives behind the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI).

The Forest

The 1.6 million-acre BNF straddles the border between Montana and northern Idaho. The rugged, alp-like mountains of the Bitterroot Range, clear, free-flowing streams, and abundant, diverse wildlife all contribute to the forest's outstanding natural beauty. Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, and occasional stands of stately old-growth ponderosa at lower elevations give way to forests of spruce, fir, larch, and rare whitebark pine in the forest's alpine regions.

Wilderness areas and wild and scenic river corridors make up nearly one-half of the forest, and inventoried roadless lands cover approximately 25.7 percent of its land base. All of the wildlife species and most of the native plant communities that Lewis and Clark encountered when they traversed the area nearly 200 years ago are still represented. A native bighorn sheep herd, large populations of moose, white-tailed and mule deer, mountain goats, and many species of birds populate the forest. The Bitterroot elk herd is of national significance. The BNF also has great potential for grizzly recovery, and one grizzly was documented by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in 2002. Numerous threatened and sensitive species, such as lynx, gray wolf, wolverine, Bull Trout and westslope cutthroat trout, illustrate not only the region's amazing diversity, but also the urgency of preserving the critical habitat that still remains.

The Threat: Historical Logging

Outside of the BNF's wild enclaves, the forest is one of the most abused public landscapes in the nation. Roadbuilding and various forms of clearcutting over the years have created a crisis of habitat fragmentation, watershed degradation, and declining populations of old-growth and wilderness dependent species. Nearly two-thirds of the forest's watersheds within the timber base lands have been heavily degraded by road building and logging. Lower elevation old-growth ponderosa pine was largely logged out by the 1930s.[1]

At one point, annual logging reached approximately 70 MMBF. Not only did the USFS permit widespread clearcutting, but they also allowed

1. BNF's Bitterroot Fires 2000 assessment of post-fire conditions

the timber industry to bulldoze terraces into steep hillsides. This led to a well-known controversy that first put the BNF in the forest conservation spotlight. A scathing early 1970s report by Arnold Bolle, Dean of the University of Montana School of Forestry, and a USFS Task Force Appraisal documented the BNF's focus on "getting out the cut" at the expense of other ecosystem resources. The event was a major factor leading to the passage of the 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA). Clearcutting and road building have significantly decreased as a result, until now.

The Threat: "Salvage" Logging and the Wildfires of 2000

During the summer of 2000, some of the largest wildfires in Montana history swept across 307,000 acres of the BNF. The fires burned over 200,000 acres of forestlands classified as available for "development." Of this acreage, more than 80,000 acres were either inventoried roadless lands, designated Wilderness or lands recommended by the Forest Plan for wilderness designation. While roadless and wilderness areas represented slightly less than half of the total burned acreage, the fires burned with far greater intensity and severity in previously logged and roaded areas.

Little time passed before the USFS proposed to salvage log as much as 278 MMBF from the burned lands, and Under Secretary Mark Rey and USFS Chief Dale Bosworth attempted to circumvent public participation. Rey signed a decision notice in December 2001, stating that no appeals would be allowed, though they were required by law. Litigation followed, when a coalition of conservation groups sued in Federal District Court. The judge ruled Rey's action to be a violation of the law. The decision was appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which ordered negotiations between the parties. A settlement ensued, reducing the cut to approximately 60 MMBF (2001 Burned Area Recovery EIS/ROD). The Forest Service left the door open for future timber sales, however, simply requiring completion of additional NEPA analysis. Given the proposed changes to existing laws, rules and regulations – including NEPA – the risk of future salvage logging and associated negative impacts on the BNF is tremendous.

The wildfires burned in many "developed" watersheds already classified as "sensitive." The 2001 Forest Plan Monitoring Report disclosed that mudslides were reported in some of the most excessively roaded areas of the forest. In 2001 and 2002, Dale Bosworth and Bush administration officials stated publicly that intensive restoration and rehabilitation of such sensitive areas, and not logging, were the driving force behind their so-called "Burned Area Recovery" plan. The settlement allowing reduced logging was based on those promises. Subsequently, during the wildfire season of 2002, approximately $25 million slated for restoration and rehabilitation efforts was stripped away to fund fire-fighting efforts elsewhere. The public has since been informed that much of the diverted funding will likely never be returned to the BNF, and there is a good chance that restoration and rehabilitation efforts will not take place as promised – yet logging on the sensitive burned areas continues unabated.

As the experience of the Bitterroot wildfires illustrates, restoration is not the issue behind programs such as the HFI. We can only expect more of the same betrayal of public trust and blatant timber-industry bias as Bush and Rey continue to push their "logging without laws" agenda on the rest of our national forests.

For More Information Contact:
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Black Hills

National Forest

Summary

The Black Hills National Forest (BHNF) is one of the most heavily managed, ecologically exploited forests in America. A century of industrial management has left practically no roadless areas or old-growth in the BHNF. Impending logging for "salvage" and "wildfire prevention" promises to worsen the situation.

The BHNF needs to shift away from industrial management, and toward a future of restoration, so it can again support the amazing biodiversity that once flourished here. As a traditional barometer for federal forest management, the Black Hills provides a unique opportunity to debunk the myth that logging is beneficial.

The Forest

A remarkable island ecosystem rising out of the plains, The BHNF covers 1.25 million acres of South Dakota and Wyoming. Forests of ponderosa pine blanket its landscape, which is capped by the highest peaks east of the Rockies. The BHNF is a mixing zone where relict plant communities from boreal, eastern and western forests merge.

Surrounded by a sea of prairie, its remoteness has led to speciation in some plant and wildlife populations. Dominated by ponderosa pine, the forest also includes dense pockets of spruce and stands of aspen, birch and oak. It is home to several biologically unique communities such as fens, wetlands and rare montane grasslands that occur nowhere else in the world. Large predators such as grizzly bears and wolves have long been extirpated, and state-sanctioned hunting threatens reestablishment of mountain lion populations. Mule deer are common in the forest, but elk are encountered less often.

Native fish and endemic land snails are at risk, and only 10 to 15 pairs of northern goshawks currently nest in the forest. Native plants are threatened by noxious weed infestations throughout the BHNF, and livestock grazing and ORV use compound the threat.

The Threat: Historic Logging and Resource Extraction

Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the USFS, used the BHNF as a proving ground for commercial forest management models and multiple use principles. In 1899-1900, the forest was the site of the very first commercial timber sale on federal lands, setting the precedent for government-sanctioned public lands logging. The intervening 100 years have seen the decimation of old-growth forest, the construction of over 8,000 miles of roads, and significant water quality damage from mining.

The BHNF is the largest timber producer in the Rocky Mountain Region, in some years logging nearly 75 percent of the region's volume. Less than two percent of the BHNF remains in a roadless or old-growth condition. It is among the most heavily roaded forests in the country, with only three roadless areas, totaling 16,447 acres, and one tiny wilderness area. Two of the three roadless areas have been released for resource extraction. The BHNF also contains thousands of mining claims, with more filed every year. Though mining companies are responsible for cleaning up mine pollution, government agencies refuse to enforce cleanup requirements. An unusually large amount of private land development scattered throughout the forest has seriously

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affected some of the most productive valley bottom and meadow habitat.

The Threat: Salvage, Fire Prevention and the Suspension of Environmental Laws

During the past three years, over 120,000 acres have burned in some of the largest fires ever recorded on the BHNF. These fires have occurred in heavily logged and thinned areas, yet the USFS continues to assert that massive industrial timber sales are necessary to avert "catastrophic wildfire" risk to homes and communities. The situation deteriorated in 2002, which saw the unfortunate confluence of ongoing drought, a critical senate election in South Dakota, and a pine beetle outbreak centered in the Beaver Park roadless area.

In an ill-fated settlement with the Forest Service to deal with "catastrophic fire risk," National groups like the Sierra Club and Wilderness Society negotiated away the fate of Norbeck Wildlife Preserve and Beaver Park Roadless Area – the last forested roadless area in South Dakota. When grassroots environmental groups refused to go along with the settlement, Senator Tom Daschle attached a rider to an anti-terrorism bill, overturning two court rulings and allowing logging in both the Beaver Park Roadless Area and Norbeck Wildlife Preserve.

Daschle's legislative rider (dubbed the "Black Hills Fire Prevention Agreement") exempted "fire prevention" logging from environmental laws and judicial review, and suspended environmental laws on over 8,000 acres in the northeastern Black Hills under the guise of fighting mountain pine beetle outbreaks. The USFS is presently developing a "pine beetle" control project for the area surrounding Beaver Park.

Initially, Senator Daschle had indicated he was not going to allow "fire and logging levels" to become a political issue in Senator Tim Johnson's re-election campaign against Representative John Thune, a vocal timber industry supporter. However, fire became a fulcrum for the South Dakota senate campaign and Daschle's rider was a key factor prompting western Republicans to clamor for easing of environmental laws on national forests in their own states.

With the Daschle rider in effect and the public's fear of wildfire very much alive, the USFS and industry-friendly politicians were more empowered than ever to spin commercial logging as a means to create "healthy forests." A direct link stretches between these events on the BHNF and the Bush/Rey Healthy Forest Initiative, making the forest once again a proving ground for destructive industrial management.

THE LAKOTA NATION

For millennia, the Black Hills, or Paha Sapa, have been held sacred by over 30 Native American nations. Indigenous people have used the mineral hot springs, gathered medicinal plants and conducted religious ceremonies here for thousands of years. The area remains protected by the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868, for the exclusive use of the Great Sioux (Lakota) Nation. The Black Hills were unlawfully taken after the Custer expedition. Since then, billions of dollars of timber, mineral and other resources have been pillaged. Many Lakota people now have a difficult time entering the hills because of the desecration.

In 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the confiscation of the Black Hills from the Lakota people was illegal, then attempted to give the Lakota money. The Lakota have rejected federal attempts at monetary settlement of their land claims, because the treaties should be used to deny further commercial development in the sacred Black Hills. Non-commercial restoration of Lakota ancestral lands, and management of much of the BHNF as wilderness, will respect the cultural values of the Lakota Nation.

Chequemegan-Nicolet

National Forest

Summary

Wisconsin's Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (CNNF) is among the Upper Midwest's most important public land holdings, containing some of the region's most remarkable ecosystems and wildlife. The CNNF was established in 1933 to recover forests and soils following deforestation in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Today, it is fragmented by roads and other infrastructure, and is threatened by unsustainable logging. Huge areas are allocated toward producing pulp logs for the paper industry. Canada lynx, eastern timber wolf, pine marten and numerous other species face an ever-declining habitat base as more and more timber is offered for sale.

The Forest

The 1.5 million-acre CNNF is the largest contiguous public land holding in Wisconsin. Despite deforestation at the turn of the century and heavy logging in recent years, portions of the forest have begun to recover. The CNNF's extraordinary landscape diversity, including everything from bogs to glades to rocky cliffs and pine barrens, provides habitat for many of Wisconsin's rarest plant and animal species, such as goblin fern, ginseng, state endangered pine marten, federally threatened eastern timber wolf, Canada lynx and a variety of migratory songbirds. High levels of ecological diversity and the presence of rare species make the CNNF a top conservation priority, according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Wisconsin was so heavily logged in the early 20th century that the CNNF represents a very rare opportunity to protect some of the state's last old-growth forest. Fewer than 20,000 acres of the forest possess true old-growth characteristics, as most stands are 80 years old or less. Virgin old-growth stands are exceedingly rare, making up only a few thousand acres, yet many of the largest, oldest trees are targeted for logging over the next few years.

The Threat: Unsustainable Logging

Of all national forests, the CNNF is the poster child for ecologically and economically unsustainable logging. The CNNF was the highest cut national forest in the entire national forest system in 2002, and has logged at least 116 MMBF each year for the past decade. From 1992 to 2001, over 188,000 acres were logged.

Nonetheless, the USFS is planning five major timber sales, based on an outdated forest plan that would log over 42,000 acres in the most remote sections of the forest. These sales will likely cost taxpayers nearly $10 million, while also violating NFMA, NEPA and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Northwest Howell timber sale calls for logging more than 7,500 acres in the heart of pine marten and lynx habitat. The McCaslin timber sale proposes to log in critical northern goshawk and red-shouldered hawk habitat, while also decimating available habitat for cerulean warbler, a species now under review for listing under ESA.

The Threat: Roads and ORV Use

The CNNF has very high road densities throughout the forest, except for several small roadless areas totaling about 69,000 acres, and is also threatened by growing ORV use. Road density throughout the Nicolet side of the forest is 5.84 miles of road per square mile of land, but a complete inventory of all roads on the CNNF has never been performed. The total miles of roads on the Chequamegon side are still unknown, because of misleading tactics used by the USFS

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to count open, closed, and non-system roads. A direct comparison of the CNNF's road density to other national forests is not possible because of different definitions of roads and differences in the quality of road databases.

Road densities exceed standards for timber wolf in many areas of the forest. The five major timber sales planned on the CNNF call for construction or reconstruction of dozens of miles of new or "improved" roads.

The Threat: Threatened, Endangered and Exotic Species

The CNNF is home to several rare, threatened and endangered species, including eastern timber wolf, Canada lynx, pine marten, red-shouldered hawk, northern goshawk and goblin fern. Logging levels have not been significantly altered to protect these species, but the USFS continues to prioritize "wildlife openings," a euphemism for small clearcuts used to benefit early-successional species such as the white tailed deer.

Wildlife population trends, landscape patterns and on-the-ground conditions reveal a steady deterioration of ecosystem health across the forest. Red-shouldered hawk and pine marten populations are in trouble, and habitat for extremely rare botrichium fern is being targeted for logging or obliterated by deer browsing.

Populations of northern goshawk are precariously low, yet logging is proposed in areas containing goshawk nesting habitat. The presence of Canada lynx in the CNNF, and the confirmation of breeding lynx populations in the nearby Superior NF, makes the CNNF's wildlands invaluable for lynx recovery. Unfortunately, timber sales target lynx habitat while environmental documents fail to assess impacts to lynx recovery. Management also fails to properly address the issue of exotic and invasive species, whose encroachment threatens the CNNF's biological diversity.

George Washington-Jefferson

National Forest

Summary

The George Washington and Jefferson National Forests (GW/JNF) of the central Appalachians are home to more unprotected roadless areas than any eastern national forest, and more endangered species than any national forest.

Logging is the dominant resource extraction activity on the forests, with some gas development, ATV use and approximately 8,000 acres of grazing allotments. A barrage of controversial timber sales promises to worsen the situation, allowing nearly 1,300 acres of logging in roadless areas, sensitive watersheds and endangered species habitat.

The Forest

Under combined supervision, the GW/JNF total 1.79 million-acres and follows the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia for 300 miles, extending into portions of West Virginia and Kentucky. The headwaters of the Potomac, James, New and Tennessee River systems originate here. The forest's many remote, undeveloped areas make them a black bear stronghold. Containing an estimated 219,000 acres of old-growth, the GW/JNF represents the best chance in the eastern United States to preserve large tracts of pristine forest. Some of the oldest, most biologically diverse deciduous forest ecosystems in the world occur here, as the GW/JNF is home to over 100 different tree species. Oak-hickory or oak-pine forest types are predominant, while hemlocks and mixed-mesophytic types are found in coves and riparian areas, and stands of red spruce and rare Fraser fir dot the landscape above 5,000 feet.

The Threat: Logging and "Timber Salvage"

The USFS considers 39 percent of the forests' acreage to be "suitable" for timber production. From 1996-2000, logging averaged 36 MMBF per year on the GW/JNF, and the 11 years prior saw an average annual cut of 63 MMBF. Old-growth is routinely logged on the GW/JNF, though the USFS rarely admits it. In 2002, some of the forest's most spectacular old-growth was cut at the Hoover Creek timber sale.

Recently, the USFS has trumpeted its move away from clearcutting, but has simply switched to shelterwood logging – effectively a two-stage clearcut. Sales such as the proposed Bark Camp sale – 700 acres of shelterwood and clearcuts next to the Clinch River – will increase siltation and threaten the survival of several endangered mussels.

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Most proposed logging uses "salvage" based on gypsy moths as a rationale, though salvage logging takes many insidious forms on the GW/JNF. In December 1998 the USFS began implementing the Hagan Hall timber sale, to "salvage" large trees broken and downed by severe weather. Though the sale area is in the wettest part of Virginia, USFS received a special exemption based on "extreme fire hazard" to expedite logging. Logging took place in moist coves, riparian areas and in a river gorge identified as a special biological area by the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage. Large trees were cut and removed, while small materials and logging slash were left, even though the USFS acknowledges that "heavier fuels are not a high risk for ignition of a wildfire in any event, " and "the greatest potential for ignition and spread of fire is among fine fuels."

Logging on the GW/JNF has resulted in severe siltation and degradation of stream habitats, and heavy criticism by the USDA Inspector General for failure to apply mitigation measures for protection of water quality. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule identifies major watersheds with impaired waters that contain GW/JNF land and inventoried roadless areas. Timber sales such as Chestnut Ridge #2 and Bark Camp log in sensitive riparian areas, threatening water quality.

The Threat: Unprotected Roadless Areas

The GW/JNF has some of the largest tracts of roadless forest in the eastern United States, and more uninventoried, thus unprotected, roadless areas than any eastern national forest. An inventory conducted in preparation for the 1993 GWNF Forest Plan identified 27 areas, totaling about 260,000 acres, but the USFS failed to inventory numerous areas of substantial size that met roadless criteria. Other previously inventoried roadless areas, such as Devils Fork and Hickory Flats on the JNF, have inexplicably been dropped from the national Roadless Rule.

Thirty percent of "inventoried" roadless acreage is open to logging or road building, to say nothing of nearly 350,000 acres of uninventoried roadless areas. Logging continues in roadless areas such as Terrapin and Wilson Mountains and Dunkle Knob. The proposed Lip Trap and Slate and Paddy timber sales are in tracts contiguous with inventoried roadless areas, or in areas once considered roadless. A recent road reconstruction project removed a road from a floodplain by locating it within two roadless areas. The USFS has also proposed gas drilling and associated road building in the North Fork of the Pound inventoried roadless area, and recently allowed AEP corporation to construct a 760 kV electrical line through roadless areas on the JNF.

Threats to Endangered Species

More endangered species are found on the GW/JNF than any other national forest. The endangered Indiana bat makes its home here, as do Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel, Peregrine Falcon, bald eagle and numerous rare plant species.

The Clinch River watershed on the JNF harbors more threatened fish and mussel species than any other watershed in the United States, which are directly threatened by siltation resulting from timber harvest. TVA aquatic biologist Steven Ahlstedt states, "the upper reaches of the North Fork of Holston and Clinch Rivers must remain pristine if the Little Wing Pearly Mussel is to survive."

Kootenai

National Forest

Summary

The Kootenai National Forest (KNF) covers 2.2 million acres of northwestern Montana, providing critical habitat for many threatened, endangered and sensitive species, and an important corridor for the movement of wildlife. Historic and present logging and mining have devastated the KNF's ecosystems, disrupting wildlife movement, isolating core habitat areas and threatening the persistence of the forest's stunning biodiversity. Continued management under the present resource extraction paradigm, underscored by local politics and economies hostile to forest conservation, is pushing the KNF's ecosystems ever closer to the breaking point.

The Forest

The KNF includes portions of five mountain ranges, encompassing high alpine ecosystems, rich mixed-conifer forests and diverse riparian communities. Its wet climate and relatively low elevation result in forest productivity and biodiversity unmatched elsewhere in Montana. The KNF is home to an amazing diversity of animals, including 191 bird species, and over a dozen conifer species. Much of the KNF's wildlife, such as the grizzly bear, gray wolf, Canada lynx, wolverine and rare woodland caribou, depend on habitats found only in undisturbed areas of native forest, and 627,000 acres of unprotected roadless area provide the remaining core habitat for these species. Logging, road building and other developments have degraded habitat for the threatened bull trout and the westslope cutthroat trout, and operation of the Libby Dam on the Kootenai River has led to the listing of the white sturgeon as an endangered species.

1996 (before logging)

1998 (after logging)

The Threat: Logging and Associated Roadbuilding

The KNF's highly productive forest ecosystems have made it a prime target for the timber industry. For much of the recent past, logging on the KNF has surpassed that of all other national forests in Montana combined. Although logging has declined from sale levels as high as 240 MMBF in the 60s, 70s and 80s, the average annual cut level still approaches 50 MMBF. Clearcutting and similar logging methods, including shelterwood and seedtree cuts, are extensive, and annual clearcutting averaged 2,556 acres from 1989 to 2000.

The USFS continually disregards its own Forest Plan standards in favor of "timber production" goals on the KNF. Dozens of times, standards limiting clearcutting and open road densities have been waived. Old-growth acreage is far below standards set by the Forest Plan. The USFS has also approved 5,346 acres of salvage

1. Kootenai National Forest Inventoried Roadless Area Map. http://roadless.fs.fed.us/states/mt/state3.shtml

2. National Forests and Mill Closures, ECONorthwest, January 2003

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logging, which would remove about 46 MMBF of timber in areas burned by wildfires in 2000.

The scale of past logging means that the KNF has only a few roadless areas, within a vast patchwork of clearcuts and a road network too expensive to maintain. Roads have facilitated the steady expansion of invasive weeds over the past decade, and are a major reason why the Montana Department of Environmental Quality lists hundreds of miles of streams and rivers on the KNF as "water quality limited." The USFS recognizes 26 percent of the KNF as roadless, though Forest Plan recommends only five percent for wilderness designation. In all, 78 percent of the forest is vulnerable to road building and associated resource extraction.[1]

The Threat: Mining

Several mines in various stages of development plague the KNF. The largest mining threat is the proposed Rock Creek mine – an enormous copper and silver mine that would tunnel three miles beneath the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness. It would discharge up to three million gallons of wastewater per day into the lower Clark Fork River, and permanently dump 100 million tons of mining waste along Rock Creek, just one quarter mile from the Clark Fork. The mine was one reason why American Rivers listed the Clark Fork River among America's "Most Endangered Rivers" in 2000.

The Threat: Political and Cultural Threats

The KNF comprises 76 percent of Lincoln County, Montana, and its poor management has helped produce a local economy that is increasingly reliant on industrial resource extraction. The KNF supplies mills in northwest Montana and the Idaho panhandle, where local politics have long been dominated by industry-backed politicians and a strong "wise-use" movement. In this and many other regions of the West, environmentalists and national forest policies have been blamed for mill closures, but much of the decline can be explained by a simple lack of available forest – given past logging levels – and a general decline in federal logging due to changing American values. Furthermore, a glut of timber on the world market has driven lumber values down to 10-year lows, driving older, smaller, high-cost mills out of business.[2] Recreation on 1,440 miles of trails, however, as well as fishing, hunting and forest restoration, present substantial economic opportunities for the region.

Nonetheless, protests from wise-use groups have grown louder, and intimidation of isolated local people who speak out against continued exploitation has risen. The chilling effects of intimidation, the KNF's relative isolation from major media markets and its lack of publicity as a tourist destination compound the forest's vulnerability to destructive logging and other resource extraction.

THREATS TO GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVERY

The KNF covers much of the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Recovery Area. Habitat degradation associated with logging and other management activities on the KNF has imperiled the grizzly, which is warranted to be uplisted to endangered species status within the area. By even the most optimistic accounts, the grizzly population has a high probability of decline, and a low chance of long-term persistence.

Mississippi
National Forests

Summary

Mississippi's national forests are critical forest fragments within a disfigured ecological landscape. The state's diverse southern mixed forests, pineywoods and lowland hardwood forests are so biologically unique, and so desperate for effective protection, that they have been termed “critically endangered” by the World Wildlife Federation (WWF).

Historically, the timber industry has had free reign in Mississippi. It has often been said that this is where forest rangers go to learn how to log. The local political establishment largely supports the timber industry position, so strong public involvement may be the only real path to reform on Mississippi’s National Forests.

The Forests

The six forests – the Bienville, Delta, DeSoto, Homochitto, Holly Springs and Tombigbee – are dispersed throughout Mississippi, but are managed as a single NF. Though heavily altered by industrial logging, they remain fabulous reservoirs of unique biodiversity. Pine and oak forests, cypress swamps filled with insect-eating pitcher plants, blooming dogwood and giant magnolia trees, azaleas, mountain laurels and wild orchids can all be found here. Some of the last remaining hardwood forests in the Mississippi Delta are found in the Delta NF, and the Bienville NF contains remnants of the Jackson Black Prairie, one of America’s most threatened ecosystems.[1]

The Risk: Logging

Industrial pine management has severely damaged Mississippi’s national forests. During the notorious "chip mill invasion" of the 1980s, when the pulp industry relocated much of its production from the Pacific Northwest to the South in search of more wood fiber, annual cut levels of 350 MMBF were standard. Current logging still approaches 100 MMBF.[2] The Homochitto alone is one of the leading timber-producing national forests in the South.

Thousands of acres of diverse forests have been replaced by loblolly and slash pine plantations. Many areas have been logged so many times, on such short rotations, that fourth-generation stands are common. Widespread clearcutting – in the past extending right up to streamsides – has deteriorated water quality. Logging roads have brought about runaway off-road vehicle use, damaged streams and, on the Tombigbee NF, facilitated horrible outbreaks of kudzu – a fast-growing invasive vine from Asia. One inventory found 48 miles of roads in a single 1,800-acre timber sale area![3]

The USFS maintains these practices under a simplistic, outdated management plan, focused on industrial pine production. Dating from 1985, the plan calls for only two percent of the forests to be older than 40 years of age. Entire ranger districts have "general forest management," or high volume timber production, as a management goal. Only a single 39-acre stand is designated an "Uneven-aged Management Demonstration Area"– a tiny exception to the

1. Southern Forest Resource Assessment, USFS. http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/sustain/report/terra1/terra1-28.htm
2. 1998 Report of the Forest Service http;//www.fs.fed.us/pl/pdb/98report/table_35.html; Monitoring and Evaluation Report/National Forests in Mississippi – Fiscal Year 1999
3. Land and Resource Management Plan: National Forests in Mississippi. 1985 Amendment 9. June 26, 1990
4. Environmental Assessment/Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Management – CCC Camp F-7 Analysis Area. DeSoto National Forest, June 2002
5. Environmental Assessment/Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Management – Whiskey Creek Analysis Area. DeSoto National Forest, June 2002
6. Faulkner, William. "The Bear". 1942.

rampant clearcutting on the rest of the forest.[4] The management plan revision has been stalled for years, with no public meetings planned.

Two Examples: The Delta and DeSoto National Forests

As on-the-ground examples, The DeSoto NF and the Delta NF epitomize some of the best and worst characteristics of Mississippi's national forests.

The DeSoto National Forest

The DeSoto's pineywoods are a fragment of the once-great longleaf pine ecosystem of the Gulf South, covering gently rolling terrain with stands of longleaf, slash and loblolly pine. Its unique winding streams form bottomlands that still support hardwood forests. The DeSoto contains the tiny Black Creek and Leaf River wilderness areas, the only two in the state, as well as Black Creek, its only wild and scenic river.

Recent timber sales on the DeSoto call for what has been termed "cutting longleaf to restore longleaf." The USFS claims that restoration of longleaf pine, as well as the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, is a high priority. The Whiskey Creek and Deep Creek sales purport to "restore the longleaf ecosystem that would potentially provide for high-species richness."[5] This "restoration" calls for clearcutting loblolly pine stands to replant with longleaf, while also cutting existing longleaf that is mixed in the stands. Worse yet are seedtree cuts – two-stage clearcuts – that log mature longleaf stands to replant longleaf. Proposed sales imperil the federally threatened gopher tortoise. Though the USFS admits tortoise populations are declining,[4] they plan to continue clearcutting.

The Delta National Forest

The Delta NF is the only bottomland hardwood national forest, and one of few remaining hardwood forests in the Mississippi Delta. Barely more than 60,000 acres, the DNF contains some of the highest concentrations of old-growth forest in the state. In many areas, trees range from 80-120 years in age. Given that the surrounding region has been largely deforested for cotton and rice farming, the DNF is a precious remnant of the unique bottomland forests celebrated by William Faulkner.[6]

Two parcels over 5,000 acres in the forest's southern half are the only roadless lands in Mississippi. These areas are the state's best hope for Wilderness designation, and offer great potential for Louisiana Black Bear recovery, yet a proposed timber sale in the Long Bayou Analysis Area would clearcut 286 acres. The remote character of this forest must be preserved. A recent campaign has begun pressuring the USFS to begin a Wilderness study, and for Congressman Bennie Thompson to support federal protection.

Oil and Gas

Oil and gas drilling has taken place on the Homochitto for nearly 50 years, but is on the rise, thanks to Bush administration energy policies. About 86 percent of the producing wells in Mississippi's national forests are found on the Homochitto, and exploration is increasing in the Desoto.

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Plumas and Sequoia

National Forests in California: Plumas NF and the Sequoia National Monument

Summary

For much of the past five years, commercial logging and thinning projects on the Plumas National Forest (PNF) have been justified by exaggerated wildfire threats and "forest health" concerns, driven by the controversial Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery and Economic Stability Act (QLG).[1] Though the 2001 Sierra Nevada Framework Plan granted stronger environmental protection to all forests in the Sierra, the USFS, under George W. Bush and Mark Rey, is dismantling that plan in favor of full implementation of the QLG agenda on the PNF.

The Forest

Characterized by rugged canyons, rolling hills and alpine meadows teeming with lakes, the Plumas National Forest covers 1.4 million acres of California's northern Sierra Nevada range. The PNF borders the Modoc Plateau to the north and the high desert of the Great Basin to the east, spanning elevations from 1,300 to over 10,000 feet, and forests ranging from moist, mixed-conifer forests to drier Jeffrey pine and pinyon-juniper stands. A reservoir of pristine habitat and high biodiversity along the spine of the Sierras, the PNF functions as a critical corridor for the movement of species between the central Sierra Nevada and Siskiyou/southern Cascade ecoregions.

A 75-mile segment of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail bisects the Plumas, joining hundreds of miles of other trails that wind through the forest. The North, Middle and South Forks of the Feather River, known for their waterfalls and deep, picturesque canyons, originate here. All three rivers are renowned for kayaking, as well as their excellent fishing, supporting important cold-water fisheries and ancient runs of salmon and steelhead. Near the town of Oroville, Feather Falls Recreation Area features the sixth-largest waterfall in the United States.

The Threat: Historic Resource Extraction

An ongoing legacy of logging, grazing and road construction has damaged many of the PNF's 4,700 miles of rivers and streams, left few roadless areas greater than 1,000 acres and degraded much of the forest's old-growth stands. With 6,000 miles of roads, the PNF ranks among the most densely roaded national forests in the Sierra Nevada. Streams on the PNF experience heavy sedimentation from roads, and a history of poor logging practices has reduced forest canopy closure, contributing to higher stream temperatures that harm coldwater fish and amphibian species. Forest Service mismanagement has severely damaged habitat for the California spotted owl, northern goshawk and other bird species. Breeding and migration habitat for large and medium sized carnivores has been fragmented, threatening remaining populations with isolation and extinction. Both the California Spotted Owl and the Pacific Fisher have been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

The Threat: The Quincy Library Group

Signed into law in 1998, the QLG sets up numerous pilot projects to log, thin and cut firebreaks, supposedly to reduce fire risk and improve forest health on the Plumas, Lassen and Sierraville District of the Tahoe National Forests in the northern Sierra Nevada. The PNF is ground zero in the ongoing debate over the QLG program, comprising approximately half its total acreage.

1. for more information on the QLG and its threats to the Plumas, see NFPA's 2001 report, "America's 10 Most Endangered National Forests"

The QLG has never been completely funded or implemented, but with the Sierra Framework being gutted, the USFS intends to fully instate the original QLG program. The 12-inch diameter cut limits in older stands are being removed. Drier forests on the PNF's eastern half face renewed clearcutting, which was halted under the framework. Group selection (mini-clearcuts) will resume in spotted owl habitat, where it had been completely removed under the framework. A new euphemism for small-scale clearcuts, called "forest gap regeneration," calls for logging one to two-acre openings that retain a few large trees within them as a means of "sustaining" forests. With full QLG implementation, commercial logging and thinning will skyrocket, further degrading habitat for numerous sensitive species. The PNF is a striking example of the threats posed to all national forests in the Sierra by Bush administration attacks on the Sierra Framework.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: THE SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST AND THE GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT, CALIFORNIA

South-central California's 1.1 million-acre Sequoia National Forest and the 329,000-acre Giant Sequoia National Monument within it are home to majestic giant Sequoia trees, the world's largest living things. Closely related to the coast redwood, Sequoias can live to be 3,200 years old, and 38 feet in diameter. The monument contains more than half of the world's Sequoia groves, and is a complex, abundant forest ecosystem that provides habitat for hundreds of plant and animal species.

In the wake of the 150,000-acre McNally fire of 2002, the Sequoia National Forest is proposing a series of massive salvage logging projects, including approximately 30,000 acres within three inventoried roadless areas. The USFS is also proposing to log approximately 35,000 acres of mature and old-growth forest per decade within the monument, supposedly to prevent fires, and clearcut much of the old-growth forest within the giant Sequoia groves to facilitate Sequoia regeneration. Large trees up to 30 inches in diameter could be removed, and a loophole would allow for unlimited removal of even larger, ancient trees, including giant Sequoias. The Forest Service ignores the fact that the nation's top scientists – and even the federal government's own scientists – have consistently found that removing large trees increases fire risk.

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Tongass
National Forest

Summary
The Tongass National Forest (TNF) in southeast Alaska's coastal archipelago is the nation's largest national forest. It is the last great expanse of coastal temperate rainforest in the United States, and is among the world's largest tracts of old-growth temperate rainforest.

Historically the most heavily logged national forest in the system, the TNF has been in the forest conservation spotlight for the past decade. Dense patchworks of roads and thousands of clearcuts have replaced its most productive fish and wildlife habitat. The forest is under constant attack by a hostile Alaska Congressional delegation and an extremely pro-development state legislature. If the Bush administration succeeds in derailing the Roadless Rule, the Forest Service could sell a staggering 800 million board feet (MMBF) of old-growth trees in the next three years.

The Forest
Stretching 500 miles along the southeast Alaska coast, the 17 million-acre TNF is the size of Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. Over 1,000 mist-shrouded islands, narrow inlets, and glacier-carved fjords punctuate its 11,000 miles of coastline. Majestic Sitka Spruce, Western Hemlock, and Red and Yellow Cedar dominate its ancient forests. These trees often grow to over 200 feet and live for more than 1,000 years. Set against a stunning backdrop of coastal mountains towering up to 18,000 feet, the rainforest of the TNF is home to diverse towns and communities that depend on the forest's resources for survival. Commercial fishing and tourism are mainstays of the local economy, and the bounty of the land and sea continues to feed rural families, many of whom still lead a traditional subsistence way of life.

The highest density of grizzly bears in North America thrives in the vast wild reaches of the TNF. The Tongass is also home to the unique blue bear and the rare Alexander Archipelago wolf. Ancient runs of all five species of wild Pacific salmon return here each year, nurturing the forest and its wildlife. Killer whales, humpback whales, porpoises, river and sea otters all thrive in the forest's nutrient rich waters. The ocean surrounding the TNF has healthy populations of Steller sea lions and Marbled Murrelets, both listed as federally threatened outside southeast Alaska, and its old-growth forests are home to the Queen Charlotte goshawk, also under consideration for federal Endangered Species protection.

The Threat: Historical and Present Logging
Industrial-scale commercial logging is the dominant resource extraction activity in the TNF. All logging in the Tongass occurs in old-growth rainforest, and 95 percent involves clearcutting. Since 1950, approximately one million acres of southeast Alaska have been clearcut. Over 70 percent of the biggest and best forest has been logged, resulting in the loss of much of the most critical wildlife habitat.

Until recently, two pulp companies enjoyed exclusive, long-term contracts to log the ancient forests of the TNF. Due to a long-term decline in world pulp prices and increasing public outcry, the Japanese-owned Alaska Pulp Corporation mill closed in 1993, and the Louisiana Pacific Company-owned Ketchikan Pulp Company mill closed in 1997. The 50-year, monopoly contracts were cancelled. During the pulp mill era (1955 - 1997), roughly 350 MMBF were cut annually. At the height of large-scale logging in the 1980s,

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The Threat: Watersheds And Salmon

Many southeast Alaska residents are fond of saying "salmon grow on trees." Healthy wild salmon runs are the backbone of southeast Alaska's ecosystem and economy, and depend on healthy forests for their continued existence. In contrast to the rest of the Pacific coast, millions of wild salmon still return to the TNF's streams each fall. The forest still contains wild, intact watersheds that are spawning waters for all five Pacific salmon species. Many of the best salmon streams are already severely damaged, however, and many more are threatened by new plans for logging and roadbuilding.

A 2001 report by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game found that over half of the Tongass' salmon and trout streams crossed by logging roads were being at least partially blocked by the roads. Spawning wild salmon and trout are unable to reach hundreds of miles of streams that are vital to their survival. Continued logging and road building will only further imperil these fragile populations of Alaska salmon.

annual cuts were as high as 480 MMBF. For the past five years, annual logging on the TNF averaged about 100 million board feet, but the USFS is working hard to increase the annual cut back up to over 200 MMBF. Most recent timber sales focus on high-grading red and yellow cedar – which are in long-term decline and regenerate very slowly – and the largest old-growth spruce.

The Threat: Roadless Area Logging

Over 4,650 miles of roads, primarily built for logging access, exist in the Tongass. Just over half the forest (9.2 million acres) is inventoried roadless area, comprising 15 percent of all of the nation's roadless areas. The Roadless Rule has resulted in record low logging levels (under 50 MMBF for the past two years), but also allowed four specific roadless area timber sales to move ahead. The USFS will offer at least three of these sales during 2003. During the next five years, the Forest Service plans to offer 138 MMBF for sale annually, with two-thirds coming from inventoried roadless areas. The Tongass 10-year Timber Schedule calls for logging just under a billion board feet from inventoried roadless areas by 2012.

The Threat: Taxpayer-Subsidized Logging

The wildness and remoteness of the TNF makes it an expensive place to log. The TNF has been the biggest money-losing national forest for the past 40 years, losing over $30 million annually on commercial timber sales. Consequently, the USFS repeatedly says it has insufficient funding to pay for recreation and tourism planning, or to do as much thinning as it would like.

Without massive tax subsidies, most logging operations would have never taken place. The Bush administration's moves to revitalize logging on the TNF will only increase taxpayer losses on government welfare to timber companies.

Umpqua
National Forest

Summary

Southern Oregon's 984,000-acre Umpqua National Forest (UNF) boasts some of the finest remaining old-growth forest in Oregon. It also historically ranks among the 10 largest federal timber producers. The timber industry and the Bush administration are anxiously waiting to reinstitute old patterns of deforestation in the UNF's ancient forests.

The UNF is a primary battleground between the public and the timber industry, and provides a good indication of the federal timber sale program's future. The forest's wildlife, fish and ancient trees face growing pressure from a host of harmful commercial logging projects and fire salvage sales. Changes to the Northwest Forest Plan and other environmental laws place the UNF at extraordinary risk.

The Forest

The UNF is an important transition zone between the north Siskiyou and Oregon Cascades ecoregions, its diverse, productive coniferous forests harboring some of Oregon's finest remaining old-growth Douglas fir and hemlock. A milder climate, lower elevations and volcanic soils provide growing conditions that have produced trees of immense size, and more biomass per acre than most forests in the Cascades.

The UNF's landscape is a dramatic expanse of rugged peaks, deep canyons, razorback ridges, and lush temperate rainforest. From high-elevation snowfields to spectacular salmon and trout streams, water shapes the UNF's diverse natural environments and ecology. The headwaters of the North Umpqua, South Umpqua and Row Rivers originate in the high mountains of the UNF. The North Umpqua River, designated Wild and Scenic, is a nationally recognized steelhead and salmon river. The South Umpqua features beautiful South Umpqua Falls and travels through the Klamath Knot, one of the world's most diverse temperate coniferous forests.

Over 250 animal species are found in the UNF, including some of the rarest mammals in the Northwest – wolverine, lynx and Pacific fisher. Habitat for these and numerous other species is increasingly threatened by commercial logging. Native sea-going fish, northern spotted owls, red tree voles and rare lichens and mollusks all depend on the UNF's ancient trees and clean, free-flowing rivers for their habitat. The delisting of the Endangered Umpqua sea-run cutthroat trout is a major ongoing political fight which could end in that species' extinction if it is not reversed. In 2003, Umpqua Watersheds and

partners filed a petition for listing of the Pacific lamprey, which was later denied.

The Threat: Old-growth and Roadless Area Logging.

In the 1980-90s, the UNF was among the top 10 timber-producing national forests, logging as much as 550 MMBF per year. Logging significantly declined from 1995-2000, but annual target volume over the next five years is 69 MMBF. Most of this will come from uninventoried roadless areas under 5,000 acres in size.

The forest has no old-growth standards. Approximately 100,000 acres of old-growth forest were cut between 1985-1995. Roughly 350,000 acres of old-growth remain on the UNF, but much is designated as "matrix" land under the Northwest Forest Plan, allowing logging when other ecological and administrative conditions permit. Similar to historic practices, approximately 80 percent of the current timber volume comes from "even age" management, or clearcutting.

Today, there are approximately 100,000 acres of inventoried roadless areas. An additional 173,871 acres of uninventoried roadless areas face extreme risk from old-growth logging and roadbuilding. Most of these areas have timber sales planned within their boundaries.

The Threat: Salvage Logging

Well over 100 MMBF of timber was sold under the 1995 Salvage Rider, the last of which was not logged until the summer of 2002. The UNF's salvage sale program has been bad enough to cause internal conflicts between timber planners and wildlife biologists.

In 2002, natural and human-caused fires burned 87,374 acres of the UNF. The local newspaper has incorrectly editorialized the fire sites to be "blackened stumps and trees." In reality, 82 percent of the fires were low intensity, and only 6.5 percent of the fire area produced high intensity fires that consumed the canopy completely. The fires were heaviest in dense tree plantations, and died down in natural old-growth stands.

In March 2003, the process began to determine which alternatives will be developed for "salvage" of the Apple and Tiller Complex fire areas. Sensitive soils and already recovering forests are threatened by most alternatives, which include clearcutting, thinning, replanting and road construction in high-intensity fire areas.

The Threat: Watershed Degradation

Due to logging and road building, most of the UNF's larger watersheds have sediment loads up to four times the natural amount, and the South Umpqua River and some of its larger tributaries often reach 75 to 80 degrees, temperatures fatal to native fish. Repeated court victories protecting listed salmon species have held up numerous timber sales in the Umpqua River watershed. Several court victories have used the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS), part of the Northwest Forest Plan that protects streams, rivers and other wetlands, to stop clearcutting of mature and old-growth forests in the UNF. Administrative and timber industry challenges continue to attempt to override these victories. Bush administration moves to weaken the ACS objectives will open the door to countless bad timber sales in the UNF.

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Allegheny National Forest, Pennsylvania

The Threats: Logging, Oil and Gas Drilling

Northwestern Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest (ANF) lies in a meshing zone between northern hardwood forests and the oak-hickory and mixed mesophytic forests of the south, supporting a high level of natural biodiversity. Preferential management for black cherry timber has heavily altered the forest, producing a simplified, artificial forest type dominated by black cherry. Logging has damaged the ANF's ecosystems to the point that many species are in jeopardy, including the endangered Indiana bat, northern riffleshell mussel and clubshell mussel.

At times during the past 30 years, the ANF has been the heaviest cut national forest per acre in the eastern region. The Forest Service is currently logging the East Side project ñ the largest timber sale on an eastern national forest - which calls for 8,000 acres of logging, 3,000 acres of clearcutting and 3,500 acres of herbicide spray. The project was challenged in federal court by a coalition of conservation organizations for its emphasis on commercial production of black cherry. A federal judge's recent reversal of an earlier decision on the East Side sale promises to return the ANF to its status as the country's most endangered national forest.

Several new timber sales, each exceeding 1,000 acres, have been introduced or recently approved. The most egregious of these is the Spring Creek Sale, which calls for 5,030 acres of logging, including 1,912 acres of clearcutting. The Brush Creek timber sale proposes 1,200 acres of logging in a watershed recommended by scientists for special protections due to its high diversity of dragonfly and damselfly species.

Apart from one Scenic Area and one Research Natural Area, nearly all of the ANF has been logged. Fully 75 percent of the forest is managed under an even-aged regime, relying primarily on clearcutting, shelterwood cuts and herbicides to promote lucrative black cherry. Thirty-three percent of the world's consumption of black cherry comes directly from the ANF, for use in expensive furniture and specialty wood products manufacturing, and consequently the Allegheny is among very few national forests to generate a positive revenue flow from its commercial logging program. However, in 2000, the USFS spent twice as much on its logging program here as they did on all other projects – including recreation and endangered species protection – combined.

The Threat: Oil and Gas Extraction

More oil and gas wells exist on the ANF than on all other national forests combined. It is estimated that 6,000 active wells and 100,000 inactive wells exist here. Between 1999 and 2002 the USFS forecasted disturbance of 448 acres for oil and gas development. During that period, however, about twice the expected acreage was disturbed.

Oil and gas drilling has gravely affected ecosystem health and water quality in the ANF. A report from the 1987 Oil Spill Conference in Baltimore characterizes the problem, stating, "in 1985 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declared northwestern Pennsylvania to have a major oil spill with multiple sources. This oil spill is unusual in that, rather than being one large concentrated spill, it consists of small discharges from thousands of individual wells, tanks, and ponds, which contribute to a major environmental problem and make discovery, containment, and enforcement a difficult and complicated task."

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The Medford BLM District

The Most Endangered Forest Outside the NF System

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), an arm of the U.S. Department of the Interior, administers 261 million-acres of America's public lands, located primarily in 12 western states. It is often referred to as the "Bureau of Livestock and Mining," due to its longstanding pro-industry management bias. While most extractive activities on BLM land focus on grazing, mining, and oil and gas drilling, four million acres of western Oregon BLM land are forested and managed for timber production. Part of this area lies within the BLM's Medford District, the most endangered federal public forest outside the national forest system. Last year, the 800,000-acre Medford District offered 83 million board feet (MMBF) of timber for sale – four times as much as any other BLM district.

The Medford BLM lies in the Cascade and Siskiyou Mountains of southern Oregon, providing habitat for numerous old-growth dependent species, and several key watersheds for salmon recovery. Northern spotted owls, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, rare salamanders, obscure fungi and unusual lichens all find refuge in its lush, ancient forests. The Siskiyou Mountains' serpentine soils are associated with multitudes of incredibly rare, unique flowering plants of critical biological significance. The district also possesses the largest forested roadless area on BLM land: the 46,000-acre Zane Grey, along the Wild and Scenic Rogue River. The district's ecological values were finally recognized last year, with the establishment of the 52,000-acre Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.

All of the issues encapsulated by the Bush administration's attack on public forests are evident here. Like all federal forest land in the northern spotted owl's range, the Medford BLM is governed by the Northwest Forest Plan. The Bush administration's dismantling of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, sensitive species Survey and Manage program, and other protections will have grave consequences for the district's unique biodiversity.

Adding insult to injury, the Medford BLM is touted as a model in fire restoration, a focus of Bush administration rhetoric surrounding fuels reduction and the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI). George Bush announced the HFI on the Medford BLM in August of 2002. One of the 10 "pilot projects" for the HFI is located here. The HFI could facilitate thousands of acres of so-called "fuels reduction" on the Medford BLM, targeting large, commercially valuable trees that pre-date fire suppression by hundreds of years. One of the worst forest health projects, the Kelsey Whisky timber sale, proposes nearly 500 acres of ancient forest logging in the Zane Grey Roadless Area.

The Bush administration and Interior Secretary, Gale Norton, view the Medford BLM as a model for their fire rhetoric. Therefore, it is a key area where increased public pressure must be mounted. The Medford BLM provides an excellent opportunity to expose the so-called "model" for what it truly is – a plan to deny citizen involvement and increase commercial logging on public land.

Photo above: The Lost Creek Timber Sale was touted as a fuels reduction sale. While there was some prescribed burning and cutting of small trees, hundreds of acres of the public's ancient forest were sold to the timber industry. All such logging would go without citizen input or environmental review under the Healthy Forests Initiative.

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Threatened National Forests

Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee

The 639,000-acre Cherokee National Forest (CNF) is significantly impacted by logging and associated roadbuilding. Regional chip mill capacity and production are increasing, resulting in air and water pollution that threaten numerous species. The CNF supports a staggering array of life, as its flora and fauna have evolved uninterrupted for more than 200 million years. Of 124 state and federally listed plant and animal species found in the forest, 81 percent are associated with riparian areas, ponds and other wet habitats. The CNF Forest Plan is under revision at this time, and the USFS is proposing up to 60,000 acres of burning per year for fuel reduction – an excessive amount for moist eastern national forests such as the CNF.

Clearwater National Forest, Idaho

Northern Idaho's 1.8 million-acre Clearwater National Forest retains much of the same wild character as when Lewis and Clark passed through nearly 200 years ago. Unique among northern Rockies ecosystems are its coastal disjuncts, vegetation typical of coastal temperate rainforests, that are relics of bygone millennia when wet coastal forests stretched far inland. The CNF's wild rivers and streams are world-renowned for fishing, rafting and kayaking.

The CNF's many low-elevation roadless areas and old-growth forests are a rarity in this age of industrial logging, but the forests's roaded portions are heavily damaged. Logging abounds on fragile soils and in degraded watersheds, under the guise of "forest health." Proposals to improve elk habitat will involve massive forest conversion in roadless areas. The USFS does little to manage off-road vehicles, whose impacts to sensitive wildland habitats are severe.

Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Idaho

The IPNF's landscape features glacial cirques, gem-like alpine lakes, ancient western red cedar groves and mountain peaks soaring up to 9,000 feet. Its clear lakes and rivers support world-class sport fisheries. Rare wildlife abound here, including Canada lynx and woodland caribou-the most endangered mammal in the United States. Mining and extensive clearcutting have reduced the IPNF's pristine wilderness and ancient forests to a fraction of historic levels. Currently, the forest is threatened by clearcutting under the guise of bark beetle outbreaks and wildfire fuel reduction, heavy and increasing motorized recreation and stewardship contracting projects. The USFS continuously fails to fully analyze cumulative effects of past and present resource extraction.

Kaibab National Forest, Arizona

The Kaibab NF is home to the Southwest's highest remaining density of ponderosa pine making it an area of critical biological significance. Because 95 percent of the Southwest's old-growth forests have been cut, the National Biological Survey declared the Southwest's ponderosa pine forests among the most endangered ecosystems in the nation. The KNF also contains the largest population of goshawks in the Southwest, however, management guidelines designed to protect the goshawk are being used to justify the continued decimation of old-growth ponderosa pine forests.

Mount Hood National Forest, Oregon

The Mt. Hood National Forest surrounds Mt. Hood, the highest peak in Oregon. The forest spans an amazing diversity of habitat, ranging from wet, mixed conifer forests to subalpine forests, alpine meadows and low elevation bunchgrass and sagebrush. Just 20 miles from the city of Portland, the forest is a popular recreation destination for thousands of visitors, and an important source of clean drinking water for one-third of all Oregonians.

The MHNF is highly fragmented from past and current logging and road building. The USFS

continues to disregard the cumulative impacts of these activities, threatening what is likely the last remaining stock of wild lower Columbia River coho salmon. Nearly all logging on the MHNF is justified by "forest health" or "restoration." Old-growth logging is common, and Bush administration changes to the Northwest Forest Plan further endanger the MHNF's remaining old-growth. Additionally, the Hood River Valley drinking water supply is threatened by proposed ski resort development and logging in the Cooper Spur Area.

Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia

Stretching 100 miles along the spine of the Appalachians, the Monangahela National Forest is a major recreation and tourism destination, hosting millions of visitors annually. Past clearcutting on the MNF caused a flood that wiped out an influential U.S. Senator's hometown, leading to the passage of the National Forest Management Act in 1976.

Largely recovered from total destruction in the early 1900s, the forest is again a target for clearcutting, setting the stage for more flooding and landslides. The Forest Service has recently pledged to triple the timber harvested from the forest. Blackwater Canyon, one of West Virginia's greatest scenic treasures, was recently acquired by a private timber company, extensively logged and now faces condominium development. Additionally, massive wind energy facilities threaten to alter scenic vistas along high mountain ridges.

Ottawa National Forest, Michigan

Lying on the shores of Lake Superior in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the Ottawa NF is one of the most biologically diverse areas of public land in the Great Lakes region. Timber wolf, moose, lynx and a host of rare and endangered plants all find refuge in its wild reaches.

For the past 15 years, the USFS has cut hardwoods at a rate nearly 70 percent above the amount allowed by the Forest Plan. A recent ruling by the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals declared this to be illegal. The USFS continues to log and develop within the Ottawa National Forest's Wild and Scenic River corridors. Mounting public pressure is calling for wilderness designation of the Trap Hills, one of the Ottawa's few roadless areas, which is threatened by logging.

Ouachita National Forest, Arkansas and Oklahoma

Complex geology, varied topography and unique plant communities provide habitat for a diverse mosaic of lifeforms on the Ouachita. The forest's remarkable species diversity is poorly researched by the USFS, and imperiled by intensive pine management.

The Ouachita NF is among the heaviest cut national forests in the system, logging over 88 MMBF in 2002. Over 100,000 acres of prescribed burning per year, along with selective tree removal and herbicides, are used to favor non-pine species. Besides logging due to oak decline and pine beetle control, this type of management by the USFS is converting the Ouachita's native mixed forests into pine plantations.

Sumter National Forest, South Carolina

In the Sumter National Forest, logging and gold mining threaten to disrupt the recovery of diverse southern forest ecosystems damaged by over a century of logging, pine conversion, farming and roadbuilding. The Little Mountain, Woods Ferry and Bethesda timber sales threaten to convert thousands of acres of the remaining stands that still contain hardwood trees into loblolly pine plantations. The Andrew Pickens Ranger District of the Sumter National Forest – as well as the Francis Marion National Forest on the coast – has proposed tens of thousands of acres of salvage and fire suppression logging and dozens of miles of road construction to control southern pine beetle. Shoddy environmental analysis by the Forest Service surrounding the Candy Branch gold mine on the Sumter National Forest sets a horrible precedent for future gold mining development.

Conclusion

The Forest Service is approaching its 100th anniversary, is there cause to celebrate? Charged with protecting the bulk of our nation's remaining wildlands, the agency is now little more than a pawn in a political game. Scientists agree that the ecological integrity of the national forest system is steadily declining and yet the Forest Service continues to disregard their findings.

While one-third of our roadless national forests are relatively intact, the rest desperately need our help. Restoration is now a routine part of the job as land managers confront the realities of resource extraction. These realities are layered on top of one another creating a complex set of ecological problems:

- Industrial forestry and a 440,000-mile road system are bleeding sediment into creeks causing watersheds to unravel and creating drastic declines in fisheries.
- Fire suppression, high-grade logging and forest conversion to plantations have created more fire-prone forests in many places.
- Widespread overgrazing has induced skyrocketing populations of invasive, non-native plant species.
- A resurgent oil and gas drilling program poses serious threats to forest health and water quality.
- Development and privatization now threaten the essence and the purpose of public lands.

Collectively, all of these extractive industries, land management policies and ecological realities pose enormous challenges to the Forest Service. *Endangered Forests, Endangered Freedoms* questions the agency's ability to restore and maintain the integrity of the diverse plant and animal species found across the 192 million acres of national forests and grasslands. This report is an indictment of the Bush administration's pro-development policies, and connects readers with its destructive impacts on and across a broad geographic range of national forests.

The Bush administration has excelled at fine-tuning many political and scientific myths that reinforce its industrial mantra/agenda. The Bush administration consistently uses environmentally–friendly language to disguise its ecologically destructive practices. What's more, it is stifling public participation and hindering genuine restoration efforts.

Both NFPA and Greenpeace expect that, by reading this report, you will have a keener understanding of national forest issues and a heartfelt willingness to get involved. So in the coming weeks and months, please voice your opinion over Bush's national forest policy rollbacks and become involved in protecting and restoring a national forest near you.

If we as a nation are to enjoy our national forests, they need immediate protection from the harmful activities that have endangered them. To this end, it is imperative that the Forest Service directs its efforts to providing consistent recreational experiences, providing extension services to private landowners and surrounding communities, and creating jobs built around ecological restoration programs. Such a compelling vision would go a long way to restoring the public's confidence in the Forest Service.

Mike Petersen
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About NFPA and Greenpeace

About NFPA:

In 1999 the National Forest Protection Alliance (NFPA) was formed, creating a unified democratic alliance among groups within the forest protection community. NFPA believes that informed groups and individuals, acting in a coordinated, strategic manner, can organize a strong base of public and political support to achieve positive, lasting social change and environmental protection. NFPA is comprised of 130 member organizations, 27 State Delegates, 3 full-time staff and a Board of Directors.

NFPA's mission is to end the industrial exploitation of all federal public lands, starting with commercial logging. We believe public lands should be managed to provide clean air and water, wilderness, wildlife habitat, and compatible recreation for the public – not subsidized lumber for the timber industry.

For more information check out www.forestadvocate.org or contact us directly at 406.542.7565 or nfpa@forestadvocate.org

About Greenpeace:

In 1971 a handful of determined activists traveled to Amchitka, Alaska to protest U.S. nuclear weapons testing in the area. The crew of 11 men leased a fishing vessel and departed from Vancouver to "bear witness" to the devastating activity. Although they never reached Amchitka Island, they brought worldwide attention to nuclear testing and its dangers. Shortly after the voyage the committee was named "Greenpeace" in order to proclaim its mission to create a green and peaceful planet.

Today, our work focuses on saving ancient forests as well as other major threats to the planet: stopping global warming, exposing toxic pollutants, protecting the oceans, eliminating the threat of genetic engineering and ending the nuclear age. There are approximately 28 fully operational Greenpeace offices and our issues are coordinated internationally through the headquarters in Amsterdam, making Greenpeace one of the few environmental groups that truly works globally on environmental problems.

Greenpeace is an independent campaigning organization, free from the influence of corporations, the government, and political parties. For over 30 years, we have used non-violent direct action and creative communication to promote solutions to environmental issues.

To find out more about Greenpeace, visit our website at www.greenpeaceusa.org

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"To announce that there must be no criticism of the president,
or that we are to stand by the president, right or wrong,
is not only unpatriotic and servile,
but also treasonable to the American public."

- Theodore Roosevelt, 1918

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