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Becoming a Skeptical Environmentalist — Debunking the Eco-Myths that Face the Industry by Melinda Caldwell

From debates over sprawl and various "Smart Growth" initiatives, to the controversy over the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in South Africa, to the catastrophic forest fires that raged in the American West, the environment has certainly had its share of time in the limelight this past year. And rightly so. There are indeed serious issues facing the residents of this planet that do require attention. However, what is interesting to note is that as environmental groups become even more vocal, and in some cases resort to means that go far beyond civil disobedience, there is a demand for level-headed decision-making based on sound science coming from the midst of the environmental movement itself.

With the assistance of work accomplished by two noted scholars, this article will attempt to take a look at some of the eco-myths that daily bombard anyone who watches television, reads the newspaper or logs onto the Internet. While the topics discussed here are by no means exhaustive, we will specifically look at myths that impact the structural building components industry. The myths listed below will be debunked using the work of the following individuals:

- Bjorn Lomborg: Author of the highly acclaimed—and highly controversial—book, The Skeptical Environmentalist, Lomborg is an Associate Professor of Statistics in the Department of Politic Science, University of Aarhus, Denmark. Lomborg, who describes himself as "an old left-wing Greenpeace member," was surprised to discover that the work of University of Maryland economist Julian Simon, who maintains that much of our traditional knowledge about the environment is based on preconceptions and poor statistics, was in large part true. This discovery, in conjunction with his belief that "statistics can be exciting exactly because it confronts our myths with data and allows us to see the world more clearly," led Lomborg to undertake writing a series of articles for one of the leading Danish newspapers, which became the foundation for The Skeptical Environmentalist.
- Dr. Patrick Moore: A founding member of Green-peace, Moore served for nine years as President of Greenpeace Canada and seven years as a Director of Greenpeace International. As the leader of many campaigns, Moore was a driving force shaping policy and direction while Greenpeace became the world's largest environmental activist organization. In recent years, Moore has been focused on the promotion of sustainability and consensus building among competing concerns. In 1991 he founded Greenspirit, a consultancy focusing on environmental policy and communications in natural resources, biodiversity, energy and climate change. In 2000, Moore published Green Spirit—Trees Are the Answer, a photo-book that provides a new insight into how forests work and how they can play a powerful role in solving many of our current environmental problems.

ECO-MYTH #1: THE ECONOMY UNDERCUTS THE ENVIRONMENT.

Many environmental groups suggest that we cannot escape the choice between higher economic

welfare and a greener environment.

Reality: This is one of the myths that Lomborg confronts early on in his book. Based on data from the World Economic Forum and the World Bank, he states: “Environmental development often stems from economic development—only when we get sufficiently rich can we afford the relative luxury of caring about the environment. On its most general level…higher income in general is correlated with higher environmental sustainability” (33).

ECO-MYTH #2: HUMANS ARE A CANCER ON THE EARTH.

The mantra of many radical environmental groups, this myth ties in closely with Myth #1.

Reality: Moore addresses this accusation in a Fall 2001 Evergreen Magazine article “The Bountiful Harvest: Securing America's Forest Future” by Arbor Day Founder J. Sterling Morton. Morton records Moore's observation that: “Extremists claim that we humans are a cancer on the earth. By contrast, forest ecology teaches that we are all part of nature and all life forms change through time. It strikes a balance between human and non-human interests, between reason and emotion. We cannot deny that we must consume to survive any more than we can deny that over-consumption would lead to our demise. Absolutist approaches based on simplistic dogma compromise our ability to steer a sustainable course” (Morton, 27).

Lomborg confronts this idea in a more general, pragmatic way in the first chapter of The Skeptical Environmentalist. In discussing the basic fundamentals one must use to make educated, unbiased decisions, he includes people:

> “…the needs and desires of humankind represent the crux of our assessment of the state of the world. This does not mean that plants and animals do not also have rights but that the focus will always be on the human evaluation.
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> “This describes both my ethical conception of the world—and on that account the reader can naturally disagree with me—but also a realistic conception of the world: people debate and participate in decision-making processes, whereas penguins and pine trees do not. So the extent to which penguins and pine trees are considered depends in the final instance on some (in democracies more than half of all) individuals being prepared to act on their behalf. When we are to evaluate a project, therefore, it depends on the assessment by people. And while some of these people will definitely choose to value animals and plants very highly, these plants and animals cannot to any great extent be given particular rights….
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> “The conclusion is that we have no option but to use humans as a point of reference.” (11-12)

ECO-MYTH #3: THE FORESTS ARE DISAPPEARING.

The World Wildlife Fund and other environmental groups have claimed that as much as two-thirds of the world's forests have been lost due to human activity. In the past decade, phrases such as “global chainsaw massacre,” “global assault,” and “the eleventh hour for the world's forests” have been used to get people to react to this myth.

Reality: According to Lomborg's investigation, there are no grounds for making these claims. Based on information from the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the overall area covered by forest has not changed much since 1950. Lomborg states: "Globally it is estimated that we have lost a total of about 20 percent of the original forest cover since the dawn of agriculture" (112). Furthermore, while it is true that a lot of tropical forests have disappeared, temperate forests have expanded over the last 40 years.

ECO-MYTH #4: THE WORLD IS AT RISK FOR DEPLETING ITS IRON ORE RESOURCES.

According to Lomborg, we spend annually $31 billion on iron ore—about 11 percent of our raw material budget. More than two-thirds of all iron is used to make steel. Furthermore, since the Industrial Revolution, iron and steel have accounted for more than 95 percent of our total metal consumption by weight (141). Concerns about running out of this natural resource go back as far as 1908, when Andrew Carnegie addressed the Conference of Governors at the White House because he feared the supply of iron ore would not outlast his generation, let alone the century.

Reality: While it is indeed true that there is a limited supply of iron ore to be had, advances in technology, efficiency and recycling continue to stave off any real fear of shortage. The U.S. Geological Survey reports that, despite the fact that annual production has more than doubled, there were actually many more years of consumption left in 2000 than in 1957. Furthermore, about one-third of the global steel production is recycled. Lomborg points out that technology has expanded in such a way that we can now exploit ore with just 30-40 percent iron and that it is estimated that the currently identified reserves leave us with 297 years of consumption at present levels. This does not take into account continued improvements in technology, efficiency and recycling methods that will only work to extend those reserves.

ECO-MYTH #5: FOREST COVER MAY HAVE REMAINED CONSTANT, BUT IT IS BECAUSE THERE ARE MORE PLANTATIONS AND LESS NATURAL FORESTS.

This issue is raised in the debate over the biodiversity of forests. The claim is that old natural forests are home to a wealth of species, while plantations consist of genetically identical trees that support very few other species (Lomborg, 115).

Reality: First, we need to understand that, according to FAO, plantations make up only three percent of the world's forest area. Moreover, while Lomborg does not argue that the biodiversity of plantations is less robust than that of old forests, he points out that it is not obvious that plantations reduce overall biodiversity. Rather, he suggests that plantations reduce the economic pressure on other natural forests, allowing these forests to support higher biodiversity and/or become better recreational areas for humans (116).

Moore looks at the issue of biodiversity from a forestry versus agriculture standpoint. In doing so, he also addresses the issue of using wood substitutes for paper products. On his web site (www.greenspirit.com) he writes: "Give me an acre of land anywhere on Earth, tell me to grow something there with which I can make paper, that would also be best for biodiversity, and I will plant trees every single time, without exception. It is simply a fact that even the simplest

monoculture pine plantation is better for wildlife, birds, and insects than any annual farm crop. It is ridiculous for environmental groups who say their main concern is biodiversity conservation to be advocating the establishment of massive monocultures of annual exotic farm crops where we could be growing trees."

ECO-MYTH #6: ONCE A FOREST IS CUT THE ECOSYSTEM IS DESTROYED FOREVER.

The Sierra Club purports that, "You don't need a professional forester to tell if a forest is mismanaged—if a forest appears mismanaged, it is mismanaged."

Reality: In a February 2000 interview with Evergreen Magazine (www.evergreenmagazine.com), Dr. Patrick Moore stated: "With very few exceptions second growth forests in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest are composed entirely of the native tree and plant species. They are as similar to their predecessors as any forest region of the world."

In addition, Moore addresses the Sierra Club's claim on his web site at www.greenspirit.com (click on "Trees Are the Answer"). He explains that their assertion is what environmental organizations want people to believe so that the unsightly appearance of a recently harvested forest is automatically associated with permanent damage to the forest. In reality, states Moore, it is a completely organic process and will renew itself to a beautiful forest given time.

ECO-MYTH #7: FORESTRY IS THE MAIN CAUSE OF SPECIES EXTINCTION.

At a 1996 media conference in Geneva, Switzerland, the World Wildlife Fund announced that 50,000 species a year are going extinct due to human activity. Moreover, they claimed that the main cause of this statistic was commercial logging. Greenpeace's official biodiversity report stated that "it is expected that half the Earth's species are likely to disappear within the next seventy-five years." (Note: This information was available on the Greenpeace web site until it came under fire by Lomborg, at which time the link was removed.)

Reality: In his book, Lomborg provides the correct statistic: 0.7 percent of the world's species are likely to become extinct in 50 years (17).

In the "Trees Are the Answer" section of his web site, Moore argues that this claim has no scientific evidence to support it and that no species has become extinct in North America due to forestry. However, he outlines the three main ways that humans can and have caused species extinction: (1) by simply killing them all with spears, clubs and rifles; (2) by clearing native forests for agriculture; and (3) by introducing exotic predators and disease. He explains that, because forests have been recovering by themselves for 350 million years, "it follows from this that every species which lives in the forest must be capable of recolonizing areas of land that are recovering from destruction. Indeed, forest renewal is the sum total of all the individual species returning to the site, each in their turn, as the forest grows back. In ecology, this is known as dispersal, the ability to move from where you are and to inhabit new territory as it becomes available….Dispersal is an absolute requirement for natural selection and the survival of species. No species could exist if it were not capable of dispersal. Therefore, so long as the land is left alone after the forest is destroyed, the forest will recover and all the species that were in

it will return."

ECO-MYTH #8: FIRE IS NATURAL AND DOES NOT DESTROY THE FOREST ECOSYSTEM LIKE LOGGING, WHICH IS UNNATURAL.

The National Interagency Fire Center reported that the 2002 season was the second largest fire season in the past 50 years. As of October 11, 68,230 fires burned about 6.7 million acres; nearly double the 10-year average. Colorado, Arizona and Oregon recorded their largest fires in the last century (see www.nifc.gov). This myth is particularly timely in the wake of this year's forest fire season and the debate over how to prevent such destruction in the future. Many environmentalists claim that fire is part of the natural cycle of forests, whereas logging to clear out underbrush to prevent future fires is disruptive of that cycle. (See U.S. Fire Chief Dale Bosworth's thoughts on this subject as he addressed the Smallwood Conference in April of this year.)

Reality: Moore contends that logging is no different a disturbance to a forest than a fire, a volcano or an ice age. Again, in the "Trees Are the Answer" section of his web site, Moore explains: "Forests are just as capable of recovering from destruction by logging as they are from any other form of disturbance. All that is necessary for renewal is that the disturbance is ended, that the fire is out, that the volcano stops erupting, that the ice retreats, or that the loggers go back down the road and allow the forest to begin growing back, which it will begin to do almost immediately." (Visit www.greenspirit.com for specific stories about forest recovery after destruction by fire and volcano.)

ECO-MYTH #9: CUTTING DOWN TREES EQUALS DEFORESTATION.

Reality: Moore explains that cutting down trees in and of itself is not deforestation. "Deforestation is not a one time event," Moore states on his web site. "It is an ongoing process of continuous human intervention, preventing the forest from growing back, which it would if left alone. Deforestation is seldom caused by forestry, the whole point of which is to cause reforestation."

ECO-MYTH #10: THE BEST ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FOR SUSTAINING FORESTS IS "CUT FEWER TREES, USE LESS WOOD."

Environmental groups have done a lot of work to convince consumers that using non-wood substitutes for everything from paper products to building materials is the only earth-friendly decision that can be made.

Reality: Moore counters this policy with exactly the opposite message. In his opinion, from an environmental perspective, the best policy is "grow more trees, and use more wood." He believes that the policy of "use less wood" is anti-environmental because it would result in increased carbon monoxide emissions and a reduction in forested land. Moore's reasoning behind this statement is as follows:

- 60% of wood used worldwide is for energy, primarily in underdeveloped and developing countries because it is all that people can afford. However, replacing this energy source with non-renewable energy such as coal, oil or natural gas would only result in more carbon dioxide emissions.
- 25% of wood used worldwide is for building houses and furniture. The production of wood substitutes generally requires the use of non-renewable energy sources, whereas the production of more trees simply takes non-polluting solar energy.
- 15% of wood harvested worldwide is used to manufacture pulp and paper for printing, packaging and sanitary purposes. Half of the wood used for this purpose is waste obtained from sawmills that produce solid sawn timber, therefore, not using wood for these purposes would not "save" many forests. Using substitutes such as cotton and hemp only leads to deforestation because more land needs to be cleared for agricultural purposes.

CONCLUSION

Again, while this list is by no means exhaustive, it does get at the main issues with which those in the structural building components industry are confronted. For a more thorough understanding of these issues, consider reading the items listed in the works cited section. When it comes to topics that are often driven by emotion and media attention, it never hurts to have as much credible information as possible in your intellectual arsenal.

WORKS CITED:

- Lomborg, Bjorn. The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001. (Lomborg's book can be purchased at any major bookseller, including Barnes & Noble and www.amazon.com.)
- Moore, Patrick. www.greenspirit.com. (To purchase Dr. Moore's book, Trees Are the Answer, visit his web site and click on "The Book.")
- Morton, J. Sterling. "The Bountiful Harvest: Securing America's Forest Future." Evergreen Magazine, Fall 2001. Pages 9-29. (To subscribe, go to www.evergreenmagazine.com.)

Small Tree Utilization: Challenge and Opportunity

Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth
Smallwood 2002
Albuquerque, NM • April 11, 2002

I'm particularly happy to be here on this occasion—for this Smallwood convention...."Small tree utilization" might not mean much to some people. But I can't think of many things that are more worthwhile than this.

You are here to explore ways of solving maybe the worst problem we face in the Interior West: the problem of catastrophic wildland fire. For that, I thank you. I thank you for taking the time

to explore ways of helping us restore our forests to health.

I'd like to talk about four things today:

- First, I want to say a few words about the forest health crisis we face.
- Second, I want to talk a little about what we need to do to solve the problem.
- Third, we have many success stories to tell, and I'll give you some examples.
- Finally, I want to point out the opportunities in this for our local communities—and, hopefully, for many of you personally.

FOREST HEALTH CRISIS

First, let me talk a little about how our forests have changed over the years. I'm sure most of you are already aware of some of our forest health problems. But I think it's worthwhile sometimes to step back and take another look at the big picture.

For many decades, trees have grown much faster than fire, harvest, and mortality combined could remove them. That's especially true for softwoods in the West, and it's especially true for the national forests. Let me just give you a few facts:[1]

- From 1952 to 1997, net annual softwood growth more than doubled in the West.
- On the national forests, net annual softwood growth also more than doubled.
- In the next 10 to 20 years, we expect the upward trend to continue.

Just to give you some idea of what that means here in the Southwest—in Arizona and New Mexico—net annual growth is enough to cover a football field 1 mile high with solid wood. Recent removals have only been about 10 percent of this.

There's more. We know from written accounts and from old photographs that many parts of the West have become densely forested just in the past 100 years. Before that, they were pretty open. Today, we often have a thousand or more trees where previously there were only 20 to 50 per acre. And this isn't something that began only recently. If you look closely at some of those old photos from around 1900, you can already see small trees coming up in the grassy areas.

Eighty years ago, ranchers in Arizona were already complaining that brush was taking over the range.[2] We still hear that today. At the time, the great ecologist Aldo Leopold—he was working for the Forest Service—offered a pretty good explanation. He pointed out that grass once covered the open woodland type in the Southwest—enough grass to carry fires set by lightning and American Indians. The fires kept out the brush and small trees. The range flourished—until settlers came along and stopped the fires.

Fire exclusion has made our forests dense, and that has changed the character of our forests. We have lost a lot of habitat for species that require open woodland. A good example is the red-cockaded woodpecker in the Southeast. Shading from canopies has greatly reduced the amount of grass and the number of forbs on the forest floor. These dense forests don't support as much

diversity as they once did, and they don't offer as much in the way of scenic quality, either.

Perhaps the biggest change has to do with fire. In open woodland, fires tend to be relatively cool and low. But in the dense forests we have today, fires become huge infernos. These fires can do great damage to the ecosystem, not to mention the damage they do to human property and the threat they pose to human life.

The Forest Service has been working on the problem for a number of years now. Our measurements are continually evolving and improving, but we currently estimate that on the national forests alone, about 73 million acres are at risk from wildland fires that could compromise human safety and ecosystem integrity. And fire is not the only risk. On all ownerships, including federal, state, and private lands, about 70 million acres are at higher-than-normal risk from 26 different insects and pathogens. Other symptoms of a forest health crisis include the spread of invasive species and the degradation of watersheds.

I want to emphasize that these problems are interlinked. Overcrowding stresses and weakens trees, rendering them more prone to fire and more susceptible to pests, pathogens, and displacement by invasive species. We've known about the problem for years, but at the rate we were treating the forests we manage, I'm afraid we were slowly losing ground. The fires of 2000 in the Northern Rockies showed that very clearly. So did the Cerro Grande Fire. Fuels that had accumulated over many years carried that fire to the very doorsteps of the people living in Los Alamos.

WHAT TO DO?

After the fires of 2000, the public demanded action. Something obviously had to be done to address the problem of hazardous fuels. There's broad consensus that the first priority has to be the areas at risk in our communities and municipal watersheds. Through the National Fire Plan, Congress has appropriated money for the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior. Our first priority is to treat areas in the wildland/urban interface. We start there and work outward.

On this matter, I speak not only for the Forest Service. The Secretary of Agriculture has said that she is strongly committed to quickly reducing the fire danger in the vicinity of our rural and urban communities. Last year, the western governors and the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior signed 10-year agreement to act together along these lines.

Today, through the National Fire Plan, we finally have the means to win the battle. And that brings me to my second point: We know what we need to do. The key is to restore the historical openness of our forests by removing excess trees. There are only two ways I know of to remove excess trees: You can either burn them up or haul them away.

Burning can be a good choice sometimes, but often the forests are too dense to safely burn until after an initial thinning. Besides, some of the material we need to remove can be used to supply the American people with wood products. It seems ironic that we have all of this material that needs to be removed, yet we rely on imports to meet so much of our need for wood.

The American people need to ask themselves if they want to place the burden of supplying our nation with wood on countries that have fewer regulations for harvesting. I believe that we should be focusing on proper forest management. That means focusing on what you leave on the land and how you leave the forest. If we can just focus on that, then the discussion doesn't need to revolve around what is or isn't cut.

Some of the trees that are excess to the needs of the ecosystem are large enough for sawtimber. There are plenty of markets for that, so we can recover our costs. The problem is, a lot of the trees are too small for sawtimber, and there are currently no significant markets for them. There are also species such as juniper that need to be removed but don't have significant markets.

The cost of removing and destroying trees can be astronomical. Costs can run from $150 to $500 per acre. Even with new funding through the National Fire Plan, we might not be able to afford these costs in many places. But even if we could, we owe it to the American taxpayer to find ways to offset or reduce these costs. For the National Fire Plan to succeed, we've got to show results and we've got to be cost-effective. That means we need to find uses for the materials we remove.

That's where we need the private sector. The Forest Service is not—nor should we be—in the business of removing trees and putting them to use. We need the ingenuity, enterprise, and resources of our industry and our local communities. That's why we're sponsoring Smallwood 2002 and encouraging citizens to participate.

We need businesses that can do two things, alone or in combination:

- do the work of removing materials from the forest, and
- turn this resource into products that the American people want.

SUCCESS STORIES

That brings me to my third point: We have many success stories to tell. I'll give you a few examples.

- In Eagar, AZ, there's a company called Environmental Forest Solutions. This company is building a power plant that will use woody biomass. The plant will utilize some 40,000 tons annually of the very lowest value material.
- In Reserve, NM, a log sort yard is being used to enable local loggers to sort their material and find the highest value for it.
- In Flagstaff, AZ, a partnership has been formed called the Grand Canyon Forest Partnership. Through the partnership, several hundred acres with extreme fire hazards have been treated around Flagstaff.
- In the Bitterroot Valley of Montana, a pole and post manufacturer has expanded his products to include roundwood furniture and building components, such as trusses.
- In Cameron, AZ, the Navajo tribe is constructing hogans using small-diameter roundwood.
- In Enterprise, OR, the community is involved in constructing a recreational building on the

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest using small-diameter roundwood trusses and vertical posts.
- In many parts of the country, school districts are exploring heating systems that use biomass—and possibly even combined heat-and-power systems.

There are many more success stories that are happening right now, but I don't have time to name them all. They all serve as good examples of how small-diameter material can be used. Let me stress, though, that many more success stories are needed before we find uses for the billions and billions of trees that need to be removed to restore healthy, resilient ecosystems.

OPPORTUNITY

Now for my final point: There's opportunity in all this. Yes, we face a forest health crisis of enormous proportions. But the tremendous challenge we face is also a tremendous opportunity. Our nation's forests desperately need treatment. Our nation's people need products—desperately, in some cases—ranging from energy, to homes, to paper, to toothpicks and chairs. When you put these two needs together, it adds up to a great opportunity for people in our local communities. We want our local communities to become part of the process—the part in the middle—of taking excess trees and turning them into useful products—and, in the process, making a living.

We would much rather see Americans using products from our forests and in turn getting jobs out of it than importing the wood, which means exporting both jobs and dollars. We would also much rather see wood used than most substitutes; wood takes far less energy and water to produce, and it is a better insulator than steel or aluminum. Best of all, it is renewable.

As I see it, the stars have finally lined up: Forests need treatment; the public, Congress, the governors, and the administration in Washington all recognize the need; and local communities can benefit from the work we need to do. Best of all, we will be leaving our forests in better condition, ready to provide for the many needs of future generations. This is the time; we must take action....

1 RPA Timber Assessment Homepage (www.fs.fed.us/pnw/sev/rpa), updated 15 February 2002, tables 16-17.
2 Aldo Leopold, "Grass, Brush, Timber, and Fire in Southern Arizona" [1924], in The River of the Mother of God (ed. Susan L. Flader and J. Baird Callicott, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 114-122.

Healthy Forests: An Initiative for Wildfire Prevention & Stronger Communities

On August 22 of this year, during a visit to Oregon to view the unprecedented damage of this year's wildfire season, President George W. Bush introduced what has come to be known as his administration's "Healthy Forests Initiative."

Based on the Executive Summary of the initiative, the plan hinges on the following tenets:

- This fire season is already one of the worst in modern history.
- Catastrophic fires are caused by deteriorating forest and rangeland health.
- These deteriorated forest and rangeland conditions sig-nificantly affect people, property and ecosystem health.
- Enhanced measures are needed to restore forest and rangeland health to reduce the risk of these catastrophic wildfires.

Furthermore, the initiative plans for the following action by this administration:

- President Bush is directing Agriculture Secretary Veneman, Interior Secretary Norton and Council on Environmental Quality Chairman Connaughton to improve regulatory processes to ensure more timley decisions, greater efficiency and better results in reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires by restoring forest health.
- President Bush will work with Congress on legislation to further accomplish more timely, efficient and effective implementation of forest health projects.
- President Bush will work with Congress on legislation to supplement the Agriculture and Interior Departments' effort to fulfill the original promise of the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan.

This initiative was introduced in the House of Representatives on September 12 as bill HR 5376. Its stated purpose is "to ehance the authorities of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to reduce catastrophic wildfire threats to communities and the environment." The bill is currently in committee.

To review a pdf of the "Healthy Forests Initiative" in its entirety, go to www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/healthyforests/Healthy_Forests_v2.pdf. To review HR 5376, go to www.fs.fed.us/projects/documents/HR%205376.htm

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Nationwide Poll Reveals Americans Want Action to Protect Our Nation's Forests

A nationwide poll released on September 25 confirmed that an overwhelming majority of Americans are concerned about the threat of wildfires and support action to protect our national forests.

Eighty-three percent of voters polled express concern about the threat of wildfires to our nation's forests and rangelands. And 70 percent agree that thinning and harvesting trees helps to reduce the risk of wildfire and forests need to be managed to minimize the impacts.

Moore Information, Inc., an independent, public opinion research company based in Portland, Oregon, polled 800 registered voters across the nation in a telephone survey. The poll was

conducted for the Forest Products Industry National Labor Management Committee (LMC), a coalition of labor unions and management associations chaired by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America (UBC).

"After a summer of the worst wildfire catastrophes in history, Americans realize that thinning and harvesting are key to stopping future disasters," said Mike Draper, Vice President of the UBC's Western Region. "If we don't take action, we won't have forests to manage."

Already this year, nearly 3,000 fires have destroyed over six million acres. "We deserve a solution that removes the imminent danger. It's time for our government leaders to loosen the bureaucratic grip and for warring political factions to reach consensus and let the land managers do their jobs to remove hazardous fuels from our nation's forests," Draper stated.

Draper also noted that materials removed with no commercial value can be utilized as biomass to generate electricity. In addition, materials with commercial value can be sold to help pay for the cost of removing the rest. "If jobs come out of it, so much the better. If wood supplies come out of it for Americans to use, so much the better. A better forest policy is not only better for our forests, it's better for our economy, producing more jobs and opportunities," Draper concluded.

[SOURCE: The Forest Products Industry National Labor Management Committee Press Release, 9/25/02, www.labormanagementcommittee.org/092502.html]

SBC HOME PAGE

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