

# A CALL FOR MORATORIUM

## TO STOP LARGE-SCALE EXPLOITATION OF PUBLIC FORESTS TO EXPAND AMERICA'S NETWORK OF PROTECTED AREAS

Greenpeace calls for an immediate national moratorium on large-scale commercial logging and road construction on federal forests that are under the administration of the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The moratorium should remain in effect until the mismanagement of these forests has been thoroughly investigated by a blue-ribbon panel of scientific experts from academia, the government and civil society and an open and transparent multi-stakeholder processes determines the exact size and location for new federally controlled protected areas.

Mismanagement of America's public forests has been systemic for most of the past century. Today only fifteen percent of our once plentiful ancient forests remain. Less than five percent remains within the lower 48 states.<sup>i</sup> The gross failures of these agencies responsible for the management of our public forests are profound, resulting in severe ecological and economic loss to the nation.

**SAVE WHAT'S LEFT:** The vast majority of our last ancient forests are on federal public lands.<sup>ii</sup> What is left of our ancient natural heritage is rapidly disappearing at the hands of corporate interests and a Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management that too often act in direct contradiction to their core mandates.

**ENDANGERED FORESTS, ENDANGERED FREEDOMS:** Federal regulations governing forest logging are being eviscerated under the Bush Administration. In addition, new regulations contrary to America's democratic principles are restricting the ability of the public to participate effectively in the planning process.

**OUR MONEY:** The General Accounting Office, an investigative branch of Congress, found that U.S. Forest Service accounting practices "made it impracticable, if not impossible, for us or anyone to accurately determine the Forest Service's timber sales program costs."<sup>iii</sup> Between 1992-1997 the Forest Service lost \$2 billion on its logging program.<sup>iv</sup> A Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility study of BLM's timber sales shows widespread noncompliance with the agency's own policies and regulations, and as much as half of the agency's timber was removed without proper payment from the timber industry. The value of ancient forests are immeasurable to America's long-term strategic interest and it is senseless to destroy what remains and to bleed the federal treasury - your tax dollars - to do so.

**FIRE:** A congressionally commissioned scientific study has found that commercial logging, more than any other human activity, increases the risk and severity of fires.<sup>v</sup> U.S. Forest Service studies, too, have confirmed this, and the agency's chief fire specialist found that brush removal - rather than logging - is needed to prevent unnaturally severe fires.<sup>vi</sup> Despite these findings, both the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management continue aggressive logging programs that worsen fire risks, while largely avoiding the most effective fire protection practices.

**Only two percent of America's timber comes from our federal forests.<sup>vii</sup>  
We can well afford to take these necessary actions.**

The above moratorium is a means to an end. It allows a "time out", a period for all to investigate the mismanagement of our public lands and to devise appropriate remedies before any more damage is done. Such a moratorium, if implemented, could provide an historic opportunity for all citizens to explore the possibility of providing a dramatic new direction for management of our public lands - namely, the possibility of re-designating management of our finest remaining natural treasures to agencies that will truly protect them.

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- <sup>i</sup> Estimated from map in Findley 1990 and commonly estimated by other authors, e.g., Postel and Ryan 1991.
- <sup>ii</sup> "Endangered Ecosystems of the US -- A Preliminary Assessment of Loss and Degradation," Noss, LaRoe & Scott, (US Biological Survey, 1995). Appendices A and B. Available from <http://biology.usgs.gov/pubs/ecosys.htm>
- <sup>iii</sup> General Accounting Office letter to Representative Cynthia McKinney, September 21, 2001, Subject: Financial Management: Annual Costs of Forest Service's Timber Sales Program Are Not Determinable
- <sup>iv</sup> *In the Red: National Forest Logging Continues to Lose Millions*, 2001, (Taxpayers for Common Sense, for fiscal year 1998). "Lost in the Forest: How the Forest Service's Misdirection, Mismanagement, and Mischief Squanders Your Tax Dollars," 2002, <http://www.taxpayer.net>
- <sup>v</sup> Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project Final Report to Congress, Vol. 1, Assessment Summaries and Management Strategies, 1996
- <sup>vi</sup> "Getting Burned by Logging," San Francisco Chronicle, June 19, 2001. Available from: <http://www.commondreams.org/views01/0619-07.htm>.
- <sup>vii</sup> "U.S. Timber Production, Trade, Consumption, and Price Statistics: 1965 to 1999", U.S. Forest Service, Forest Products Lab, Madison, WI, 1999. "U.S. Total Timber Sold and Harvested for all the Forest Service Lands: 2002", U.S. Forest Service, Washington, D.C.