The Forest Emergency Recovery & Research Act

MYTHS / FACTS

Myth: The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act guts environmental review, public comment requirements and weakens judicial review.

Fact: The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act requires thorough environmental review, including full evaluation of the environmental effect of a catastrophic event recovery project and how those effects will be minimized and mitigated in the short-term to promote quick recovery, restoration and reforestation in the long-term. Public notice, appeals and judicial review are required using the exact same process as required in the overwhelmingly bipartisan Healthy Forests Restoration Act. Furthermore, the agencies are required to work with state and local governments, Indian tribes, land-grant universities and interested persons in the development of projects.

Myth: The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act would provide a new mechanism for logging old growth while also creating new roads and massive clear cuts.

Fact: Permanent roads are strictly prohibited in the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act. Any temporary roads created in the restoration process must be removed upon completion of the project. Timber removal is limited to trees that are down, dead, broken or severely root sprung, where mortality is highly probable within five years of the event or where removal is necessary for worker or public safety. All recovery projects must comply with the desired outcomes in the approved forest plan – meaning habitat snags will remain, as will other necessary debris to prevent erosion and begin the recovery process.

Myth: Administrative appeals do not currently hold up restoration projects.

Fact: Appeals and litigation hold up hundreds of projects on public lands each year. The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act uses the exact same administrative appeals process as the overwhelmingly bipartisan Healthy Forests Restoration Act, which includes pre-decisional appeals during the project planning process. This pre-decisional appeals process provides critical information from the public and concerned groups to the agencies at the beginning of the planning process, creating an environment of collaboration to help the agency make better decisions.

Myth: The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act would result in artificial "replanting" and/or "restocking," creating forest plantations.

Fact: The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act strictly prohibits the replanting of forest plantations and requires the establishment of native or beneficial plants according to the approved forest or resource management plan – including the establishment of biologically diverse forests and plants.

For additional information, please contact the Subcommittee on Forests & Forest Health (202.225.0691) or Congressman Greg Walden's office (202.225.6730).

Myth: You don't need to remove dead trees to help pay for the restoration of forests.

Fact: According to scientists published in the peer reviewed Journal of Forestry, science and experience have shown that removing dead and dying trees does help repair the damage to forests and its associated values while offsetting the cost of these critical activities. For example, in the aftermath of the 2001 Gap Fire on the Tahoe National Forest, a two year delay in action due to appeals resulted in a $1.35 million loss in value to the dead and dying trees. This loss in value, if retained through authority authorized in the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act, would have more than covered the $739,000 spent for watershed restoration, resource enhancement and hazardous fuel removal at the Gap Fire site.

Myth: ***There is no reforestation backlog due to increased forest fires and other natural disturbances.***

Fact: In an April 2005 report, the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office conservatively estimated that the reforestation backlog on public lands currently exceeds one million acres. For example, the 2002 Biscuit Fire in southern Oregon burned 499,965 acres of which 178,051 acres are within the Kalmiopsis Wilderness area and congressionally withdrawn from recovery projects. Of the total area burned, 321,914 acres were outside the wilderness with recovery projects authorized on only 49,215 acres. Today, three years later, 9,461 acres have been replanted, representing recovery on less than 20 percent of the total burned area proposed for restoration. This type of painstakingly slow response is adding to an ever increasing reforestation backlog taking place across the country on federal lands.

Myth: ***The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act is a new taxpayer-subsidized campaign to log on public lands for economic return.***

Fact: The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act would expand authorized uses of several funding sources for both federal and non-federal land, including annual appropriations, the United States Forest Service Knutson-Vandenberg timber trust fund dollars and salvage sale receipts, Bureau of Land Managements Forest Ecosystem Health and Recovery fund account, and federal Emergency Management Administration funds. Any funds received from the recovery of dead and dying timber would be used to offset the costs of reforestation and rehabilitation, thus maximizing taxpayer dollars. Furthermore, the bill would increase the amount of public land that is rehabilitated, preventing future wildfires, insect infestation and disease outbreak, which would save taxpayer dollars, ensuring America's national forests are healthy for future generations.

Myth: Many salvage logging sales have sold for a single minimum bid at high cost to taxpayers.

Fact: Due to procedural delays, including administrative appeals and litigation, the dead or dying wood deteriorates quickly thereby reducing the value of wood. As a result, many sales go unsold or sell for very little. In some cases, the trees hold little to no value by the time the sale is offered, making the recovery projects too expensive to implement – resulting in no restoration.

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