

Hope for our forest health

According to a report by the General Accounting Office in 2001 and 2002, 52 percent of forest thinning projects subject to appeal were delayed by environmental organization protests.

According to the report, the seven environmental groups which filed the majority of the appeals included the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, Oregon Natural Resources Council, and the Forest Conservation Council.

This comes as no surprise to people in central Oregon. Environmental litigation has all but halted any timber harvesting in central Oregon. Instead of thinning the forests for the sake of forest health and jobs for local residents, the buildup of fuels continues in our forests resulting in the ever-present threat of wildfire.

There is hope, however.

As Rep. Greg Walden has pointed out, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act promises to streamline the process for timber sales.

The indications are that this bill will pass the House of Representatives. However, the real test will come in the Senate. Walden has, and continues to work, in support of this bill. The support of Senators Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith will be critical if this bill is to pass the senate.

Preservation of our natural resources is imperative, but the pendulum of reason has been stuck for the past several years. Hopefully, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act will bring it back towards the middle where it belongs.

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for the editorial board