



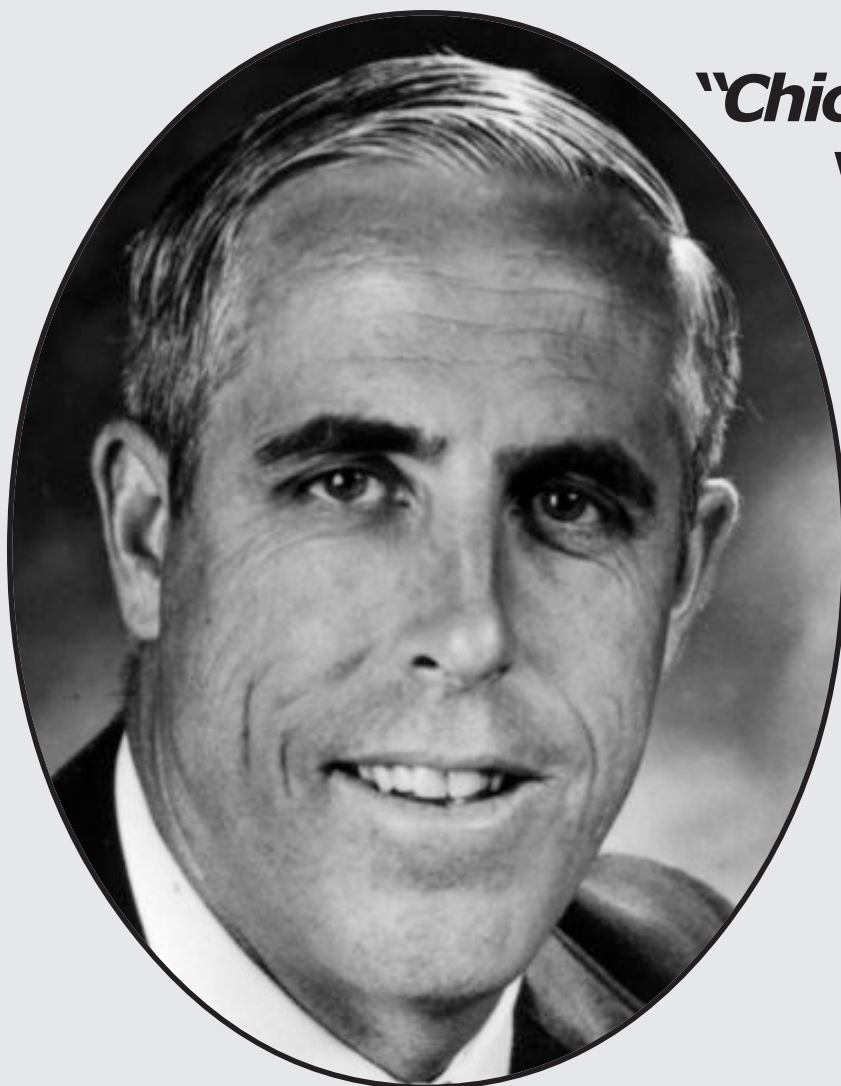
# ***T***TRANSITIONS

*Working for Sustainable Forests and Diversified Economies in the Pacific Northwest*

[www.landscouncil.org](http://www.landscouncil.org)

Volume 13, Number 2, 1999

## "Beetlemania"



**Dave**  
***"Chicken Little"***  
**Wright**

**Supervisor,  
Idaho Panhandle  
National Forests**

**Mike Dombeck,  
Chief of the U.S.  
Forest Service:**

- The National Forests are "the headwaters of the nation."
- "Watershed health will be the overriding priority in all forest plan revisions."
- "If [logging for beetles is] just an excuse to get out the cut, that won't fly."

**Damaging Forests • Losing Taxdollars • Claiming Virtue**

# Beetlemania

**Damaging Forests • Losing Taxdollars • Claiming Virtue**

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# Beetlemania

By John Osborn, M.D.

*The Beatlemania of the 1960s is replaced  
by Beetlemania of the 1990s – infecting  
Forest Service officials at epidemic levels.*

As with a patient that has been grossly mistreated and afflicted with chronic diseases, the Idaho Panhandle is both gut-wrenching and an excellent teaching case. Billions of dollars in forest- and mineral-wealth have been taken from the Panhandle, leaving behind some 70 million tons of toxic mine waste and deforested, unraveling watersheds. The Idaho Panhandle contains the worst heavy metal pollution of its kind in the world; the worst watershed damage of all 156 National Forests. Now the U.S. Forest Service has seized on an increase in tree beetles to defend one of the largest public land timber sales in recent American history.

Most Idahoans live in the South, and the Boise-based state government is a long, long way from the Idaho Panhandle. In the North, Idaho government has been little more than a shill for Big Mining and Big Timber. Corporate power reigns supreme. With few exceptions, the Federal Government's record in North Idaho is nearly as unsavory as the Idaho State Government's record in protecting the public interest against large corporations. Witness the U.S. Forest Service's destruction of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests.

The best way to see the forests of the North is by airplane. Down on the ground, the "beauty strips" and thousands of gates hide the massive clearcuts and logging road networks. In the streams and rivers you can see the rubble and gravel bars, but few people know that this is part of an entire river ecosystem falling apart.

The Forest Service deliberately destroyed the Idaho Panhandle's forested watersheds to get out the cut. Within the agency, watershed scientists objected to the level of cut and road-building practices. They were removed from the Idaho Panhandle. Anything that stands between the trees and the iron triangle (corporations—politicians—Forest Service) trying to cut those trees is at risk. Government officials signed their names to the hundreds of decisions to build the logging roads and log away the trees. The banality of the evil becomes clear when looked at from the totality of the destruction.

Where were those pesky conservationists? The Forest Service kept us busy with a blizzard of timber sale decisions and eight-pound forest plans. Meanwhile Sen. Jim McClure slyly padded Forest Service logging-road budgets with hundreds of millions of tax dollars. We responded by developing the Forest Watch program for expanded citizen oversight, appealing timber sales, and submitting an 800 page appeal of the Panhandle forest plan.

The Forest Service – aided and abetted by timber corporations – worked to eviscerate these citizen oversight processes. Congress weakened the appeals process, and then Congress suspended the laws altogether (the 1995 "salvage rider"). The Forest Service wrote slicker documents to shield its forest-cutting decisions against our appeals. The agency undertook a series of marketing campaigns for logging the National Forests: New Forest, New Perspectives, Forest Health, Ecosystem Management, and Salvage.

## Now we have beetlemania.

Beetles are found at their highest numbers in recent decades, part of the natural history of these radically disturbed forests. The beetles are in the Douglas Firs, one of the most desired commercial species on the Idaho Panhandle. Some trees are turning brown and some are dying. How is the Forest Service proposing to handle this "epidemic" of beetles? No surprise, the treatment for any diagnosis is the same: log it. In classic "cart-before-the-horse" timing, the Forest Service published full-page advertisements about logging and even started marking trees long before completing the public participation process.

While the head of the Forest Service, Mike Dombeck, was telling the nation about the agency's new commitment to watershed values on our National Forests, the Panhandle supervisor, Dave Wright, asked for and received an emergency ruling from the Washington, D.C. office to suspend public process and log the forests above Hayden Lake.

Dave Wright and the Forest Service have made "claims to virtue" which are unfounded. The Forest Service has told the public

- (1) logging will turn a profit that will be used for restoring past logging damage [the loss to taxpayers on the Idaho Panhandle already exceeds \$1,200 per acre, and is likely to worsen by dumping huge volumes of timber onto already flooded timber markets];
- (2) logging will control the beetle "epidemic" [the Forest Service is already backpedalling and acknowledging that logging will do little or nothing to alter this natural cycle]; and
- (3) logging will reduce the risk from wildfire [by leaving slash, promoting the growth of grasses and other "fine fuels" that carry ground fires, and increasing human access, logging will likely increase fire risks].

The Forest Service has conducted a public campaign of deception and fear-mongering as part of its strategy to continue logging the Idaho Panhandle.

The Beatlemania of the 1960s is replaced by Beetlemania of the 1990s – infecting Forest Service officials at epidemic levels.

On the Idaho Panhandle, the forest ecosystem cannot be logged back to health.

In a single day of flooding in 1996 over a million pounds of lead washed into Lake Coeur d'Alene. Mining poisons from the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River were carried by floods from the clearcut watersheds of the Coeur d'Alene National Forest.

The ecosystems are coming apart. Gifford Pinchot understood that what happens to our National Forests is ultimately a moral issue. On the Idaho Panhandle, government officials entrusted with these forests have signed their names to the hundreds of decisions to build the logging roads and strip away the forest canopies. Deceiving the public while deliberately destroying the Idaho Panhandle National Forests – the cumulative effect of Beetlemania and past decisions – provides an excellent teaching case on forests and ethics.

# Forest Service expands beetle battle

## Critics call massive harvest a ploy to increase agency's logging levels

By Ken Olsen, Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE—This summer, the U.S. Forest Service will start logging enough trees to rebuild every home in Coeur d'Alene.

The web of roads needed to carry out the massive harvest will be long enough to stretch from Spokane to Ellensburg.

And that three-year effort may only be the start of logging in response to the worst Douglas fir beetle outbreak in four decades.

Is this triage for the trees, or a Trojan horse for more national forest logging?

Environmentalists and some scientists see the latter based on the project's magnitude and the speed with which the Forest Service wants to move. The plan calls for dramatic increases over recent annual logging rates in the Colville and Idaho Panhandle national forests.

The logging estimates have increased greatly in recent weeks — from a maximum 140 million board feet to a minimum of 153 million board feet.

The agency wants special permission from its Washington, D.C., office to sell the timber before the final environmental analysis is finished.

The timber industry is worried the infestation will spread to its private lands and lead to greater wildfires on public lands. Mill operators say the logging is necessary to create healthier forests.

The Forest Service agrees, insisting that such large scale logging is simply the smart move.

"The bugs are in there, killing the trees," says David Wright, supervisor of the Panhandle National Forests.

Why not sell the dead trees and use the proceeds to restore watersheds, replant fire and bug resistant trees and reduce the chance of massive wildfire?

"You can kiss it off," Wright says of the beetle problem. "But there are consequences of doing nothing."

Those consequences include catastrophic fires, perpetuating trees most susceptible to insects and disease, and missing the chance to sell timber to pay for watershed fixes, Wright says.



Steve Turner, A Hard Day's Write, HarperPerennial, 1994.

*The Beatles are everywhere.*

### Three-part effort

The proposed logging is in three ranger districts, all infested with beetles because logging has removed the most fire- and bug-resistant trees and fire suppression has allowed Douglas fir to take over with choking density.

*Continued on page 11*

### Forest Service's bark beetle plan

By the numbers, this is the preferred Forest Service plan for dealing with the largest Douglas fir bark beetle outbreak in 40 years on the Idaho Panhandle and Colville national forests. It includes the most logging, the most road building and the most watershed restoration and road removal. Other alternatives range from doing nothing to lesser amounts of logging, road building and watershed work.

**153 million board feet** of logging across 25,000 acres.

**183 miles of road construction**, reconstruction, and temporary roads on the Panhandle Forests only. No road construction; reconstruction on Colville forest.

**67 miles of road removed** on all forests.

**5,192 acres of clearcuts.**

**20,237 acres of selection harvest.**

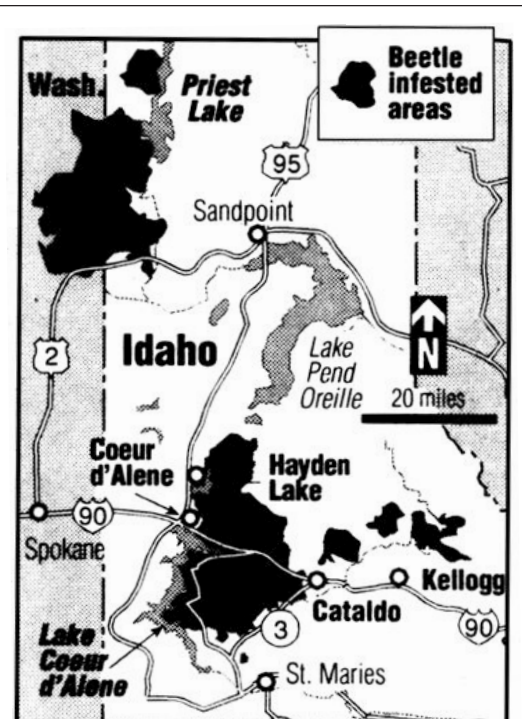
**8,896 acres of prescribed burning** after logging.

**Several thousand additional acres of fuel breaks** (exact figures unavailable).

Replanting with fire and bug resistant trees on 5,192 acres.

**Logging: Starting from Summer 1999 through year 2001.**

SOURCE: U.S. Forest Service, Staff graphic: Warren Huskey





# Environmentalists: Phony beetlemania an excuse for logging

By John Hughes, Associated Press

WASHINGTON—Douglas fir bark beetles are killing thousands of trees in the Pacific Northwest, and Forest Service officials say they can do little to stop them.

But the officials say some good can come from what they consider an epidemic. They can sell trees on 25,000 infected acres in Washington state and Idaho and use the proceeds to rebuild roads, plant more trees, protect streams and cut the risk of forest fires.

"What we're trying to do is realize some of the value by salvaging the lumber," said Dan Dallas, a district ranger in the Colville National Forest in northeast Washington. "I'm not going to have another opportunity like this, I'm sure, to make this many needed improvements in a road system I can't maintain."

Problem is, environmentalists say, there is no beetle epidemic.

They contend the little black-headed bug with reddish-brown wings is being used as an excuse to boost the cut and try to increase Forest Service income.

"It's very clear that the Forest Service timber program is winding down. ... They have to come up with some reason to log," said Ron Mitchell, who dubs the plan the "fraudulent beetlemania project."

"They are in a desperate situation, and this is the most desperate thing they could have done," said Mitchell, director of the Idaho Sporting Congress in Boise.

No one disputes there are billions of the beetles in western forests. They reproduce in the inner bark of weakened Douglas fir trees. Larvae eat away at the bark, killing the tree.

An ice storm in the winter of 1996-97, plus unusually heavy snow and rains, weakened thousands of trees in Idaho and northeast Washington, leaving them ripe for infestation.

Ralph Thier, an entomologist in the Forest Service's Boise office, inspected some damaged trees in the Boise National Forest in the spring of 1997 and sounded the alarm that conditions were ripe for a major beetle buildup.

In May 1998, Boise forest officials approved a plan to allow logging on 7,000 acres, to remove infested trees and prevent a larger infestation.

They also hung bait traps on trees to try to condense the beetles in a 365-acre area of that 7,000 acres, contracting with Boise Cascade Corp. to quickly remove about 9,000 trees in the smaller area last fall.

Mitchell's group filed suit in 1998, trying to block both the 365-acre plan and the larger effort.

In October, District Court Judge B. Lynn Winmill in Boise put a halt to the 365-acre plan, and last month he put the entire 7,000-acre project on hold. Winmill said the Forest Service's environmental analysis was insufficient and that the agency had presented no evidence beetle populations were high.

Environmentalists called the decision a major victory — and proof of the "beetle hoax."

And they say the Forest Service is now falsely claiming beetle epidemics in the Colville forest and in the Coeur D'Alene and Kaniksu national forests in the Idaho Panhandle.

Agency officials say the cases are different.

Thier said that while the beetle problem he expected in the Boise forest didn't materialize in 1998 — probably because of an unusually moist spring the year before — the problems in the Panhandle and northeast Washington have been documented.

Forest Service officials say surveys last fall found hundreds of dead trees with telltale red needles in the three forests. They expect to lose thousands more trees this spring.

With the Beetles: historic photographs of Dezo Hoffman. ed Pearce Marchbank. Omnibus Press. 1982.



1960s Beatlemania swept the world. 1990s "Beetlemania" is epidemic in Forest Service offices.

***"The sky is not falling."  
[From a Forest Service Beetle Survey Form,  
Nov. 13, 1998]***

The plan is to log 150 million board feet from 25,000 acres in the Colville, Coeur D'Alene and Kaniksu forests, or about 40 percent more than loggers typically take from those areas.

In all, trees scattered across an estimated 150,000 acres on the Idaho Panhandle national forests are under beetle attack, according to testimony last week from Stanley Hamilton, director of the Idaho Department of Lands, before a House Resources Committee panel.

"The Forest Service must consider immediate action to reduce the potential risk of high-intensity wildfire and bark-beetle infestation onto adjacent private lands," he told the forests and forest health subcommittee.

Environmentalists say nature should be allowed to take its course.

Weakened and dead trees are home to woodpeckers, squirrels, rodents and at least 50 other species that are critical to the forest ecosystem, they note. And a rotting tree provides critical nutrients to soil.

"I do not believe we have a potentially catastrophic epidemic," said Sara Folger, forest watch director of The Lands Council in Spokane, Wash.

"They're killing some trees," she said of the beetles, "but forests will regulate themselves given the chance.

"My contention is the ecosystem needs that material a lot more than the timber mills do."

Some say the Forest Service is moving too fast.

The agency is proceeding before necessary research has been completed, says Art Partridge, a consultant and retired University of Idaho forestry professor.

*Continued on page 13*

# Forest Service declares beetle emergency

## Decision allows agency to get started on timber sale before environmental analysis is finished

By Zaz Hollander, Staff Writer

COEUR d'ALENE—Top Forest Service officials have declared an emergency in North Idaho's Douglas fir beetle-infested forests.

This special clearance from Washington, D.C., means the U.S. Forest Service can start the process of selling timber on 4,000 acres of forest before an environmental analysis is finished.

A letter from acting Forest Service deputy chief Gloria Manning to David Wright, supervisor of the Idaho Panhandle Forests, cites the risk of beetle infestation and fire to adjacent state and private forests.

"The accumulation of dead fuels presents an extreme fire hazard in and adjacent to inhabited areas which threatens public and firefighter safety,"

Manning's letter states.

On March 15, Wright asked for permission to accelerate work on 4,000 acres of national forest stretching in a semicircle north

***"The accumulation of dead fuels presents an extreme fire hazard in and adjacent to inhabited areas which threatens public and firefighter safety."***

***— Gloria Manning, deputy chief  
U.S. Forest Service***

of Hayden Lake to an area south of Fernan Lake.

Those are high priority areas because of their proximity to the cities of Coeur d'Alene and Hayden Lake, federal officials say. Regional forest service officials are also eager to address what they call a beetle epidemic across up to 25,000 acres.

An environmental impact statement evaluating the logging, however, doesn't come out until May 15.

So on Thursday, Manning exempted the 4,000-acre parcel from a law that bans Panhandle officials from starting work on timber sales before the impact statement comes out.

Crews will start marking trees for logging next week, the first step in any timber sale process, said Brad Gilbert, in the Panhandle Forests' Coeur d'Alene office.

The environmental impact statement includes several alternatives — including no logging. Panhandle officials released a draft version of the statement in January. It drew nearly 1,000 letters from the public.

Stunned members of the conservation community condemned the emergency declaration.

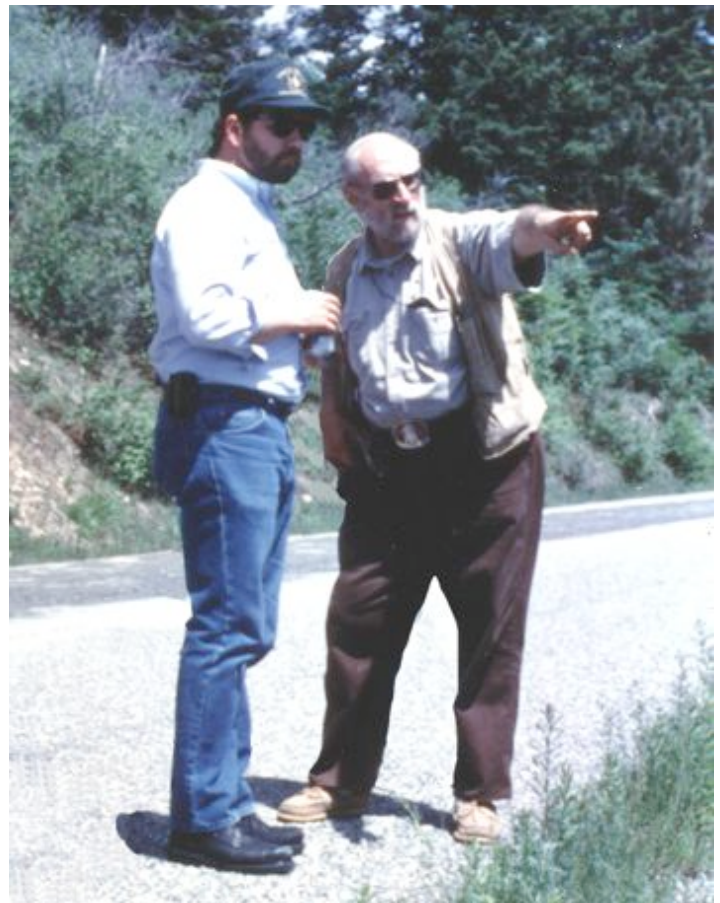
"The decision has been made already," said Lisa Ramirez, a biologist with The Lands Council. "It's an outright lie to say this will not affect the public's involvement."

Ramirez accused the Forest Service of using scare tactics about the risk of fire to speed logging. Heavy logging and fire suppression actually increase the risk of wildfires, she said.

Gilbert denied that starting the timber sale process will influence the agency's final decision.

"It's not a dictate that we implement this," he said. "It only allows us to move forward."

***Lisa Ramirez accused the Forest Service of using scare tactics about the risk of fire to speed logging. Heavy logging and fire suppression actually increase the risk of wildfires.***



Cathy Bertagnoli

Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Jim Lyons (left) getting a lesson on the Panhandle's forest fungi and insects by Art "Doc" Partridge, forest pathologist. 1994. Lyons once marked trees for cutting on the Idaho Panhandle. (See related story on page 30.)

Members of the timber industry applauded the fast-tracking, calling it a much-needed solution to a possible disaster. Private timber companies fear beetles will fly onto their lands, and that the risk of fire from dense fir stands hit by the bugs is too great.

"This is the right thing for our community and for this part of the national forest system," said Stefany Bales, with the Intermountain Forest Industry Association, representing 53 timber companies and mills in Idaho and Montana.

Potential buyers are already expressing interest, Gilbert said, including Idaho Forest Industries Inc., Crown Pacific L.P., and Columbia Helicopter Logging.

The Forest Service can't actually award contracts until 30 days after the EIS is released, according to Gilbert. The logging still can be appealed in that time, he added.

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# Emergency logging met with skepticism

## Action linked to Douglas fir bark beetle infestation

By Ken Olsen, Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE — Some folks living around Hayden Lake are unhappy the Forest Service will speed logging near their homes in light of the Douglas fir bark beetle infestation.

"I'm not convinced this isn't a connived excuse, given the history of the Forest Service," said Jules Gindraux, who moved to a home on Hayden Lake a few months ago from the Priest Lake area. "Virtually all claims by the Forest Service of benefit to be gained have been shown to be groundless or downright misleading."

Last Thursday, the Idaho Panhandle National Forests received emergency authority from the Forest Service's Washington, D.C., office to start preparing timber sales and watershed restoration on 4,000 acres around Hayden and Fernan lakes. Normally that work isn't supposed to begin until after the final environmental analysis is finished and all appeals have been resolved.

Now the timber can be sold a little more than 30 days after the final environmental study is completed on May 15. That's important to deal with the fire danger posed by dense stands of dying Douglas fir, Forest Service officials said.

The logging won't just deal with dead Douglas fir. The Forest Service now acknowledges that 15 million board feet of live, healthy trees—enough to build 1,500 homes—will be logged in the process.

That's necessary to create larger openings, allowing sunlight to help regenerate more insect and fire resistant white pine larch and ponderosa pine, the Forest Service said.

Another 21,000 acres of land the Forest Service wants to log as a result of the bug assault is not covered by the fast-track waiver granted by Washington, D.C.

"Initially, we asked for an exemption for the whole project," said Brad Gilbert of the Panhandle Forests. But deep snow at higher elevations will stall any logging, whether on a fast track or not.

The Newport District of the Colville National Forest, also part of this bark beetle logging project, decided not to ask for emergency authority soon after the plan was unveiled in late November.

On the lands where the Forest Service has the emergency authority, the agency will have a head start on watershed restoration and road removal—not just logging, Gilbert said.

Some people who live around Hayden Lake don't find comfort in the Forest Service's words.

"I'm not as worried about the fire danger from letting (the trees) stand as much as I am from cutting them down," said Jim Bingham, a Spokane physician whose family spends its summers in their cabin on the east side of Hayden Lake.

He is similarly worried about increased runoff and erosion from logging, based on his past experiences with selective logging.

"The runoff is still horrendous and the mud and the muck still goes into the lake," Bingham said. "Cutting down every stick of wood, I think, isn't going to help regenerate the forest when all of the topsoil is sitting in Hayden Lake."

Larry McLaud, who fought fires for the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management for 12 years before going to work for the Idaho Conservation League, says he fears the logging will increase the fire danger.

"If they go in and helicopter log and leave the tops and limbs the fire danger could actually increase in the short term," McLaud said. "This emergency timber proposal will cost taxpayers a bundle, not stop the bugs, increase the fire danger."

Gilbert, of the Panhandle Forests, says more of the slash will be removed by helicopter close to town. Farther out, it will be chopped up and spread across the ground so it will decompose faster.

In the short term, fire danger will increase, he acknowledged. In the long term, it will drop, he said.

Earlier, Forest Supervisor Dave Wright said the logging cannot stop fires, only reduce the intensity.

The timber industry, meanwhile, wishes the Forest Service already had logged the 25,000 acres. Now the beetles will spread, from infested trees to new trees.

"The window is gone," said Stefany Bales. "They're not going to be harvesting trees with hibernating bugs

in them."

The Forest Service also has a good neighbor responsibility to move fast to make sure the infestation doesn't spread to neighboring private timberlands, Bales said.

In the end, "people must make a choice about the kind of forests they want — vibrant, healthy and growing or unnaturally dense, dead and dying."

***"Virtually all claims by the Forest Service of benefit to be gained have been shown to be groundless or downright misleading."***  
—Jules Gindraux,  
Hayden Lake property owner.

***"The runoff is still horrendous and the mud and the muck still goes into the lake."*** — Jim Bingham, MD,  
Hayden Lake property owner.

***"This emergency timber proposal will cost taxpayers a bundle, not stop the bugs, increase the fire danger."*** —Larry McLaud,  
Idaho Conservation League

Staff writer Zaz Hollander contributed to this report.

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# Bark beetle plan greeted by skepticism

By Ken Olsen, Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE—U.S. Forest Service efforts to battle insect infestations with salvage logging traditionally are financial disasters that don't stem the bug outbreaks, a forest historian said Tuesday.

That includes a 1950s effort to deal with a spruce bark beetle outbreak over 600,000 acres in the Rocky Mountains, including Idaho. DDT and massive logging were weapons, said Paul Hirt, a Washington State University professor.

But, by the 1960s, Forest Service chief Edward Cliff concluded that cold weather—not the agency—had stopped the insects.

Hirt's comments Tuesday were part of a panel discussion on the Idaho Panhandle and Colville national forests' controversial proposal to log 153 million board feet of timber. The Forest Service wants emergency authority from its Washington, D.C., office to start selling timber on some of the land before all of the final environmental study is completed.

The Forest Service says the logging will reduce fire danger, slow the spread of bark beetles to private land and provide money to finance road obliteration and watershed restoration. But Hirt says he is skeptical the project will accomplish any of that.

Similar efforts have “usually cost and lost a lot of money (and) usually are done for a lot of reasons regretted afterwards,” he said during the panel discussion held by The Idaho Spokesman-Review.

Considering the Forest Service does not usually get the money it needs to do restoration, “I think we will get the roads built, the timber cut and one-third to one-half of the restoration done.”

David Wright, supervisor of the Panhandle National Forest, said the agency isn't promising to stop the beetle outbreak or totally prevent fires. Simultaneously, the Forest Service has to do something in light of an epidemic insect outbreak that can easily spread from federal to state and private land.

Private timber landowners have worked hard to clean up after the 1996 ice storm that, in conjunction with dry summers, gave the beetles just the right conditions to erupt, Wright said. Now the Forest Service, as a good neighbor, has to do its part.

After years of fire suppression, there are between 35 tons and 100 tons more fuel per acre than normal, he said. That's too much to deal with by way of controlled burns. This high fuel load also means a fire would burn extremely

hot and do a great deal of damage. “There are serious consequences of doing nothing, especially in terms of fire,” Wright said.

He also encouraged people not to focus on the logging as much as on the proposed restoration. Three-quarters of the 765 miles of road obliterated in recent years were taken out with proceeds from timber sales, Wright said. Here's another chance to use timber dollars to help forest health.

Amy Gillette of the Idaho Forest Owners Association said the Forest Service needs to expand its project to cover all of the estimated 125,000 acres of Forest Service land hit by the beetles. Bark beetle numbers have increased so significantly

that they are leaving Forest Service lands and attacking green trees on private lands, Gillette said.

Everyone on the panel agreed fire is a serious potential problem, but differed on the solution.

Mike Petersen of The Lands Council, said the Forest Service is proposing taking the largest Douglas fir trees—the least likely to burn because of their size—suggesting this is about logging valuable trees not preventing fires.

The beetles will fly in the spring, long before the logging can begin, Petersen added. And most of the proposed logging isn't taking place near private land, as the Forest Service suggests.

Roads were an equally controversial topic at the gathering. But along the way, Dan Dallas, Newport District Ranger, was complimented by The Lands Council for not proposing new roads on his part of the beetle sale.

Wright noted he has received significant public comment on the road construction and reconstruction on the Panhandle Forests. There are 35 miles of new road proposed, but now “I have my serious doubts it will be that much new road construction,” he said.

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*Similar efforts have “usually cost and lost a lot of money (and) usually are done for a lot of reasons regretted afterwards.”  
— Paul Hirt, PhD*



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# *A Conspiracy Of Optimism*

## *Management of the National Forests since World War Two*

By Paul Hirt, Ph.D.

The following are excerpts from Dr. Hirt's book printed by the University of Nebraska Press, 1994.

"This drive to salvage insect-infested timber reflected a peculiar mind set: an industrial forestry vision of intensively managed and fully utilized timber resources. Proponents of this vision abhorred the thought of dead and dying trees decaying in the forest without being utilized. The value to the forest ecosystem of decomposing trees did not enter the picture at all. America could not afford to be so wasteful. Worse yet, every dead or decaying tree attracted 'pests' and 'diseases' that threatened nearby healthy timber. Complicating matters, the Forest Service based its calculations of sustained yield and allowable cuts on the assumption that intensive management would progressively increase the level of protection from fire, insects, and other natural decomposers. This assumption of greater protection led to a second assumption that more timber would be available for harvest in the future, which in turn led to the crucial decision that more timber could be cut today without exceeding sustained yield. Consequently, large fires or natural, periodic outbreaks of spruce bark beetles, white pine blister rust, and other pests threatened to upset sustained yield calculations and motivated the agency to attack vigorously these 'natural enemies of timber abundance.' Fire and pest control were thus aimed to protect the market values of the timber as well as to preserve the integrity of the agency's increasingly optimistic calculations of sustained yield.

"The Forest Service approached the naturally occurring spruce bark beetle outbreak of the early 1950s as if it were a national emergency justifying extraordinary measures. These measures included huge federal subsidies for rapid bulldozing of timber access roads into high elevation areas of the northern Rockies, the spraying of DDT mixed with oil on some timber stands, the harvesting of other stands, and a temporary departure from sustained yield." . . .

"The use of DDT is this battle against the bark beetle went unquestioned, as did essentially all uses of pesticides which became quite widespread on the national forests in the 1950s. Manufacturers claimed the new chemicals were safe and managers

considered them wonderful technological advances essential to the effort to maximize productivity. Montana's Lolo National Forest casually announced in 1955 that it planned to spray 102,000 acres aerially with DDT the next year to control spruce budworm, mainly because the insect damaged the esthetic appearance of young conifers used by the local Christmas tree industry." . . .

*The Forest Service approached the naturally occurring spruce bark beetle outbreak of the early 1950s as if it were a national emergency justifying extraordinary measures.*

*The use of DDT is this battle against the bark beetle went unquestioned, as did essentially all uses of pesticides which became quite widespread on the national forests in the 1950s.*

*The Chief of the US Forest Service admitted that cold winter temperatures — not the pesticides — actually broke the epidemic.*

*If businessmen were running the national forests, these costly salvage sales in marginal timberland would never have occurred.*

as both ineffective and destructive, but at the time 'salvaging' dead and dying trees was widely accepted as appropriate and desirable.

"Interestingly, [Edward Cliff, Chief of the US Forest Service] admitted that cold winter temperatures — not the pesticides — actually broke the epidemic. Two decades later, an official team of Forest Service researchers in Wyoming would discredit this practice of timber harvesting for spruce bark beetle control. "These 'emergency' salvage operations actually set the stage for future timber harvests in areas that otherwise might not have supported profitable development. Rocky Mountain spruce and fir at the time were considered commercially worthless. Higher quality timber (mainly lower elevation ponderosa pine) was so readily available that no market had yet developed for these 'inferior' species. The first sale of insect-damaged spruce in the northern Rockies salvage campaign occurred on Montana's Flathead National Forest, and the stumpage sold for \$1 per thousand board feet — essentially a giveaway. The late University of Montana forestry professor Arnold Bolle argued that the Forest Service consciously used salvage sales subsidies at that time to create new markets for its low value timber so that the old undesirable forests could be cleared away and replaced with plantations of desirable species.

"Congress eventually approved more than four-fifths of Cliff's requested budget increase for salvage roads, going the extra mile by giving the agency half of it right away in a Supplemental Appropriations Act passed in June 1953. Ironically, in July, the 'Washington Lookout' column in American Forests magazine observed that Eisenhower's budget and Congress's action on it strengthened the perception that this was a 'businessman's' administration — if businessmen were running the national forests, these costly salvage sales in marginal timberland would never have occurred."

# Working out the bugs

## EPA wants more details from Forest Service on logging plans

Ken Olsen, The Spokesman-Review

Coeur d'Alene — The U.S. Forest Service doesn't make a thorough case for large-scale logging in its environmental study of a Douglas fir bark beetle outbreak, the Environmental Protection Agency says.

The EPA is calling on the Forest Service to give more details to justify taking 153 million board feet of lumber from the Idaho Panhandle and Colville national forests.

The logging is proposed to deal with what the Forest Service calls the worst beetle outbreak in 40 years. The agency says tree damage from the 1996 ice storm followed by the dry summer of 1998 made conditions perfect for the beetle explosion.

The EPA is partially right, the Forest Service says. It agrees it needs to better explain the need for the logging and road construction, as well as the consequences of doing nothing in response to the beetles.

But the Forest Service says there is no doubt there is a pressing need to get bug-killed and likely-to-be-killed Douglas fir out of the woods fast. Otherwise, the trees will deteriorate and timber sales won't generate money for watershed restoration.

The EPA's letter is one of more than 900 sets of comments the Forest Service received on its draft environmental study of the beetle project. The work of reading, analyzing and responding to those comments is slowing a final decision on how to deal with the beetles, said Brad Gilbert of the Panhandle forests.

In its comments, the EPA is questioning whether the Forest Service considered the effect of the beetle project in conjunction with all of the other normal logging and road construction work on the national forests.

"Harvesting over such an enormous area could be far more intrusion than is sustainable by the ecosystem, especially in light of the timber sales and other projects already planned for the area," Richard B. Parkin of the EPA said in a letter to the Forest Service. The EPA also questions whether the Forest Service has made the case that the beetle outbreak is serious, compared with historic outbreaks.

The agency also didn't thoroughly explain the negative consequences of doing nothing, nor the effects of the road

construction and logging on polluted or threatened streams and lakes, EPA said.

The Forest Service agrees it needs to provide more detail and explanations of those particular logging consequences, but

the agency does believe it's showing a comprehensive picture of the effects of the beetle logging in the larger logging and road construction picture.

"We will be considering past, present and reasonable future activities of all kinds," Gilbert said. Part or all of the regular timber sales planned for the forests will be suspended if the Panhandle and Colville forests decide logging is part of the beetle remedy.

It seems likely the Forest Service will log. Dead trees, with rusty-red needles, are becoming more abundant across the forest.

Gilbert points to those dropping to the ground in the forest above Hayden Lake. If a fire starts, those trees could fuel a more intense fire, potentially sterilizing the soil, Gilbert said. A fire could destroy nearby homes, he added, waving to the expensive spreads dotting the Hayden area hills.

"To me, it's a great deal to the taxpayers to get the timber companies to take these trees out of the forest, because they will be a liability in the future," Gilbert said.

The Forest Service said it is marking trees for harvest, choosing roads for removal, and doing other on-the-ground preparation throughout the two forests. It's not irreversible work, so the agency believes it's legal to do it even before a

final environmental study is done and the final logging decision is made, Gilbert said.

Environmental groups, long skeptical of the beetle project, angrily disagree. For example, the Forest Service admitted it was breaking the law by marking trees for logging in a Douglas fir beetle project on the Boise National Forest last fall, said Jeff Juel of the Lands Council. A court transcript backs him up.

Beyond that, it seems clear that an agency that is doing so much work on the ground has its mind made up before it has finished its studies, he said.

"They've committed thousands of dollars and hundreds of person hours marking trees," Juel said. "How does that not prejudice the decision?"

***"Harvesting over such an enormous area could be far more intrusion than is sustainable by the ecosystem, especially in light of the timber sales and other projects already planned for the area." — Richard B. Parkin, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency***

***"They've committed thousands of dollars and hundreds of person hours marking trees. How does that not prejudice the decision?" — Jeff Juel, The Lands Council***

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About 5,000 acres will be logged over three years on the Newport Ranger District of the Colville National Forest, according to the latest estimates.

Unlike the other two areas, Newport is not building new roads or temporary roads, and is only reconstructing 19 miles of existing roads.

"We're trying to figure out how to (remove) roads," says Newport District Ranger Dan Dallas. "It didn't make sense to build any."

The other 20,000 acres of logging is proposed for the Priest Lake and Coeur d'Alene River ranger districts in the Idaho Panhandle. This includes rebuilding 132 miles of road, and building 35 miles of new road and 30 miles of temporary road during the next three years, according to estimates released last week.

At the end, if the timber sales generate enough money, 67 miles of roads will be removed on both the Panhandle and Colville forests. In total, 5,000 acres — one-fifth of the total — will be clearcut. Several of those clearcuts will be larger than the 40-acre maximum under federal law, Wright says, requiring a waiver from forest managers in Washington, D.C. All will be replanted with white pine, larch and Ponderosa pine.

The Forest Service also is putting out about 500 beetle traps this spring, with the aim of slowing the spread of the bugs. But under no circumstances does the agency believe it can stop the infestation with logging.

About 250,000 acres have been hit by the beetles or are at high risk, the Forest Service says. So the logging would merely get lumber from dead or dying trees to raise money for watershed restoration, Wright says.

Where civilization is creeping out into the woods, the Forest Service also believes it can lessen the chances homes will be lost to wildfire by thinning forests and creating fuel breaks. It is not a guarantee against fire, Wright adds.

"We're not trying to say we're going to restore the forest," Wright emphasizes. "We are improving the existing condition of the forest."

## A matter of money

Much of the proposed watershed improvements — replacing outdated culverts, relocating roads and removing roads — depends on the logging plan making money.

But critics predict the proposed sales will lose as much as \$30 million. Recent General Accounting Office reports lend credence to the prediction of red ink.

If the timber doesn't sell for enough, things like road removal won't happen, Wright says.

"I don't anticipate that," he says. He believes, based on the calculations for this kind of project, it will make money — perhaps as much as \$14 million.

His critics disagree.

***Under no circumstances does the agency believe it can stop the infestation with logging.***

***Critics predict sales will lose as much as \$30 million. Recent General Accounting Office reports lend credence to the prediction of red ink.***

***"The notion that they are going to make money on this stretches credulity." —Robert Wolf***

If anyone compares the estimated logging receipts from the Panhandle plan with GAO and Forest Service records, "the notion that they are going to make money on this stretches credulity," says Robert Wolf, a retired Forest Service employee and fiscal watchdog.

Adding 153 million board-feet of lumber to an already flooded timber market only means the Forest Service will inflict a great deal of logging damage and lose a great deal of money, adds Sara Folger of the Public Lands Council.

Building and rebuilding more forest roads in the name of access and improving watershed health also seems questionable, Folger says. "My God, how much more access do you need in the most heavily roaded national forest in the nation?"

## Industry support

The timber industry says the Forest Service plan is the responsible way to stop the bug infestation from spreading to private lands, which the industry says it cleaned up before the beetles could take hold.

"If your neighbors have a giant bug incubator, we are helpless," says Frank Carroll, spokesman for Potlatch Corp. And "if we can't do something to reduce fuel loading, I promise you a wildfire is a hammer the people in this country have forgotten about over the last 70 years and don't want to find out about again."

There will be controversy because huge tracts of trees will be removed within easy sight of many back yards, the Forest Service says. But the pain will be short-lived. Even opponents of the plan generally agree the beetle problem may require

logging where the national forest and cities meet.

"Folks, when they are deciding how they feel, need to keep in mind the Forest Service is trying to make things better. It's going to require some pain up front," says Stefany Bales of the Intermountain Forest Industry Association.

The industry is serious about taking good care of the environment and producing vibrant, healthy forests that are good for fish, wildlife, people and timber production, Bales contends. If the public chooses to support the proposed logging, "they get both a healthier ecosystem and the wood products they demand."

## Better left alone?

Longtime University of Idaho entomologist Art Partridge believes the logging will make the beetle problems worse.

"They are just using this as an excuse to do something they shouldn't," says Partridge, who is a consulting forester after 40 years as a professor.

Logging increases the stress on surrounding Douglas fir, making them more susceptible to beetle attack, Partridge

says. It stresses the soil, sometimes to the point that new trees won't grow.

In addition, Douglas fir are often laced with root rot, a disease that massive logging is likely to spread, he says.





## THE NATIONAL U.S. FOREST SERVICE PLAN

Critics, such as Ron Mitchell of the Idaho Sporting Congress, view the proposal as a ruse to dramatically increase Forest Service logging, which has dropped significantly in the last five years.

The Forest Service may be logging the trees with genetic resistance to the Douglas fir beetle. That's like "taking the money out of the bank and not replacing it," Partridge says.

The Forest Service plans to replant many Douglas firs with blister rust resistant white pines. But those trees are susceptible to a number of other diseases, and in some cases less than 10 percent of the white pine survive, he says.

"I wouldn't mind if they did salvage logging in a sensible way," Partridge says. "With horse logging they could easily employ a lot of people without damaging the ecosystem."

Left alone, the beetles will thin the dense Douglas fir stands, and those dying trees will enrich the soil, Partridge says. Along the way, more bug-resistant species will slowly take over.

Other scientists, such as University of Idaho fire ecologist Leon Neuenschwander, aren't sure what to suggest. Under current management, he predicts the Douglas fir/ponderosa pine forests around Spokane and Coeur d'Alene will be eaten by bugs or burn.

If the logging is done right, actually makes money and the money goes to watershed and forest improvement, the project could be beneficial, Neuenschwander says. But doing it right includes returning to the logged areas in 15 to 20 years and thinning the young trees, work he says the Forest Service never performs, because it doesn't produce timber-sale revenue.

"I don't know what the right thing to do is," Neuenschwander says. "Maybe we will have to trust the Forest Service and hope they will do the best thing for the forests and the people."

*"My God, how much more access do you need in the most heavily roaded national forest in the nation?"*

*—Sara Folger, The Lands Council*

*"They are just using this as an excuse to do something they shouldn't."*

*— Dr. Art Partridge, University of Idaho entomologist*

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The Lands Council photo archives

*Clearcut – just a few trees left standing – Idaho Panhandle National Forests – watershed of Wolf Lodge Creek and Lake Coeur d’Alene.*

*Continued from page 5.*

“They claim an epidemic, but they don’t give you any figures to substantiate it,” he said.

Some members of Congress, and some parties who own land near the forests at issue, say the Forest Service is moving too slowly.

Rep. Helen Chenoweth, R-Idaho, is expected to introduce a bill in the next two weeks that would push the Forest Service to speed up approval for logging in infested areas.

Under the bill, the agency would be required to seek permission from the White House Council on Environmental Quality to condense the environmental regulatory process. Paperwork that typically takes six months to complete could be finished in as little as one month.

“The Forest Service must expedite its actions,” Chenoweth said at last week’s forests and forest health subcommittee

hearing. “Not to do so would be an irresponsible and unacceptable breach of the public trust.”

Forest Service officials plan to announce a final decision on the Colville-Coeur D’Alene-Kaniksu plan by the end of April. There then would be a 105-day appeal period before most of the project could go forward.

Forest Service officials are seeking an exemption to log 4,000 acres in the Coeur D’Alene as early as Aug. 1, before the environmental appeals process is completed. They say the infestation on those acres has become a matter of urgency.

The rest of the logging, if approved, would begin later this year or in early 2000.

*Idaho Falls Post Register, March 28, 1999*

# Suit claims law broken over beetles

## Seeks to halt 'emergency logging' on Panhandle

By Ken Olsen, Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE—The Forest Service failed to get White House clearance before beginning emergency measures to log 4,000 acres in the Hayden Lake area this summer, environmentalists claim.

The agency downplayed the seriousness of a Douglas fir bark beetle infestation to avoid requirements that it get permission from the president's Council on Environmental Quality, environmental groups allege in a lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Missoula.

Idaho Panhandle National Forests managers now say the beetle outbreak is so great that logging must begin without the usual waiting period for public comment and appeals.

The Idaho Conservation League, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, The Lands Council and a Hayden Lake resident are asking a judge to prevent logging until the public has the normal opportunity to comment and challenge the fast-track cutting of trees within clear view of Coeur d'Alene and Hayden.

"By definition, if it's an emergency, the Forest Service is supposed to go to the Council on Environmental Quality — especially if they want to go around the National Environmental Policy Act requirement," said Lew Persons, executive director of the Lands Council. "They didn't do it and declared an emergency. They broke the law."

The Forest Service says the environmentalists are confused about emergency exemptions. The agency only has to go to the president's council if it wants permission to skip a full-scale environmental analysis, with public comment.

But in the Idaho case, forest managers simply have asked for permission to start logging before all appeals are resolved because of extreme fire hazard in the urban-forest interface, Forest Service officials in Washington, D.C., said.

The project encompasses as much as 170 million board feet of timber — enough wood to build 17,000 homes — on some 24,300 acres in the Colville and Panhandle national forests.

But, for the moment, the legal wrangling only covers about 20 percent of the project, all of it in the Idaho Panhandle.

A judge is expected to rule on an injunction as early as this week.

The legal complaint also says the Forest Service is logging large Douglas fir trees under the guise of a bug and fire emergency — trees that would otherwise be protected as old growth forest.

Forest Service studies and management plans have long said that the dense stands of small trees are the ones that need to be eliminated to improve forest health, the suit says. That was never considered on this project.

Finally, the agency's analysis of the financial costs of the beetle project is flawed, the environmentalists charge.

"Without considering reasonable alternatives, or the cost/benefit trade-offs they represent, the Forest Service assumed that the only way to actively restore a forest degraded by past logging, roads and fire suppression is by more logging, roads and fire suppression," the suit says.

Wright says there are no other options.

"This has nothing to do with smaller trees," Wright said. "That's not an option the bugs are allowing us to consider. The Douglas fir beetles are selecting the larger (trees)."

Leaving them alone poses a huge risk to public and private property, and the safety of citizens and firefighters, he said.

Timber industry representatives, meanwhile, say they wonder what alternative the environmental community can offer to deal with the bugs and fire problems.

"We hear a lot of whining about what they don't like," said Jim Riley, executive director of the Intermountain Forest Industry Association. "What would be their plan?"

The Forest Service has come up with a creative, reasonable alternative, Riley said. "Perhaps it is time for reasonable people to just work together to make that happen."

Persons, of The Lands Council, says educating rural homeowners about clearing brush and trees away from their homes and changing building codes so things like cedar shake roofs aren't allowed in the forest zone is a better start.

Then the Forest Service should pull the roads, thin the trees and let nature heal itself, Persons added.

***"... the Forest Service assumed that the only way to actively restore a forest degraded by past logging, roads and fire suppression is by more logging, roads and fire suppression." – Lawsuit filed by conservationists.***

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## Federal judge blocks Boise National Forest logging

BOISE (AP) —A judge ruled the Boise National Forest prematurely launched a plan to lure destructive bark beetles to a timber parcel earmarked for logging in an effort to reduce infestations elsewhere in the forest.

U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill blocked logging for this year of almost 9,000 trees on the 365-acre Beetle Bait timber sale northeast of Lowman.

The ruling leaves in limbo the sale of 1.26 million board feet of timber to Boise Cascade Corp. for \$189,000, forest spokeswoman Jennifer Jones said.

In an order issued Thursday, Winmill agreed with environmentalists that the Forest Service improperly decided to place bait traps for beetles in the sale area before reviewing a draft environmental assessment issued for public comment on March 23.

"We're pretty disappointed with the judge's ruling because we believe that the forest in that area is at serious risk of attack by Douglas fir beetles," Jones said Friday.

Winmill said federal law requires a more extensive environmental impact statement to be prepared on "major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of human environment."

So before deciding to place the bait traps, the judge said, forest officials should have reviewed the environmental assessment to determine whether the sale might constitute a "major federal action" requiring more comprehensive study.

The environmental assessment resulted in a Forest Service finding that the sale would have no significant impact on the environment.

Boise National Forest plans called for putting out bait traps and then logging trees in the area where the beetles concentrate to get many of them out of the forest. But officials said it would only work if the trees came out before snow covers the area. If not, eggs laid by beetles that burrowed under the bark of trees this year will hatch next spring, before loggers can get into the woods, and spread outside the area.

But environmentalists led by the Idaho Sporting Congress and The Ecology Center sued, and Winmill agreed there would be no irreparable harm in delaying the harvest.

The judge cited testimony from Arthur Partridge, a University of Idaho forest disease expert and outspoken critic of salvage timber sales, who said the bait traps have not resulted in the level of beetle infestation that would require immediate logging to protect the forest.

# Agency sees money in beetles

## Logging bug-infested trees will provide funds to make forest healthy, Forest Service says

By Ken Olsen, Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE—When chain saws begin the attempted counterassault on the Douglas fir bark beetle outbreak this summer, the U.S. Forest Service expects the money will start rolling in.

The Idaho Panhandle and Colville national forests estimate they'll clear more than \$14.4 million after timber companies purchase and log enough wood to build 15,000 homes during the next three years.

That money is key to justifying the timber harvest. The Forest Service acknowledges it cannot cure the beetle malaise or totally fire-proof the forests simply by cutting trees. Logging is essential to provide money for road obliteration and forest restoration, but must be done quickly — before the dead and dying trees begin to rot, the agency says.

Critics say there's no way the Forest Service can expect to make money in a timber market soured by the downturn in the economies of Asian countries that typically buy U.S. lumber and flooded by imports from Canada, Europe and South America.

The Forest Service, meanwhile already has extensive plans for spending the proceeds.

Logging sales will pay for ripping out 67 miles of road and removing or replacing some 200 culverts prone to clogging — causing water to back up and wash out roads, Forest Service officials say. That work, sorely needed to stop roads from bleeding sediment into streams, likely won't get done for years — if ever — if the Forest Service has to rely solely on funding from Congress, they say.

In addition, the Forest Service plans to use the timber revenue to replant 5,000 of the logged acres with white pine, larch and ponderosa pine. Those trees are more fire- and bug-resistant than the Douglas fir and grand fir that have overtaken the Inland Northwest after a century of logging and fire suppression.

"I'm confident if we get back what we think we can, we can accomplish a lot of this restoration," said David Wright, supervisor of the Idaho Panhandle forests. Just leaving the dead trees increases the danger of fire and taxpayers shelling out dollars to fight them, he said.

"I'm not going to have another opportunity like this, I'm sure, to make this many needed improvements in a road system I can't maintain," said Dan Dallas, ranger of the Colville's Newport District.

Even the Forest Service acknowledges this ambitious restoration roster won't happen if the timber sales don't make money. Many people, from historians to number crunchers say, there's no reason for optimism.

General Accounting Office reviews show the Panhandle National Forest lost \$50 million from 1992 to 1997 said Bob Wolf, retired

forester and GAO auditor. The Colville did only slightly better, losing \$43 million during that same period.

Timber sale appeals and environmental regulations can't be blamed Wolf said, because from 1995-97 most logging was done under the Salvage Rider — which prohibited appeals and waived most environmental regulations.

"They are inflating what they are going to take in and making it worse by not telling you all of what it's going to cost," Wolf said.

When the sawdust is swept away, Wolf predicts the Panhandle and Colville will lose \$31 million on the bark beetle sale alone.

Historian Paul Hirt, of Washington State University, said he's hearing the same theme.

"The Forest Service always claims it's making money and it's always wrong," Hirt said. "The moneymaking sales were sold a long time ago and we can safely assume what's left is economically

***"They are inflating what they are going to take in and making it worse by not telling you all of what it's going to cost," Robert Wolf said. When the sawdust is swept away, Wolf predicts the Panhandle and Colville will lose \$31 million on the bark beetle sale alone.***

marginal."

However, if the trees are big enough and there aren't too many roads to build, there is a chance the Forest Service will break even on the sales, Hirt said.

Richard Haynes, a respected economist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Pacific Northwest Research Station, said those two factors and the sheer size of the timber sales, may help boost the price the Panhandle and Colville forests bring in.

"If you have a large volume like that, you can get more people to bid on it because you can run mills off of it," Haynes said. The sales will "help some mills eke out another year or two before the inevitable shutdown."

Larger timber sales also are more economical to log. Bidders will include "folks that don't operate in that area normally," Haynes said.

There are cautions, however. Canadians and southeastern U.S. mills continue to be competitive with Inland Northwest mills, pushing prices and profitability down.

Fewer bidders may be attracted to such salvage sales given the Forest Service's new policy of not offering some live timber with salvage sales to make the sales more attractive to buyers, Haynes said.

Because of the Asian economic problems, large timber producers such as Weyerhaeuser Co. can't export their premium Douglas fir logs overseas. Instead, they are running them through their domestic mills further depressing prices for the beetle-killed trees.

When it's all added up, "we won't make as much money on the (trees) as we would have a year or two ago," Haynes said.

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# Red in the Forest: Loss to Taxpayers

By Robert E. Wolf, Fellow, Society of American Foresters

## Recognizing Financial Realities

It is foolish to pretend that this project is cost-effective. . . .

[The following are excerpts of an economic analysis prepared by Robert Wolf and sent to Dave Wright, Supervisor, Idaho Panhandle National Forests and to Robert Vaught, Supervisor, Colville National Forest, on June 22, 1999.

If the reality is that past practices have led to the current crisis, then the lack of [1] solid cost estimates, [2] setting priorities for corrections, and [3] a well articulated plan for correcting defined problems, is going to create another round of problems that will call for correction in the future.

Robert Wolf is a forester whose career spanned 45 years with the U.S. Forest Service, BLM, Bureau of the Budget under Eisenhower, the U.S. Senate, and the Congressional Research Service. Wolf participated in writing the 1960 Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act, the 1964 Wilderness Act, the 1974 Resources Planning Act, and the 1976 National Forest Management Act.]

***"For 1992 GAO data show the Idaho Panhandle lost \$623/acre cut. By 1997 the Idaho Panhandle loss had doubled to \$1,251 per acre cut. The Colville loss rose 31% from \$1,479/acre to a loss of \$1,936 per acre in 1997."***

Dear Mr. Wright and Vaught:

***"Losses per acre of this magnitude should be a cause for concern."***

I've examined the IPH-Colville Douglas fir Beetle FEIS and have these reactions.

***"It is foolish to pretend that this project is cost-effective."***

The FEIS has much good basic material. Staff did a tremendous job. These Forests deserve a timber sale, resource action and financial plan that has a high likelihood that it will achieve the objectives staff has outlined. Neither Forest will realize them because, in its present form, the proposal has serious shortcomings, which I'll outline. . . .

***"Losing money isn't the sin. It's pretending [that losing money] isn't happening when it's a chronic, recurring condition." – Robert Wolf***

## The Financial Situation

The 2 GAO studies (237FS and 99-24) for the 6 years 1992-1997, give a conservative cash flow picture, which is consistent with budget realities. 6 years is long enough to provide a reasonable picture of financial events.

	IPH	Colville
Acres Cut	56,010	26,005
MBF Cut	710,427	304,033
Dollar Net	-\$50,732,934	-\$43,397,514
Net Per MBF Cut	-\$ 71.41	-\$ 142.71
Net Per Acre Cut	-\$906	-\$1,665

For 1992 the GAO data shows that the IPH lost -\$623/acre cut. By 1997 the IPH loss had doubled to -\$1,251 per acre cut. The Colville loss rose 31% from -\$1,479/acre to a loss of -\$1,936 per acre in 1997. Losses per acre of this magnitude should be a cause for concern. . . .

## Facing Reality

The time has long past when the Service should pretend that there is no requirement in law that timber sales receipts cover the sale outlays. . . .

Remarkably the 1995 Salvage Rider was first and only time authority to lose money on timber sales was put into law: Subsection (c)(5) said, "...sales are to be offered whether or not revenues derived from the sales are likely to exceed the sales' costs."

This was the work of Cong. Taylor (R-NC), the Rider's author, who at the same time was carelessly boasting on the House Floor that with his Rider that there would be "... tens of billions of dollars of revenue coming to the Treasury. . .", as he contended that his bill was "... a very positive revenue producer. . . ." (H 3231, 1995).

The Rider sales lost millions, as anyone with the slightest familiarity with genuine salvage sales knew was likely. Even the Forest Service knew this was even the prevalent condition for green sales on most National Forests.

Losing money isn't the sin. It's pretending it isn't happening when it's a chronic, recurring condition. Loss control and cost management would serve the resources better.

My recommendation is to adopt a Plan of Action that makes ecologic, social and financial sense. It would become a model for improved management.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Wolf  
Fellow, Society of American Foresters



# Big Timber the welfare queen has hungry maws to feed

**The true measure of our taxpayer-funded public assistance burden can be delineated in board feet and in miles of forest-debilitating roads built, Fred Glienna charges.**

By Fred Glienna, Special to Roundtable

We in Eastern Washington and Idaho are blessed with some of our country's best forests.

We need to remember that the national forests are ours, not industry's, and that it is in the best interest of future generations to demand from the U.S. Forest Service more accountability and much better management.

The Forest Service does a good job in many ways of keeping our forests open and healthy, and it has many educational programs and replanting programs which contribute to appreciation of and a healthy future for these natural, national assets. Unfortunately, it also — way too easily and sometimes with added pressure from Congress — caves in to the timber industry's demand for a fatter bottom line.

There are more than 360,000 miles of logging roads in our national forests, more than eight times the total of the interstate highway system.

How those roads are built and paid for is a lesson in circular government logic which mocks taxpayers as it rips them off.

The logging industry, not the Forest Service or the taxpayer, builds the roads and charges the Forest Service for them. The Forest Service then "pays" the logging industry in trees cut. Although the roads are primarily for the benefit the loggers, the Forest Service says the roads "add to the capital value of the forest." Most environmentalists counterclaim that the roads add to soil erosion, befoul the water and threaten wildlife. Thus, we are losing, usually at less than fair market value, valuable trees to pay for roads which harm the forests and which exist only so trees can be cut.

The bark beetle infestation in this area is a recent example of a crisis shaped more by private profit than for public benefit. Forest scientists, entomologists, and environmentalists have maintained that the cyclical recurrence of beetle infestations is inevitable, no matter what we do. The critters, in part due to weather, in part due to their natural cycle, are in high number now. The timber industry has generously tried to do its part in controlling the insects by doing salvage logging.

Timber executives prefer salvage logging because the practice bypasses open, competitive bidding and provides a windfall of large, older-growth trees that otherwise might be barred from being harvested.

Though the timber industry for 40 years has referred to trees as "America's renewable resource," which on the surface is true, there is nonetheless a preference among consumers for the older giants, which are in increasingly shorter supply. Industry salespeople have told me that the older trees are better and more desirable.

I have been to a handful of public discussions and forums about the bark beetle problem. No matter how many insect experts are on the panels, the conversations soon shift to logging and the needs of big logging companies and smaller logging families. And to vague consideration of something generally described as the public good. I can infer only that the driving engine behind the bark beetle crisis is not a need to do something about the infestation, which is running its natural course in any event, but rather a chance to give the logging industry windfall profits, regardless of long-term harm to the forest.

There are many issues to consider in the current alleged crisis, such as the best way to eliminate fire risk and sustain the varied life forms that promote forest health. Many argue that the best thing to do is nothing. Many more argue that sending in chain saws is not the best response to a crisis best dealt with by experts in insect management.

I prefer to concentrate for a moment on the larger issues of public money being transferred to private gain.

The Clinton administration has tried to rein in many of the logging excesses. For instance, it has made somewhat public the formerly secretive meetings between Forest Service officials and timber company people when setting the value of a tree. And it has attempted to declare moratoriums on road construction. Still, industry reaps enormous tax breaks closed off to most other businesses and uses its public relations arm to shape the debate about what happens in our public forests.

The logging industry has received such consideration for more than 50 years. For instance, treating timber income not as regular income but as capital gains saves the industry millions of dollars a year, shifting the burden from those in it to the rest of us. Excess profits have in large measure gone into mergers and acquisitions. The resulting large debts have caused the industry to log its own trees at a faster rate, leaving our trees as delicious targets.

Author Mark Zepezauer claims that U.S. taxpayers lose \$95 million per year in new road construction in the national forests and \$332 million per year in selling our trees for less than they are worth.

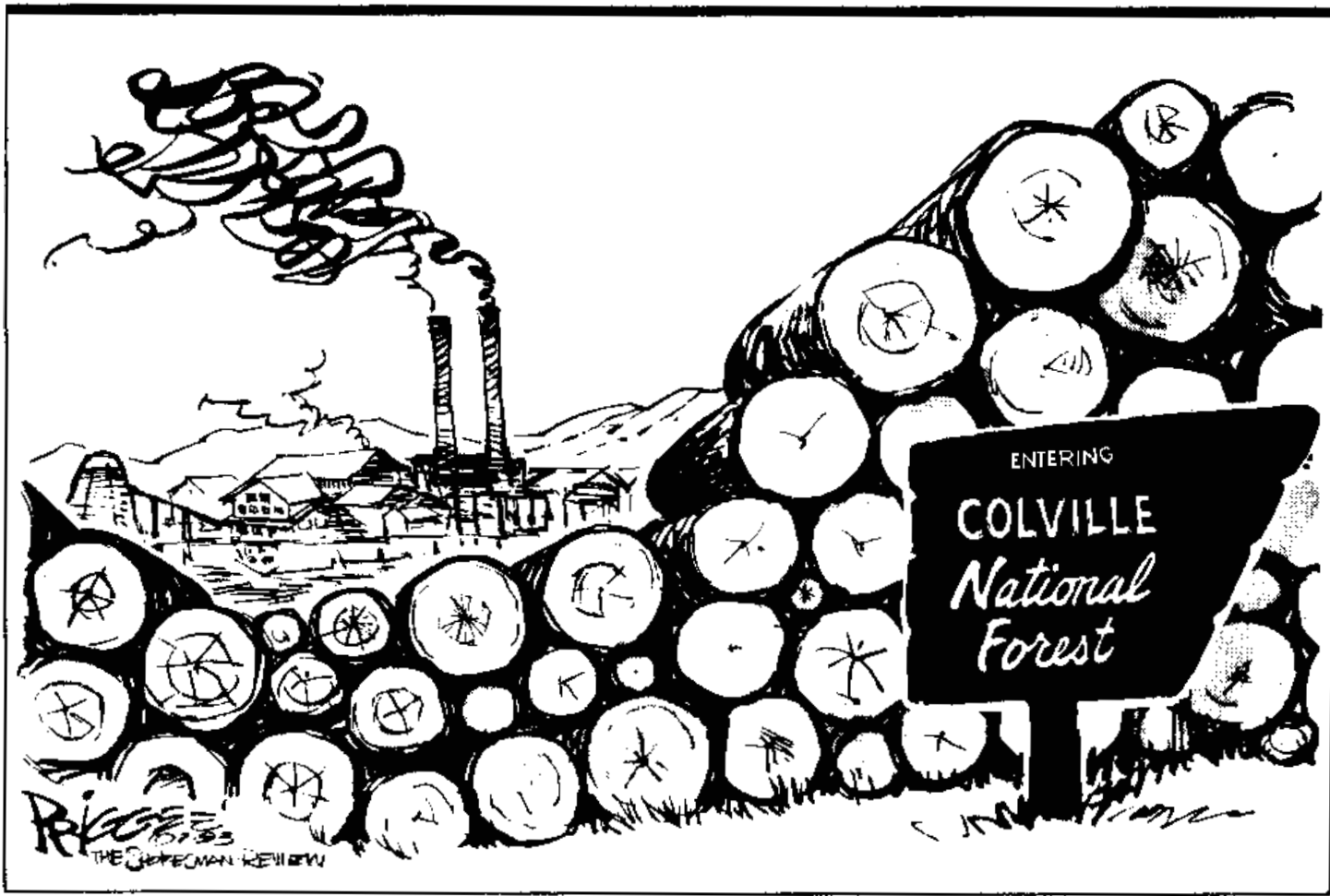
It is a social curiosity that when we discuss welfare reform in this country, we talk about reforming those at the bottom of the heap — and not the wealthiest who feast insatiably from the public trough.

*Fred Glienna, a Chicago native, now lives in Coeur d'Alene where he is president of the Kootenai County Democratic Club. He is a member of The Spokesman-Review's Board of Contributors.*

*Spokesman-Review June 13, 1999  
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Wedding of Gunnar Holmquist & Carrie Lipe at Betts Meadow Wetland Preserve, August 31, 1997. Dr. Holmquist has worked to restore this fishery and wetland. The Forest Service (Colville NF) wants to log the old growth forest above the meadow – about 6 square miles – the unroaded forest closest to Spokane. In stark contrast Chief Dombeck says preservation of water quality and fisheries are the top priority of the Forest Service.



# Claims to Virtue

By Derrick Jensen. (Originally published in 1995.)

There's a place I know near Spokane where the clearcuts wrap around a mountain, drop into a valley, climb the nearby ridge, and cut a swath deep into the next watershed. Last fall I walked those clearcuts, past whitened slash piles of wood dead a dozen years and past the dead green limbs of this year's cut, and in ten consecutive miles I never once came within twenty yards of a live tree.

The forests of the Inland Northwest have been hammered by logging. Seventy percent of the streams in North Idaho are clogged by logging-induced sediment. Habitat damage from logging has caused Idaho to reduce the elk season in many prime hunting areas from two months to as little as two weeks. Fisheries and wildlife are in universal decline. In an attempt to pacify an increasingly outraged public while still cutting the forests, the Forest Service has long since taken to calling old-growth trees "overmature" or "decadent," and has recently begun to call clearcuts "temporary meadows." In Idaho and possibly elsewhere, the Forest Service has been known to keep two sets of computer inventories, one containing the number of trees actually standing,

the other containing grossly inflated numbers and claiming there are thick forests where in actuality there are clearcuts or meadows. The Forest Service has used this second inventory, known as a phantom forest, for public consumption and to feed the computer programs that tell forest sale planners how many trees to sell.

Computer models notwithstanding, it has become impossible to hide the logging-induced damage from anyone who walks in the forest. Now, in a campaign as disingenuous, blatant, and nonsensical as anything in Orwell's 1984, transnational timber companies and the Forest Service are attempting to use the

damaged state of the forests to justify further cutting. Timber industry organizations are flooding the media in Appalachia, the Southwest, and here in the Inland Northwest with advertisements and press releases saying that the only way to keep the forests from dying is through a massive and immediate program of cutting. Significantly, the advertisements fail to mention that industrial forestry is the cause of the forest's problems in the first place.

Recently, the Forest Service assisted the timber industry by redefining "forest health." According to the Forest Service's new definition, forest health has nothing to do with the presence or absence of fish or wildlife, and in fact has nothing to do with timber extraction: "A desired state of forest health is a condition where

*The forests of the Inland Northwest have been hammered by logging.*

*The only difficult cognitive task in this whole business is understanding how so many people could involve themselves in a plan so blatantly and absurdly destructive as attempting to use massive logging to fix logging-induced damage.*



Spokesman-Review August 24, 1990. Copyright 1990, The Spokesman-Review. Used with permission of The Spokesman-Review.



biotic and abiotic influences do not threaten resource management objectives now or in the future.”

Western politicians such as Larry Craig are currently helping the timber industry in this plan by attempting to legislatively provide “exemptions from environmental laws for logging needed to improve forest health.”

It doesn’t take a cognitive giant to see that if this logging were truly “needed to improve forest health” there would be no need to exempt it from environmental laws. In fact the only difficult cognitive task in this whole business is understanding how so many people could involve themselves in a plan so blatantly and absurdly destructive as attempting to use massive logging to fix logging-induced damage. Fortunately, though, the work of Dr. Robert Jay Lifton, the world’s foremost authority on the psychology of genocide and mass destruction, provides a clue toward understanding this otherwise incomprehensible plan.

Before you can commit any act of mass destruction you must convince yourself and others that your activity is not in fact destructive but instead beneficial. You must, as Lifton has made clear, have a “claim to virtue.” This was true of the Crusaders, who killed, looted, and raped their way across southern Europe and the Near East under the banner of purifying the holy lands, and it was true as well of the nazis, who murdered six million Jews and millions of others in an effort to revitalize the “Nordic race.” It is true today of the big timber corporations, the Forest Service, and many western politicians.

The forests of this continent have long suffered under “claims to virtue.” The early European colonists, on their arrival in North America, saw it as their task to Christianize the natives and to make a profit on the side. Captain John Chester put it succinctly: the natives were to gain “the knowledge of our faith,” while the Europeans would acquire “such riches as the country hath.” These “riches” included the dense forests of New England. Under the claim to virtue of spreading the Christian faith, the colonists committed genocide, and at the same time cut down these native forests.

Soon the claim to Christianization was dropped, and the rationalization for the destructiveness became “Manifest Destiny,” the tenet that the territorial expansion of the United States was not only inevitable but divinely ordained. Before the United States could expand, however, the land’s original inhabitants had to be removed. This necessitated destroying hundreds of human cultures and killing or placing on reservations millions of human beings. It also necessitated killing between 45 and 70 million buffalo and more than 20 million pronghorn antelope. At this time the native forests of the Midwest fell to the axe.

Manifest Destiny as a claim to virtue soon evolved into the ideal of making money. An enterprise was deemed to be good if it was

profitable, no matter the destruction it caused. Under the new motivation the native forests once again suffered: A publicist for Northern Pacific, the company that eventually spawned Weyerhaeuser, Potlatch, Boise Cascade, and Plum Creek, described

the forests as “a rich heiress waiting to be appropriated and enjoyed.” For more than a century these timber companies have appropriated and enjoyed this region’s forests, until today the combined worth of these corporations is well over \$20 billion.

As the effects of industrial forestry have become increasingly clear – as the fisheries have collapsed, the biodiversity been decimated, the communities fragmented, and the once-rich forests

converted to tree-farms – corporate profitability has lost its effectiveness as a claim to virtue. The big timber corporations have had to take to heart the words of the psychologist R.D. Laing: “Exploitation must not be seen as such. It must be seen as benevolence.”

This is where “forest health,” as prescribed by timber companies and the Forest Service, comes into play. One of a spate of recent timber industry advertisements, for example, shows two

pictures, one containing a few standing trees and the other showing the aftermath of a forest fire. The caption states, “One of these Idaho forests was selectively logged in 1994. . . . One of them wasn’t,” implying that logging creates a healthy forest and the lack of logging creates destructive forest fires. This implication is misleading on two counts; the multibillion dollar corporate sponsors are ignoring both the natural role of fire in these forests and the fact that many of the biggest fires of 1994 burned through areas that had already been roaded and logged. The advertisement continues by making the even more misleading claim that “appropriate harvesting is essential to the survival of forests, wildlife, and our way of life.” This statement ignores, of course, the millennia these forests (including the wildlife that make them up) have survived without the assistance of a single chainsaw.

The advertisements contain even more significant problems, however. The first is that the fires that occurred in north-central Washington, central Idaho, and other areas during 1994 were not the catastrophic events that corporations and the Forest Service have portrayed them to be and that have been exploited by the media as such. In most places the fires burned slowly, creating small openings and snags, diversifying habitat and providing nutrients to the soil. When viewed from a landscape perspective, these fires

were exactly what the forest needed, and were well within intensity levels to be expected after extended drought, industrial logging, sloppy disposal of slash piles, and fifty years of fire suppression. The fires were painful in terms of loss of human life, as well as economically expensive, but to continue to depict forest fires as bad or purely destructive, as the timber corporations are doing,

***Before you can commit any act of mass destruction you must convince yourself and others that your activity is not in fact destructive but instead beneficial. You must, as Lifton has made clear, have a “claim to virtue.”***

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***“Exploitation must not be seen as such. It must be seen as benevolence.”***

***The Forest Service justifies cutting these admittedly healthy trees on the grounds that if left standing they may someday get sick.***

is to perpetuate a falsehood that leads to shortsighted “solutions” that have proved time and again to be mistakes. Fires, a natural occurrence, must not be used as a justification to log off, thin out, or otherwise diminish the biological potential of the forest to bring itself back to a balanced state.

In using the “forest health” ploy, the timber industry is merely following a trend the Forest Service began in the 1980s.

Forest Service timber sale planners have for years regularly proposed huge timber sales under the pretext of improving forest health. One not-atypical example should suffice: the reasoning for the recent Upper Sunday Timber Sale (which targets mainly mature and old growth trees, and includes over a square mile of glorified clearcuts) is that “while insect and disease populations are currently at endemic levels, there is a potential for spruce bark beetle populations to reach epidemic proportions.” In other words, the Forest Service justifies cutting these admittedly healthy trees on the grounds that if left standing they may someday get sick.

The aforementioned Larry Craig is not the only Senator helping the transnational timber corporations to access the National Forests. Western Senators such as Bob Packwood (\$101,000 in timber PAC money between 1987-1994), Mark Hatfield (\$90,786), and Slade Gorton (\$83,679) seek to improve

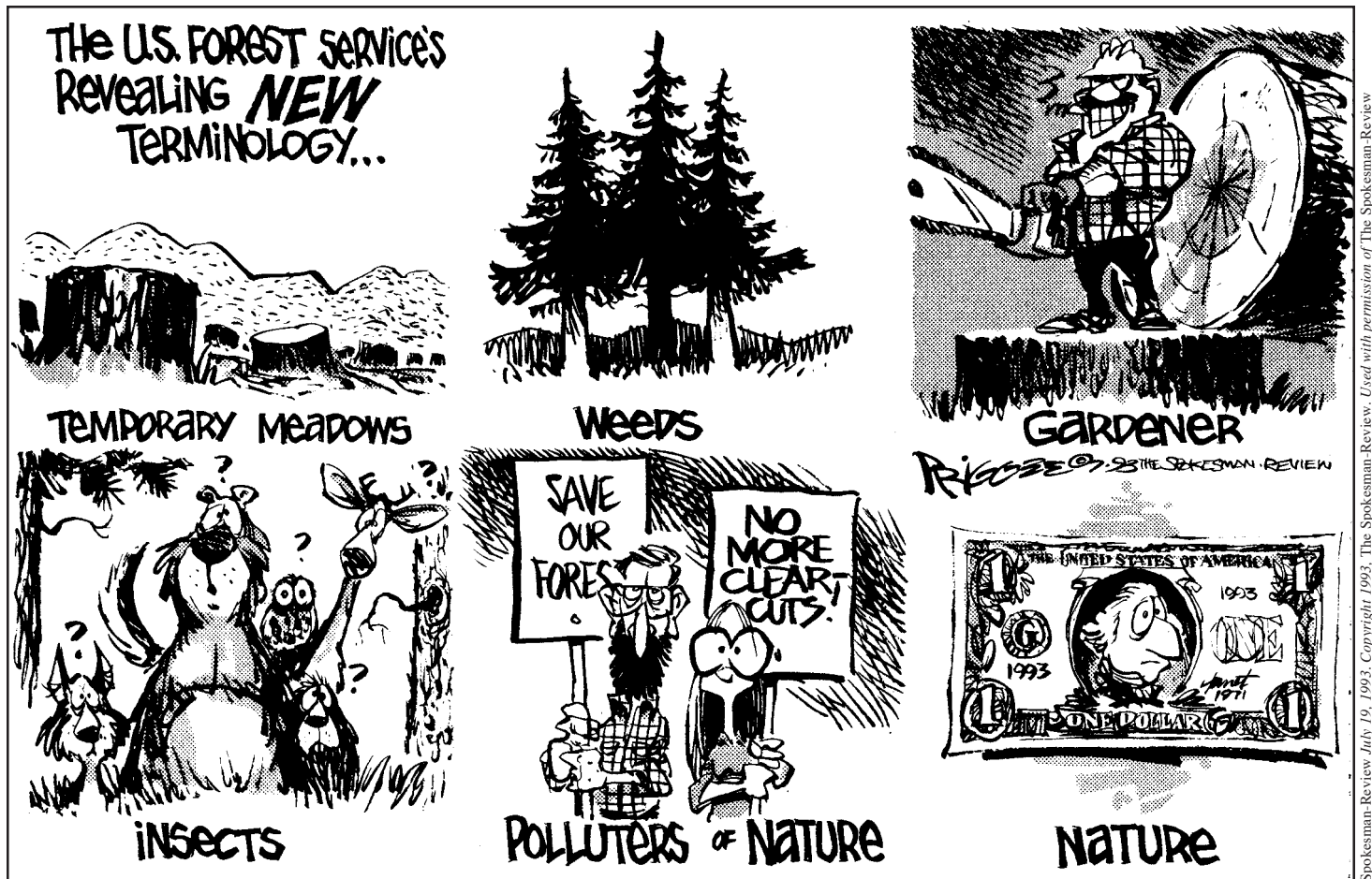
forest health, so they say, by exempting many Forest Service sales not only from environmental regulations but also from citizen oversight.

It’s all insane. Whether it was medieval crusaders looting for the greater glory of god, nazis murdering Jews for the sake of the master race, or transnational corporations cutting trees for the sake of forest health, the result is the same: massive and inexcusable destruction. And it is the inexcusable nature of the destructive activity itself that necessitates the perpetrator make a claim to a higher good. This claim, then, is a mask to conceal one’s real intent from one’s victims and especially from oneself. As has been made clear by Lifton, none of the physicians selecting prisoners to be gassed at Auschwitz would have been able to live with themselves or would have been able to perform as cogs in the nazi machine of destruction had they not

been able to convince themselves they were acting in the best interests of the world, and even in some cases in the best interests of the Jews themselves.

Take, for example, the nazi physicians’ use of phenol to control tuberculosis, typhus, and other contagious diseases. Children, adults who had long been on the medical block, and other inmates who were ill or had the potential to become ill

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were selected for injection. The physician or technician filled the syringe from the phenol bottle and thrust the needle into the heart of the patient, emptying the contents of the syringe. Most patients fell dead almost immediately, although some lived for seconds or even minutes. The physicians – “healers” – killed their patients ostensibly to prevent the outbreak of disease.

So it was in Germany, so it is in the forests today. It is easy to marvel at the way individual nazis, and indeed an entire nation, provided themselves with moral justification for murder; the nazi credo stands as a testament to the human capacity for self-deception. It is more difficult, however, to see this same process of justification at work in our own culture. None of this is to say that the destruction of the forests is identical to the Holocaust; it is to say that both activities involve mass destruction taking place under the guise of benevolence.

The “forest health” advertising campaign, absurd as it may be, has so far been successful at confusing the public. How has this happened?

The first answer is that these companies are very wealthy and are effective at using that wealth to subvert public process. This was recognized at least as long ago as 1940, when Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace wrote, “In a democracy, individual understanding of problems and an aroused public opinion are essential to constructive action. It is my considered judgment that in the Northwest true understanding of the forest problems and the development of an aroused public opinion have been delayed mainly by the hired men of the forest industries who have been adroit in issuing misleading propaganda.” He continued, “Actually the purpose is to justify with some kind of rationalization cutting practices dictated by conventional and short-term investment and dividend considerations. These, and not good forestry practice based on public interest, are the determining considerations.”

The same subversion of democracy happens today, whether in the form of the “jobs versus owls” debate, in which the public was bombarded with the number of jobs lost to habitat preservation but never exposed to the far greater number of jobs lost because of raw log exportation or mill automation, or whether it is the current debate over forest health, in which everyone encounters paid timber industry advertisements but few hear the voices of conservation biologists.

There is another reason that few question the claims of the timber corporations: to do so would inevitably lead to increasingly difficult questions about the role of our governmental representatives in the destruction of the forests, and to questions

about the sustainability of our industrial way of life. I recently asked Grey Reynolds, deputy to Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas, “If we discover that industrial forestry is indeed incompatible with biodiversity, what then?” His one sentence response – “What do you want us to do, live in mud huts?” – was revealing in its dismissiveness. Ask yourself the question Grey Reynolds refused to answer: If we discover that industrial forestry is incompatible with biodiversity, what then?

And then ask yourself another: How do we stop the destruction of the forests? As a partial answer, I would like to return once more to Robert Jay Lifton and his study of nazi doctors. Lifton found that most of the nazi doctors he studied were ordinary people: “Neither brilliant nor stupid, neither inherently evil nor particularly ethically sensitive, they were by no means the demonic figures – sadistic, fanatic, lustful to kill – people have often thought them to be.” These ordinary human beings became killers precisely because they never asked themselves how to stop the destructiveness that was Auschwitz’s *raison d’être*, and instead adapted themselves to Auschwitz and to the committing of

atrocities. They adapted themselves – and this is as true today for all of us who participate in a culture that is destroying the forests as it was centuries ago for those who participated in the Crusades – by claiming to themselves and to others that their own actions were virtuous. So the first step toward stopping the destruction is to recognize that it is in fact

destruction. Industrial forestry destroys forests. Ask any conservation biologist, or anyone who hunts or fishes. Better yet, walk the clearcuts yourself.

As you’re walking, ask: What is the appropriate response to a government willing to lie and to destroy our natural heritage to further enrich transnational corporations? What is the appropriate response to Larry Craig’s so-called Forest Health

Bill, an act which simultaneously destroys forests, democracy, and integrity? If our governmental system, and the transnational corporations it represents, are destructive of life, liberty, and truth, what options are left to

concerned and responsible citizens? We must recognize that we have the power to stop the destructiveness. The question is—when are we going to exercise it?

*Derrick Jensen is author of Listening to the Land and Railroads & Clearcuts: Legacy of Congress’s 1864 Northern Pacific Railroad Land Grant. Jensen is also a founding member of the Railroads & Clearcuts Campaign.*

***“In a democracy, individual understanding of problems and an aroused public opinion are essential to constructive action. It is my considered judgment that in the Northwest true understanding of the forest problems and the development of an aroused public opinion have been delayed mainly by the hired men of the forest industries who have been adroit in issuing misleading propaganda.”***

***What is the appropriate response to a government willing to lie and to destroy our natural heritage to further enrich transnational corporations?***

***We must recognize that we have the power to stop the destructiveness.***



# The Douglas Fir Beetle Project DEIS

**By Timothy Ingalsbee, Ph.D.**

Director, Western Fire Ecology Center

[The following is an excerpt of a review by Dr. Ingalsbee of the draft EIS for the bark beetle plan .]

## CONCLUSION

The DEIS fails to disclose significant scientific controversy over the agency's preferred fuels management strategies and methods, and fails to offer any plan in its range of alternatives that would implement the Federal Fire Management Policy and provide for landscape-scale prescribed burning as an authentic ecosystem restoration activity. The result is that the rationale for the preferred alternative is seriously deficient in analysis, and risks being arbitrary and capricious for failure to consider the best fire science and current federal policies.

Finally, though one of the alleged purpose and needs is "vegetation restoration," the DEIS fails to disclose that its preferred technique — commercial salvage logging — is a completely unproven, experimental method for restoring historic vegetation. We challenge the agency to identify any ecosystem in the West whose ecological processes, structures, compositions,

functions, or native flora and fauna have been successfully restored through salvage logging. On the contrary, commercial and salvage logging coupled with aggressive fire suppression and systematic fire exclusion are the prime agents of ecological degradation throughout the West.

The Beetle Project precedes, if not precludes, the development of an ecologically and economically sound restoration strategy that reintroduces fire. A new fire restoration alternative needs to be developed and selected in the FEIS. If the Responsible Official goes forward and selects one of the current action alternatives with the flawed analyses and incomplete documentation of the current DEIS, then s/he will certainly be putting the Project at risk of administrative appeals, citizen lawsuits, and more.

Our best advice is to shelve the entire Beetle Project unless and until the Idaho Panhandle and Colville National Forests are ready, willing, and able to develop new fire management plans in compliance with the Federal Fire Management Policy. The staff of the Western Fire Ecology Center offers our assistance as partners in fire management planning should the agency decide to take that wise course of action.

*The Idaho Panhandle is already the most heavily damaged of America's National Forests. The Forest Service is "claiming virtue" in proposing a massive new logging operation here.*



Jeff Green, New York Times Pictures

# Joseph W. Fox, Ph.D., J.D., Firefighter

## Comments On Insect Outbreaks, Fuel Hazards, And Wildfire Risk Douglas Fir Beetle (DFB) Project, Idaho Panhandle National Forests

[The following is an excerpt of a review by Dr. Fox of the draft EIS for the bark beetle plan.]

My comments pertain to insect outbreak risks, fire risks, and fuel hazards. Specifically, my comments concern the agency's failure to adequately disclose the scientific uncertainty inherent in the evaluations used and adequately disclose the biological and ecosystem risks intrinsic to the harvest methods proposed. Also, the Forest Service makes conclusory statement insufficiently supported by data and fails to adequately disclose common knowledge found in the community of experts and scientists and research published in professional journals.

### My criticisms include the following.

1) The Forest Service failed to adequately disclose the methods, and concomitant scientific uncertainty, used in establishing a risk analysis of stands and a Douglas-fir beetle hazard ratings.

2) The Forest Service failed to adequately disclose that the DFB DEIS [Draft Environmental Impact Statement] projected tree mortality is a conclusory statement insufficiently supported by data.

3) The Forest Service failed to adequately disclose that its assumption that Douglas-fir stand overstocking is a primary risk factor for Douglas-fir beetle outbreaks and is best addressed using harvest methods is a conclusory statement insufficiently supported by data.

4) The Forest Service failed to adequately disclose that the harvest methods proposed may increase the risk of prolonging the Douglas-fir beetle outbreak and increase the incidence of root disease.

5) The Forest Service failed to adequately disclose that silvicultural and direct control responses to insect outbreaks are often considered controversial and disputed by the community of experts and scientists.

6) The Forest Service failed to adequately disclose that its assumption that the current Douglas-fir beetle outbreak will increase severe wildfire risk is rigorously disputed by common knowledge found in the community of experts and scientists and research published in professional journals.

– March 10, 1999

*Clearcut & slash pile – Idaho Panhandle National Forests – watershed of Wolf Lodge Creek and Lake Coeur d'Alene. Mike Mihelich of the Kootenai Environmental Alliance (KEA) provides scale for one of many piles of slash to be burned.*



The Lands Council photo archives.



# Idaho's Panhandle Lives With a Deadly Legacy

## Reckless Logging, Toxic Mining Wastes, '100-Year' Floods

In a single day of flooding in 1996, the raging Coeur d'Alene River carried a million pounds of lead into Idaho's Lake Coeur d'Alene. The lead came from toxic waste dumped by mining companies into the Coeur d'Alene River's South Fork. Excessive logging on the north fork of the river is the main source of floods. When these two branches come together, so do logging and mining, which are the genesis of the toxic floods in Idaho's Panhandle region.

These activities have a long history of environmental destruction in the region. In 1884, a rich lead-silver vein was discovered near the town of Wallace. Other veins were discovered and exploited, until Idaho's "Silver Valley" became one of the world's leading suppliers of silver and lead. The dangers to surrounding communities became clear nearly 70 years ago. In 1929, the *Coeur d'Alene Press* began a series of articles on mining pollution. In 1932, a scientist with the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries noted that "as far as fisheries are concerned, the mine wastes . . . have reduced the 50 miles [of the Coeur d'Alene River] . . . to a barren stream practically without fish, fauna, food, or plankton, end with enormous lateral supplies of potentially toxic materials which as they now stand will continue to poison the waters of the Coeur d'Alene River for a considerable period of time."

Despite such warnings, mining companies continued to dump mine waste into the waters of the Coeur d'Alene until 1968. Abandoned tailings piles continue to release more toxic metals into the system each year.

Today, over 165 billion pounds of contaminated mining and smelter waste have entered the Coeur d'Alene system. Toxic sediments cover the bottom of Lake Coeur d'Alene. A glass of water taken from the river may look clear, but in times of flooding that water contains heavy metals such as lead, mercury, cadmium, zinc and arsenic greatly exceeding safe drinking water standards. Signs posted along these waterways issue health warnings: "The Lower Coeur d'Alene River and lateral lakes are contaminated with lead and other metals from mine tailings. Small children are at greatest risk. To protect your health: Avoid breathing dust and touching the soil and mud; Wash hands before eating and serving foods; Do not eat large amounts of fish, waterfowl or aquatic plants; Do not drink water from the river or lakes."

Unfortunately, birds and other wildlife are blind to these signs. Nearby wetlands are called "killing fields" by biologists because mine wastes cover thousands of acres and the lead has killed thousands of migrating tundra swans.

Logging transformed the Idaho Panhandle national forests—the St. Joe, the Kaniksu and the Coeur d'Alene national forests—into the region's "timber basket." As the Forest Service signed off on one destructive timber sale after another, the Panhandle's forest ecosystem has died a death by a thousand cuts. People zipping along the Interstate or the river road that winds along the north fork won't see the clearcuts behind the deceptive "beauty

strips." But these thin curtains of trees are not a substitute for an intact forest watershed. Illusions don't hold back floods.

There is no doubt that irresponsible logging causes floods. Numerous studies have shown that flooding and increased water yield are byproducts of present and historical rates and methods of logging. In addition, the Panhandle's forested hillsides are vulnerable to "rain-on-snow" events. Snow accumulates during the winter, then a warm, maritime Pacific storm drops rain on the snow, melting it.

Logging roads create and worsen flood events. Studies show that roads are a very significant source of erosion and consequent sedimentation of streams. According to one hydrologist and forestry instructor, 99 percent of the sediment that enters water is the result of road construction and activity conducted too close to the riparian zones. A complex of nearly 10,000 miles of logging roads has been built in the Idaho Panhandle national forests.

"Hundred-year" floods are now occurring with deadly, destructive frequency. The bitter irony is that abundant warnings against overcutting and roadbuilding went unheeded for so long. The connection between overcutting and floods was well understood in the last century, and was a primary reason for creating the forest system in the first place. As early as the 1960s, Forest Service hydrologists in the Idaho Panhandle warned of severe flood risk from overcutting in rain-on-snow zones. These Forest Service watershed scientists were transferred out of Idaho; others took early retirement.

Prompted by scientists' warnings, citizens have become actively involved. They challenged the adequacy of the Panhandle Plan in 1987, only to have their appeal rejected years later. They then turned to scrutinizing individual timber sales. In response, the Forest Service crippled the timber sale appeals process in 1994. Congress went further the following year by suspending the appeals process—and environmental laws—with the so-called salvage rider.

The Forest Service continues logging and road construction despite the worsening floods and degraded condition of the Coeur d'Alene River. The Yellow Dog-Downey timber sale is but one example of the spurious reasoning the Forest Service employs to justify continued overcutting. The Forest Service has sold this major timber sale in one of the most overcut drainages of the north fork. The agency claims it must cut the trees to pay for removal of old logging roads and to improve timber stand health. The Yellow Dog-Downey timber sale includes building over a mile of new logging road and reconstructing and reconditioning (clearing and grading) nearly 50 miles of existing roads, which already average 8.2 miles per square mile in the project area.

Despite many decades of citizen concern and involvement, the Coeur d'Alene watershed remains in jeopardy.

"Stewardship or Stumps? National Forests at the Crossroads", SIERRA CLUB, June 4, 1997





*Clearcuts in the forested watershed of the Coeur d'Alene River. Deceiving the public while deliberately destroying the Idaho Panhandle National Forests – the cumulative effect of Beetlemania and past decisions – provide an excellent teaching case on forests and ethics.*

## Beetle project waste of money

The Douglas fir bark beetle project is just another way for man to mess with nature. Don't you think we've messed up this planet enough?

Ice Storm '96 brought dead and dying trees that increased the bark beetle population. Man didn't do it, nature did. The only reason they want to log 153 million board feet is to make a profit. Clear-cutting dramatically increases the water runoff and soil erosion which will harm Hayden and Priest lakes.

The beetles do not spread as rapidly as the Forest Service would have us believe and outbreaks only last two to three years. So why not keep the forest the way nature intended it to be? They need to widen their views on this project because they think the only answer is to cut, but all it's really doing is destroying our forests and lakes.

In '97, taxpayers had to pay \$1,230 per acre to clearcut the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. The bark beetle project is a waste of our money and of our forests. The forest belongs to everyone and is for everyone to enjoy. Work on this project should stop immediately.

– Charissa A. Gage, Greenacres Junior High

Spokesman-Review March 24, 1999  
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## Logging, desecrating, not the way

Panhandle Forest Supervisor Dave Wright's "input" may be "sensible," according to D.F. Oliveria's Feb. 20 editorial, but it has no ecological value and even less aesthetic accountability. The quality of life that sensible people enjoy, and which draws many others to this region, is directly related to the quality of the environment.

Of course, Oliveria views forests from a purely materialistic-economic standpoint. Yes, enough trees, 30,000 truckloads, could be cut to "build a town the size of Coeur d'Alene." But at what cost?

It doesn't matter how many or what kind of trees will be replanted. The Forest Service and timber industry cannot log without permanently disfiguring the mountains and the very beauty that makes Idaho what it is. The beetles, microbes, plants and animals comprising this forest ecosystem have managed it from time immemorial. In the process, they have left no ugly scars to intrude upon the beauty of the land. Logging will not "ensure healthier forests for future generations," as Oliveria claims. A forest, like a work of art, can't be desecrated and made healthy (ugly would be the correct word).

Drive I-90 between Kellogg and Mullan to see the disappointing aesthetic effects of logging to communities in this area. Logging will destroy the priceless beauty of this region as it has so many others, and degrade the human spirit as much as the land itself. People of conscience and sensibility will lament this insidious act for generations to come. With Bobbi Dalton (Feb. 21), let's "fight these corporate bullies."

– Frederick K. Bardelli, Osburn, Idaho

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# Time to End Commercial Logging in the National Forests

By John Osborn, M.D.

For over 15 years citizens in our region have worked within the laws and through public processes to end damaging logging operations on federal forests. Our experience? Laws interfering with getting out “the cut” are flouted, suspended, or gutted. Corporate plunder has replaced law and order on our National Forests.

When Teddy Roosevelt established millions of acres of National Forests, he did so to keep these forests out of the hands of timber syndicates. From the beginning there was debate on how best to protect and preserve these forests. Central to this debate has always been the question: is commercial logging consistent with the mission of America’s federal forests?

The debate is often personified by two great Americans, John Muir and Gifford Pinchot. Muir, the farmboy and naturalist who founded the Sierra Club, advocated keeping the National Forests forever wild to ensure that Americans always have clean rivers and lakes, wildlife, and forests. Pinchot, a forester-politician trained in Europe, believed that the National Forests could be preserved through uses that included logging — so long as logging was scientifically sound and showed profit.

Today the dreams of both Muir and Pinchot lie in the ditches next to the costly 380,000 miles of logging roads bulldozed into the mountains of the National Forest system. Their dreams are buried in the millions of tons of sediment that choke the spawning beds of our vanishing native trout and salmon. Logging roads and clearcuts, corporate plunder, and huge costs to taxpayers have transformed the National Forests from an American dream to nightmare.

Follow the money: Congress funds the Forest Service... the Forest Service delivers taxpayer-subsidized federal timber to the corporations... the corporations “donate” to the re-election campaigns of the politicians who fund the Forest Service. Get the picture? As the General Accounting Office pointed out in 1995, the timber program for 1992-1994 cost the taxpayers \$1 billion more than receipts. In 1996, the condition was even worse: losses exceeded \$400 million, not including damage to flooded homes, ruined hunting and fishing, and other forest values.

Upstream from Spokane and Coeur d’Alene is the Coeur d’Alene National Forest: the most heavily damaged of

America’s 156 National Forests. The Coeur d’Alene has 8,000 miles of logging roads — averaging 10 miles of logging road per square mile of forest, (in some places exceeding 20 and even 30 road miles per square mile). The North Fork, once among the region’s most popular fishing streams, is demolished from clearcuts and roads. Its floodwaters carry something “special”: lead — millions of pounds of lead — into Lake Coeur d’Alene, the Spokane River and the lives of the 500,000 people who live here. Estimated costs for restoring the North Fork: \$100 million and up.

The Kootenai National Forest, in the extreme northwest corner of Montana, is another “poster child”. While logging the 4th of July and Arbo timber sales, the Forest Service “found” an extra 12 million board feet (about 5000 board feet fit on a loaded logging truck) for the timber companies that bought the sale. When the timber

company violated the government contract by logging streamsides and trees from outside the already expanded timber sale boundaries, the Forest Service virtually looked the other way.

The Kootenai National Forest is being massively clearcut. Demolished. Plundered.

Remember the flooding in downtown Chewelah and the sandbags along Highway 395? Look upstream. First Plum Creek hammered headwater streams around Chewelah. Now the Forest Service is logging another 40 million board feet, and building/rebuilding 177 miles of roads. Expect more floods.

The Forest Service will soon celebrate the Lewis and Clark bicentennial by massively clearcutting near the historic trail on the Clearwater National Forest. Above the Lochsa River — remaining refuge to wild trout, salmon and steelhead — the federal agency is planning a 63 million board foot sale and huge clearcuts. This despite hundreds of mudslides in 1995, 1996, and 1997 that devastated the Clearwater National Forest.

Parents immediately know when they return home to find the baby-sitter abusing their child that it’s time to take action. For the National Forest, it’s time to end commercial logging and put people to work restoring the damage.

Dr. Osborn is founder of the Inland Empire Public Lands Council.

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***Get the picture?***



## Forest Service's plan illogical

The Lands Council and a coalition of forest conservation groups filed formal comments criticizing the Forest Service's plan to clearcut 5,000 acres and intensively log 20,000 acres on the Idaho Panhandle and Colville national forests. The coalition and panel of scientific experts reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Douglas Fir Bark Beetle Project in great detail, and concluded that intensive logging will do more harm than good. Common sense tells us that the forest cannot possibly be "restored" by logging, yet that is exactly what the agency is planning.

Dr. Tim Ingalsbee, fire ecologist, found that "the proposed commercial salvage logging will increase fire risks and fuel hazards, degrade ecological and social values and resources, and greatly increase the scale and cost of authentic ecosystem restoration." Dr. Joe Fox, forest entomologist, states that the Forest Service failed to meet its obligations "by ignoring science, environmental realities and public opinion." Economist Dr. Pete Morton found the economic analysis to be incomplete, stating, "if a total economic framework was used, the agency may find that the true economic value of Idaho's and Washington's national forests is in recreation, passive use benefits, watershed protection and providing habitat for native fish and wildlife."

The agency will now issue a Final Environmental Impact Statement and project decision. Anyone who submitted comments on the DEIS can appeal the decision. In the meantime, we are still waiting to see if this project will be exempted from citizen appeal allowing the chain saws to start buzzing immediately.

— Lisa Ramirez, Conservation Biologist, The Lands Council

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## USFS knows right but does wrong

The Colville and Idaho Panhandle national forests' 153 million board foot logging sale is likely the largest timber sale in the entire country. It will clearcut over 5,000 acres. The Forest Service claims it wants to do the right thing but the agency's own meeting notes state this is an opportunity to log because they "know we're not going to stop the epidemic."

Now, Forest Service supervisors have asked Forest Service Chief Michael Dombeck for a special status which would insulate the project and require logging implementation, regardless of public comment. The Forest Service has its agenda set to log. This request comes at the same time the inspector general released an evaluation of the timber sale program and found, "Specifically, the . . . environmental assessments did not include adequate analyses" and articulated the need for "immediate corrective action."

According to Dombeck's recent directive concerning restoration of damaged watersheds and protection of water quality, the Forest Service should never propose such a damaging logging operation. "Multiple use does not mean we should do everything on every acre simply because we can," said Dombeck said in Missoula recently. "We must protect the last best places and restore the rest."

As the Forest Service stated in its environmental impact statement, these beetle outbreaks have occurred historically in our forests and have been exacerbated by past Forest Service logging, fire suppression and road building. History seems to be repeating itself. Why should the public let our forests be pillaged for profit?

— Elizabeth Allen, Kettle Range Conservation Group, Republic, WA

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# Top forest boss tours Panhandle

## Agency's poster child started career near Avery

By J. Todd Foster, Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE—Jim Lyons' last visit to the Idaho Panhandle National Forests was in 1976, as a 21-year-old summer helper marking trees for sale.

On Friday, Lyons returned as President Clinton's point man for 191 million acres of federal forest land.

At 39, Lyons is the poster child for the new U.S. Forest Service.

Timber targets and rewards for getting the cut out are gone, said Clinton's assistant agriculture secretary for natural resources and environment.

Clearcuts are nearly gone. Research scientists are replacing timber sale planners. Forests will be managed for what's left, not what's taken off, Lyons said as he kicked off a three-day Idaho aerial and ground tour arranged at the request of U.S. Rep. Larry LaRocco, D-Idaho.

Lyons, who heads the Forest and Soil Conservation services, roamed the Wolf Lodge Creek drainage east of Coeur d'Alene on Friday.

He'll move up to Priest Lake today and down to Boise on Sunday.

When he's done, Lyons will have dined with city fathers in St. Maries, visited sawmills and timber workers, and been asked by impassioned environmental activists, "What's taking change so long?"

His answer Friday was that good science was a rare commodity in a politically driven agency led by two Republican administrations.

The agency is now undergoing a cultural and structural rebirth and trying to regain the public's trust, Lyons said.

The ultimate goal is determining the state of the landscape left by generations of blind timber harvesting, he said.

"Change takes time. It's not going to happen overnight," he said. "We've always done a horrible job in monitoring the impacts of management activities. We need to have a better handle on what the resource condition is, the status of watersheds and past management practices."

Next year, the administration will throw more research money into its budget. Downsizing measures reducing the work force are being confined to the ranks of managers and administrators, he said.

In the meantime, the timber industry wants to know the whereabouts of Clinton's pledge toward balance, uttered during last year's forest summit in Portland.

Timber sales on the nearby Fernan Ranger District, alone, have plummeted from about 40 million board feet a year to next

to nothing, said Joe Hinson, executive vice president of the Intermountain Forest Industry Association.

"I can't believe it's in the administration's best interests to shut down the Panhandle. Somewhere between zero and 40 million board feet, there must be some balancing point where we each meet our mutual objectives," he said.

There is, Lyons said.

There is a commitment to strike a balance. And the key to certainty is understanding what the resource can sustain. Certainty shouldn't only be measured in timber production. We have an obligation to provide a wide range of goods and services," he said.

During a Friday forest tour with the Inland Empire Public Lands Council, Lyons was pulled in the other direction.

Barry Rosenberg and John Osborn, leaders of the Spokane-based environmental group, brought along two scientists who said only time can repair the damage wrought in the hills

overlooking Wolf Lodge Creek.

So much of the forest canopy has been removed that winter rains melt snow and prompt raging torrents that destroy streambeds, said tree pathologist Art "Doc" Partridge and hydrologist Al Issacson.

The activists pointed in disdain to the site of the Horizon timber sale—awarded last year and calling for 30 million board feet of timber to be logged off 28 miles of new roads.

"We're not saying there should not be any logging in the Coeur d'Alenes," Rosenberg said. "But what we are saying is there should never be another Horizon timber sale. That's a dinosaur."

Lyons worked in the summer of 1976 as a tree marker on the defunct Red Ives Ranger District 40 miles southeast of Avery, Idaho.

He went on to earn a master's degree in forestry from Yale University and has been on Capitol Hill virtually since.

He was nominated undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in March 1993 and confirmed by the Senate two months later.

"The decisions we make are going to have to stand for 40, 50, 60 years," he said. "There are a lot of problems that we have inherited based on political direction that was provided in the past.

"We've got to overcome some hurdles that were put in place by the politics of the day."

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— Jim Lyons*

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# Hottest resource in forest is water

## Watershed health is top priority, says chief of Forest Service

By Rich Landers, Outdoors editor

Water is washing out timber as the new management standard for America's national forests, the chief of the U.S. Forest Service said last week.

"Watershed health will be the overriding priority in all forest plan revisions," Mike Dombeck announced in a speech before the Outdoor Writers Association of America annual conference in Sioux Falls, S.D.

While timber has driven regional economies and provided lumber for a growing nation, water may be the most valuable

### Timberland

## Forest Service's new top priority is water quality

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SIOUX FALLS, S.D.—Water management, not lumber production, is the new administrative standard for federal timber land, the chief of the Forest Service says.

The national forests are "the headwaters of the nation," and clean water is the product of healthy forests and grasslands, Mike Dombeck said.

"Watershed health will be the overriding priority in all forest plan revisions," he told the Outdoor Writers Association of America's annual conference in South Dakota this week.

Eighty percent of Americans live in cities, and focusing on water quality allows the Forest Service "to connect with our urban constituency so they understand the values and problems of the ranchers and farmers in South Dakota," Dombeck said.

"Water is an issue everybody understands."

The Forest Service has paid for most of its programs through timber sales. So those programs focused on timber production, with recreation, water quality, wildlife and other issues taking a back seat.

The new focus will require new revenue sources, especially as timber sales decline, Dombeck said.

Since he took over at the Forest Service last year, Dombeck has issued an 18-month moratorium on building roads in national forests and has banned new mining development along the eastern slope of the Rockies in Montana. Mines and timber-haul roads produce silt, which can degrade streams.

Dombeck said shifting gears will be difficult for the Forest Service, which has focused on timber production for 40 years, but a potentially dramatic personnel changeover could help.

Forty-two percent of the service's personnel are eligible to retire in the next five years, and Dombeck said he thinks more than half those eligible will.

"The down side is you lose a lot of experience and institutional memory," he said. "But it does give us a chance to change our skills mix."

product of the 193 million acres of public land managed by the Forest Service, he said.

Some of his reasons include:

- Sixty million people depend on national forest watersheds for drinking water.
- Polluted or diminished water supplies are a factor in the threatened status for 35 percent of the nation's freshwater fish, 38 percent of amphibians and 56 percent of mussels.
- Agricultural production is constrained by lack of irrigation water.
- About 75 percent of the nation's outdoor recreation is within a half-mile of streams or water bodies.

The national forests are "the headwaters of the nation," where 80 percent of the country's water originates, Dombeck said, adding that clean water is the product of healthy forests and grasslands.

"In the last 50 years, water has not been co-equal in management with logging and other development," he said in justifying his policy shift.

The announcement was critical because 65 national forests comprising 150 million acres are scheduled to revise their management plans within the next 10 years.

The foundation of the new forest policy is simple, Dombeck said: "If you take care of the soil and the water, everything else will be OK."

Dombeck, a boyish-looking 50-year-old with an honest down-home reputation, has overseen several other landmark policy shifts for the federal agency.

Since 1998, when he moved from interim director of the Bureau of Land Management to head the Forest Service, Dombeck has issued an 18-month moratorium on road building in national forests, and has banned for two years new mining development along the east slope of the Rocky Mountains in Montana.

Timber haul-roads and mines are major sources of silt that degrade streams.

Floating and fishing on Montana's Smith River two weeks ago only bolstered the chief's resolve to look at forests as complete ecosystems rather than timber farms, he said.

"The era of clearcutting is coming to a close," he said at a dinner table during the conference. "Even Canada is realizing that clearcuts affect water quality and other resources."

"The head of the Canadian forestry service said the process of change was creating a lot of heat. I told him I knew exactly what he meant."

The current Inland Northwest controversy over clearcutting to counter infestations of bark beetle is an issue that seemed to pique Dombeck's interest.

"There are certain occasions when extreme actions should be taken," he said, "but if it's just an excuse to get out the cut, that won't fly."

Dombeck is the first man with an aquatic ecology background to be named chief of the Forest Service. He was reared in Wisconsin and was once a fishing guide.

"Major wars of the 19th and 20th centuries were often driven by nationalism and economics," he said. "Without planning, cooperation and forethought, wars in the 21st century may be fought over water and other resources."

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# "Beatlemania"



With the Beatles: historic photographs of Dezo Hoffman. ed Pearce Marchbank. Omnibus Press. 1982.

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