

Citizens for Balanced Use
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Citizens for Balanced Use is supporting a procedure, that if adopted by Congress, would reduce the gridlock within the Forest Service. Simple legislative changes that mandate active forest management using harvest, reforestation and restoration will return the Forest Service to a self supporting government agency.

NEPA Sufficiency and Hard Release Language applied congressionally will mandate harvest quotas based on Best Management Practices and sound science in areas of our Forests in Montana that have been studied again and again over the last 30 years. All proposed projects today are litigated by environmental groups which impose a burden on the Forest Service budget and a huge waste of tax dollars. Multiple use lands must be congressionally released.

NEPA Sufficiency:

The U.S. Congress finds and directs that all federally managed public lands in Montana have been adequately studied for wilderness designation pursuant to sections 202 and 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Land Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712 and 1782) and section 6 of the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

Hard Release:

Any public lands administered by the Forest Service in Montana not designated wilderness shall not be subject to section 6(e)(1)(2)(3)(A) of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 through 1614) but shall be managed for the full range of non-wilderness multiple uses in accordance with land management plans adopted pursuant to section 6 of such Act (16 U.S.C. 1604). Such lands shall not be managed for the purpose of protecting their suitability for wilderness designation or their wilderness character and shall remain available for non-wilderness multiple uses, subject to the requirement of other Federal laws.

Forest Service Duties:

The Forest Service will complete programmatic economic, social and environmental analysis of resource cost benefit, watershed health benefit, wildlife affects, and human social health in compliance with all NEPA regulations including the full participation of local governments and citizenry.

Put into place an administrative Panel that rules on the appeal and significance of that appeal prior to moving to the Courts.

Court Requirements:

Require a bond for persons or entities appealing Forest projects. This could be a percent of the projected receipts, or an amount equal to the projected non-performance clause amount in projects that are already under contract.

Place a requirement that appellants must show proof of being part of the entire planning process of a project before filing litigation opposing that project.

Payment to a prevailing appellant is commensurate only to proportionate equivalent and significance of that part of the project they appeal and litigate.

Summary

The Forest health in Montana has reached a critical stage. Some areas of the Forest are 100% dead. Catastrophic fires in recent years have devastated watersheds, resources and private property. The Forest Service has become a reactive agency floundering in litigation and paper work. The predicted fires they know will come but refuse to initiate neither a plan for reduction of fuel loads nor the pre fire management control measures necessary.

Montana citizens are given rights to a healthful environment in our Constitution and deserve to have our vast amounts of federally managed public land properly taken care of and actively managed. Only through U.S. Congressionally mandated changes of procedure and requirements for the Forest Service will we ever be able to accomplish the massive amount of work that needs done. We must not waste this vast amount of renewable resource.

Harvest amounts should be based on a percentage of either projected new growth or mortality. State stream protection measures are already established and need no further regulations. Harvest techniques have advanced to a point which we are able to leave these areas in better condition than before the timber is removed. Strategic locations of harvest areas will provide fire breaks and reduce fire suppression costs which were reported to be 2 billion dollars in 2007.

Only through advanced planning and implementation, along with congressional mandates will we ever be able to improve the health of our National Forests in Montana.

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