

**FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY  
NATIONAL LABOR  
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**International Unions:**

International Association  
of Machinists and  
Aerospace Workers

United Brotherhood  
of Carpenters and  
Joiners of America

United Mine Workers  
of America

**Regional Affiliates:**

Association of Western  
Pulp and Paper Workers

Carpenters  
Industrial Council

Woodworkers  
District Lodge 1, IAM

Woodworkers  
District Lodge 2, IAM

**National Associations:**

American Forest  
& Paper Association

**Regional Associations:**

American Forest  
Research Council

Arkansas  
Forestry Association

California  
Forestry Association

Intermountain  
Forest Association

Louisiana  
Forestry Association

Minnesota  
Forest Industries

1111 19th Street, NW  
10th Floor  
Washington, DC 20036

May 15, 2006

Rep. Richard Pombo  
Chairman, Committee on Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pombo:

On behalf of the Forest Products Industry National Labor Management Committee (LMC), a coalition of trade associations and labor unions representing 1.5 million members nationwide, including 250,000 workers in the forest products industry, I am writing in support of H.R. 4200, the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act.

In the aftermath of the forest fires that ravaged the Pacific Northwest earlier this decade, we determined the Forest Service lacks the appropriate tools and authorizations to immediately begin recovery and reforestation projects quickly. In addition, various groups have used administrative appeals and lawsuits to stop the quick removal of damaged trees. The combination of these factors has slowed the restoration process to less than a snail's pace. Regretfully, we have been left with a situation where private lands filled with new trees border devastated public forests that have been untouched for years on end.

While the Healthy Forests Restoration Act did a good job of streamlining the approval process for necessary thinning projects that will help reduce the risk of new fires, it did not do anything to expedite recovery and reforestation projects after the fire. The LMC believes H.R. 4200 takes the next logical step that will continue to move toward healthier public forests.

After a fire, there are acres of downed and damaged trees that have economic value. But that value does not last long as insects and rot quickly destroy the value of the timber. Therefore, timber that could be cleared and processed in nearby mills, providing needed jobs in forest communities, instead lay decomposing on the forest floor.

One important thing that is often overlooked in these debates is that recovery and reforestation projects support rural communities. In addition to providing jobs, these projects also help maintain the local economic base. They keep rural forest communities alive by keeping up the local tax base that helps maintain schools and local governments. These jobs are glue that keep these communities together.

Letter to Chairman Pombo  
May 15, 2006  
Page Two

There are two parts of the legislation that we believe will be the most beneficial.

First, we strongly support the expedited procedures set forth in the bill that will allow recovery and reforestation programs to begin as quickly as possible after the catastrophic event. By putting in place pre-approved procedures we can avoid the all too prevalent problem of "analysis paralysis." Moreover, it will make it possible to offer timber sales when the logs have their most value. This is not only important to the timber industry and timber workers, but also to the entire reforestation program. As recent experience after fires in the West and Intermountain regions has taught us, by the time the Forest Service was finally able to offer sales, the timber had decayed to such an extent that much of the value was lost. A recent study on the Bitterroot Fire estimates that \$1.5 million was lost due to a one year delay in recovery operations. The new rules, if passed, will not only encourage companies to bid on the sales, but also ensure an increased level of funding for reforestation programs. In an era of tight budgets, anything we can do to make programs self-supporting must be seriously considered.

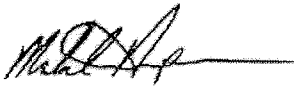
Next, the legislation makes use of the guidelines established under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act to set the rules for administrative appeals and litigation. Rather than setting a whole new set of rules, the bill lets everyone know the rules of the game. Moreover it clearly defines what can and cannot be done in a recovery project and keeps in place many of the current laws that ensure a safe environment and provide for public notice and input.

Finally, I would point out there is widespread agreement that the current system is a failure. In a poll conducted in August 2005 of Oregonians by the independent polling company of Davis, Hibbits & Midghall, nearly three-quarters of those surveyed supported restoring federal forests after wildfires by removing dead trees and planting seedlings. More than half said fires are growing out of control and causing too much damage and everything possible should be done to restore burned forests.

At the same time, a strong majority - 56 percent - thought it was a poor argument to say forests should be left alone because fires have occurred for centuries and more damage would be done by equipment and road construction. This poll was taken in Oregon, a state with one of the most environmentally aware populations in the country.

The Committee supports your work on H.R. 4200 and urges the House to pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Michael V Draper  
Chairman, Forest Products Industry National Labor Management Committee and  
Vice President, Western District, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America

cc: Members of the House of Representatives