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## WALDEN BILL WILL HELP FORESTS, COMMUNITIES

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People who care about the environment deserve the world's respect and admiration. People who care about the environment but don't give a feather about families in need of livelihood deserve much less.

On Nov. 2, U.S. Reps Greg Walden, R-Ore., and Brian Baird, D-Wash., introduced the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act, a bill that would speed salvage logging in forest areas damaged by fire or other catastrophic events. It deserves support it is not getting from some quarters.

A look at the legislation seems to bear out the proponents' contentions that environmental laws would remain in place, and that the public will retain its right to appeal and litigate projects.

Provisions for a more speedy review of projects might need tweaking — even supporters say the time allotted the Forest Service to make a recovery plan for a damaged forest is too short.

Yet overall, the bill looks to be a level-headed attempt to rehabilitate forests damaged by fire and other catastrophic events, while bolstering the timber industry.

True, the bill allows temporary road building for salvage logging purposes, but it also requires obliteration of the roads when a project is complete.

As for actual timber harvesting, it allows only for the taking of trees that are down, dead, broken, severely root sprung, or those that have a high probability of mortality within five years of the catastrophic event.

Wyden and Baird both make it clear that the bill complies with the Endangered Species Act, the Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, in fact all federal environmental regulations.

It is not perfect legislation, but it makes a good attempt to address the issue of forest health and jobs. Yet since its introduction, there's been a predictably negative, knee-jerk reaction from environmentalists.

Arising are strident claims that the legislation will do away with protection for old-growth forests, forests in roadless areas, and fish and wildlife. There's also a baseless-appearing contention that the bill will cut the public out of the review and appeal processes.

The criticism is couched in the same unbending terms it always has been. It holds that the chain saw is the root of all evil. As usual, the environmental interests refuse to accept on

any terms the idea that man can utilize the resource while caring for it, that timber health and timber harvest can be compatible.

It's a fact of life that the economies of entire regions — including this one — may collapse if the timber industry doesn't get some help.

The leave-it-alone, let-it-burn attitudes that have driven policy for so long are not only wrongheaded, but do a disservice to our communities.

Wyden and Baird are right. We need healthy forests. We need good paying jobs. And we need them now.

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