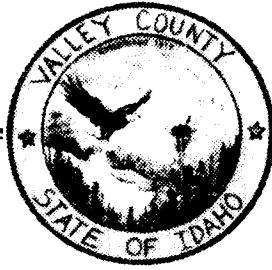


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November 28, 2005

The Honorable Congressman C.L. Otter
1711 Longworth
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20215

RE: The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act (H.R. 4200)

Dear Congressman Otter:

The Valley County Board of County Commissioners is responsible for the health, safety and well being of Valley County residents on all lands within Valley County, thus the Board supports the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act (H.R. 4200).

There are many benefits to H.R. 4200. First, the bill requires the agencies to adopt a list of "pre-approved management practices" that can be implemented quickly in response to a catastrophic event. (Sec. 104(a)(1)). The list of practices would be developed through public notice and comment and peer review. (Sec. 104(a)(2)&(3)). The practices may include construction of temporary logging roads, but not permanent roads. (Sec. 104(d)(1)). The list can also include salvage logging of dead trees and trees that are very likely to die within five years after the catastrophic event. (Sec. 104(d)(2)). This list should be compiled in coordination and cooperation with the affected local government. Local governments participation could be as a Cooperator pursuant to the provisions set forth in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1508.5).

Secondly, the bill requires the agencies to complete a "recovery evaluation" within 30 days after a catastrophic event affecting more than 1000 acres. (Sec. 102(a)(1)&(b)). For affected areas between 250 acres and 1000 acres, the agencies would have discretion to prepare a recovery evaluation, but would not be required to do so. (Sec.

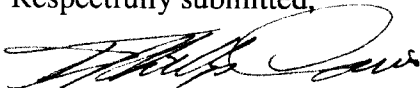
102(a)(2)). Once again, discretionary decisions should be compiled in coordination and cooperation with the affected local government.

Importantly, based on the area-specific evaluation, the agencies could choose to proceed along either of two decision-making avenues. If an agency chose to use the “pre-approved management practices” for a particular project, the agency would have just 30 days to issue a decision, after which the project must be implemented immediately. (Sec. 104(f)&(g)). Setting timelines is crucial to success.

The Board is confident that the “Extremes” will claim that the bill provides minimal opportunity for public involvement on proposed projects. However, on a common-sense level, it is obvious. When a forest burns, the trees are dead. So you cut them down, haul them to the sawmill and plant new ones. Soon the blackened hillsides will be covered with healthy green trees.

H.R. 4200 encourages timely action to repair damaged forest and to reduce recovery costs. In line with that encouragement the Board believes that now is the time to consider the effective control of forest fires, and the policy of wild fire use (WFU) in the fight against global warming. Burning vegetation and trees contribute to the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere directly through emissions of gases and aerosols from the fires and indirectly through the impact fire activity has on the forest ecosystem and its ability to store carbon. Simply put, fires contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and there are impacts from fires when they destroy trees that soak up carbon dioxide.

Respectfully submitted,



F. Phillip Davis, Chairman
Valley County Board of County Commissioners

CC/

The Honorable, US Senator Larry Craig
United States Senate
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Washington, DC 205250

The Honorable, US Senator Mike Crapo
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