

May 6, 2003

## **ANOTHER REASON TO SUPPORT THE BI-PARTISAN HEALTHY FORESTS RESTORATION ACT**

Dear Colleague:

One needs look no further than my home State of California to see the urgency of the forest health crisis on America's public lands.

Lands within the Angeles, Cleveland, and San Bernardino National Forests are suffering from the largest bark beetle infestation in the last 50 years (see pictures on reverse side). The effects of overstocking, drought, and lack of active forest management have severely damaged these forests. As a result, several hundred thousand dead pine trees are decaying fast and threatening to fall on homes, power lines, and emergency evacuation routes. These forests contain recreation areas used by millions of people from the nearby metropolitan areas and surround residences with millions of dollars of property value.

The bark beetle outbreaks on these forests have created an extreme fire hazard, prompting California Governor Gray Davis to declare a State of Emergency on March 7, 2003. "Trees on more than 150,000 acres have died and an estimated 75,000 residents are threatened by catastrophic wildfire, injury and property damage from falling trees," said Governor Davis. By declaring a State of Emergency, the Governor reduced the "red tape" and provided landowners with the regulatory relief from state laws necessary to quickly remove dead and dying trees from their property.

Congress must now decide whether it wants to face the facts on the forest health crisis and give this nation's land managers new and innovative tools. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act is responsible legislation, not only enabling land management agencies to do their job, but also conserve habitat for endangered and threatened species, ensure clean water by protecting municipal watersheds, and clean air by preventing catastrophic wildfires. At the same it creates stringent safeguards defending public participation in the decision making process.

**This bill is a balanced, bi-partisan, common sense, decisive approach to make America's forests healthy again. Recognizing the importance of H.R. 1904, a total of 93 members from both sides of the aisle are cosponsors. I urge all Members to support this vital legislation. If you would like to be a cosponsor or have further questions, please contact the Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health at 5-0691.**

Sincerely,

RICHARD W. POMBO  
Chairman  
Committee on Resources

## Vast tree mortality due to insect infestation in the San Bernardino National Forest



Dead trees in close proximity to communities threaten homes by both potential wildfires and falling trees.