

Fix the Biomass Definition:

- *Federal Forest biomass must be recognized as a reliable source for development of domestic renewable energy. Yet, in a move harmful to the economies of rural forested counties, a very restrictive definition of “biomass” was added to energy legislation in Congress 2007 that precludes the use of forest biomass from public lands in the context of the federal renewal fuels mandate.*
- *Renewable energy markets for forest biomass materials give rural forested counties additional economic activity, jobs and revenue. America’s well-managed forests will play an important role in meeting U.S. energy needs in the future. For instance, in Lake County, Oregon the biomass facility under construction by Iberdrola will create 68 new full-time jobs, invest \$70 million in the local economy and power 18,000 homes when completed in 2012.*
- *Congress should encourage investment in National forest management and restoration, which would allow for a reliable source of renewable fuel and electricity, by establishing a non-restrictive definition of forest biomass eligible for use in renewable fuel program.*

Expedite Harvest of Trees Killed by the Beetle Infestation:

- *Pine beetle infestation in the US has already killed millions of acres of lodgepole pines in the Western US forests. Scientists expect that more than 20 million acres of forests in the US will be impacted, resulting not only in the loss of timber and forests, but also significantly increasing the threat of catastrophic wildfire.*
- *For these catastrophic events, it is crucial that the BLM and the Forest Service expedite recovery and management on these impacted areas to hasten restoration, create jobs and provide a supply of raw material. The threat of wildfires is dire, risking homes, power lines and water quality. Congress should pass emergency measures to hasten BLM and Forest Service thinning and harvest projects in impacted forests.*

Mandate the use of emergency arrangements under NEPA for Catastrophic Events:

- *The Council on Environmental Quality (“CEQ”) regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act provide for agencies to develop “alternative arrangements” to address “emergency circumstances” which require prompt action before a full environmental analysis can occur. 40 C.F.R. §1506.11.*
- *Salvage of damaged timber over a large area has qualified for alternative arrangements in the past. This controls the threat of future fire and spread of insects to protect property and natural resources. Since 1998, the CEQ has used the emergency circumstances regulation and approved alternative arrangements numerous times to remove dead trees from forests damaged by windstorms, ice storms, and fires:*
- *Following a devastating windstorm in Texas that blew down 103,000 acres of timber in east Texas in 1998. Within 30 days CEQ authorized alternative arrangements and immediate salvage of 270 million board feet of timber toppled by the storm.*

- Congress should pass legislation that mandates alternative arrangements on any catastrophic event, including wildfires, exceeding 10,000 acres in size on National Forests.

Expedite Land Exchanges with New Authority:

- BLM and the Forest Service manage countless blocks of land in a checker-board pattern. Often these parcels are ideally suited for local community use such as commercial development. Private landowners often own land with high ecological value that could be swapped with the federal government, increasing contiguous habitat for the BLM and the Forest Service and freeing up land better-suited for local development. Yet, these land exchanges often take many years to pass Congress.
- Congress should pass an expedited land exchange authority for small parcels, using a community consensus public process to ensure suitability.

Shed the Forest Service of “Orphan” Properties that Sit Unused in Urban and Suburban Areas:

- The Forest Service previously proposed shedding its inventory of lands of orphan parcels that are in urban or suburban areas, detached from their larger forested areas. These properties are not central to the mission of the Forest Service.
- A better screening system is needed to ensure that the parcels to be sold are truly inconsequential to the Forest Service mission, such by including the public and other resource agencies (e.g., the State Fish and Game Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) in a joint selection process.
- The sale of the orphan parcels would generate revenue for a special account to provide an offset for the SRS legislation.
- The Forest Service owns 193 million acres of forests and grasslands, and some parcels that are neither forests nor grasslands. This proposal would keep it focused on its mission and would create jobs in rural America.

Allow Counties and Schools to Retain 75% of Receipts:

- Representatives of forested counties that receive SRS funds have been clear from the beginning that it is much better to have receipts increase to cover the needs in their respective counties.
- One way to align incentives is to provide an opt-in alternative that increases the percentage of retained receipts to 75%.

Allow National Forest Units to Retain and Reinvest the Timber Sale Receipts that Go to the Treasury:

- Similar to the SNPLMA framework, individual units of the National Forest System would retain the portion of the timber sale receipts that go to the Treasury. The retained receipts would be used for planning and projects, including timber sales, forest restoration, hazardous fuels reduction, trail and road maintenance, and recreation enhancement. Since the funds are staying with the federal government, this proposal should not score.

Increase Grazing Opportunities:

- *Rural counties have been negatively impacted by uncertainty surrounding grazing permits. The Forest Service has been unable to renew grazing permits in a timely fashion primarily due to the heavy workload caused by both litigation and efforts to produce gold-plated environmental documents. This leaves ranchers uncertain about the continued availability of their permits and consequently reluctant to make long term investments.*
- *Rural communities that depend on federal grazing as a significant portion of their local economy are being impacted as this uncertainty is translating into more and more vacant allotments. For instance, California has gone from 40 vacant allotments to 200. This lowers property values and results in decreased local taxes, jobs and economic activity. It also decreases grazing fee revenues to the federal treasury.*
- *Permanent authority to renew permits without NEPA (especially on those permit renewals where the grazing management remains the same) until NEPA is completed and any appeals or litigation is completed would provide additional security for permit holders. Congress annually passes a rider that gives the Forest Service the same authority as found in BLM regulations that allows grazing to continue while litigation is ongoing. Congress should pass legislation that requires the federal agencies to make decisions on permit renewal.*