



Arizona Cattlemen's Association

MEDIA RELEASE

Too Much Fuel in the Forests

PHOENIX, AZ, July 5, 2011 – Arizona's forests are like bombs waiting to explode. According to the United States Forest Service (USFS) over 5 billion board feet of saw timber has been allowed to build up without harvest and this amount of fuel only leads to catastrophic wildfires.

During the House of Representatives Ad Hoc Committee on Arizona Forest Restoration Management Andy Groseta, Incoming President of the Arizona Cattle Grower's Association, stated, "The problem in Arizona's forests is fairly simple – we have allowed too many fuels to build over the last 25 years to the point where they don't burn – they explode!" The USFS estimated from 1986 – 2000 there was 367 million board feet of saw timber growing in Arizona's forests each and every year. This totaled over 5.5 billion board feet of saw timber accumulating in Arizona's forests. During the same timeframe the USFS data demonstrated that only 1.6 billion board feet of saw timber was harvested (Slide attached)."

Groseta went on to say, "Too many lawsuits, appeals, objections and excessive analysis have paralyzed the Forest Service. Radical groups are using the fish, the frog and the owl as surrogates. They are using them to keep man, management and harvests out of our forests. These surrogates have worked so well that in 1996, 1997, and 1998 we reduced saw timber harvests to nearly zero and forage management by ranching families was reduced between 30 to 60%. Too what ends have the fish, frog and owl been used? Well, we now know. It is over 500,000 acres of our beautiful White Mountains charred; a whole generation of endangered species killed by fire; and air and water pollution unlike anything ever seen in the White Mountains."

Over the past 30 years Arizona has lost nearly its entire forest wood infrastructure. Over 16 saw mills have been shuttered due to lawsuits and uncertainty. "Arizona's forests are the greatest wood and plant fiber producing lands in our state. Even today, these forests are growing and producing wood and plant fibers for the next fire – or if we act properly – the next pound of beef, lamb, particle board, piece of lumber or biomass energy," stated Groseta.

The Forest Service estimates that the Wallow Fire burned 400 million board feet of Ponderosa Pine and 2.1 billion board feet of mixed conifer for a total of 2.5 billion board feet of wood destroyed by the fire. ACGA President, Steve Brophy said, "Following the fires, we've heard a rising tide of voices calling for more collaboration in managing our overgrown forests. But these folks have been collaborating since the last 400,000 acre fire (Rodeo-Chediski), and the problem has only gotten worse. Collaboration has led to something called the "4 Fry" plan to cut small diameter trees – a well-intended plan but a plan so far only on paper and in and of itself woefully inadequate to address the scale of overgrowth of our forests. Do we do the "5 Fry" or "6 Fry" plans? No, we need action now, not more planning and collaboration. It is time to get people who know the woods and how to harvest them and return them to health – back in the woods with their hands untied and their chainsaws sharpened. The fish, the frog and the owl will benefit from their actions."

The United States Forest Service (USFS) own Process Predicament Report states, "73 million acres of national forests are at risk from severe wild land fires that threaten human safety and ecosystem integrity." They said this in June of 2002 and after nine years we still allowed a catastrophic situation turn into the largest fire in Arizona history – the Wallow Fire. "The last 30 years of lawsuits, appeals and objections of timber sales, fuel reduction proposals and livestock forage programs have reduced the Forest Service to a shell shocked state. They hear the slightest threat of a lawsuit, and they duck their head, forgetting their responsibility to manage our priceless forests," said Steve Brophy, President of the Arizona Cattle Growers Association.

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For more information contact: Patrick Bray (602) 762-0671