

A Bomb in Our Forest

Wallow Fire Hearing

June 30, 2011

There are bombs in our forest! Only these bombs aren't made of the typical explosives – they are made of organic particles of wood fiber; wood sap; and plant fibers. Three of them have gone off over the last 20 years and we called them: The Dude Fire; The Rodeo-Chediski Fire; and now the Wallow Fire. As with most bombs the individual components can be good or bad when by themselves. For instance about 20 years ago we had a crazy, evil and angry man build a bomb from fertilizer and kill a lot of people – FERTILIZER! Now everyone here knows fertilizer can be used to grow food – and now we know it can be used as part of a bomb. It's just like the trees and plants in our forest – they can be used for food; the good of man and to build rather than destroy.

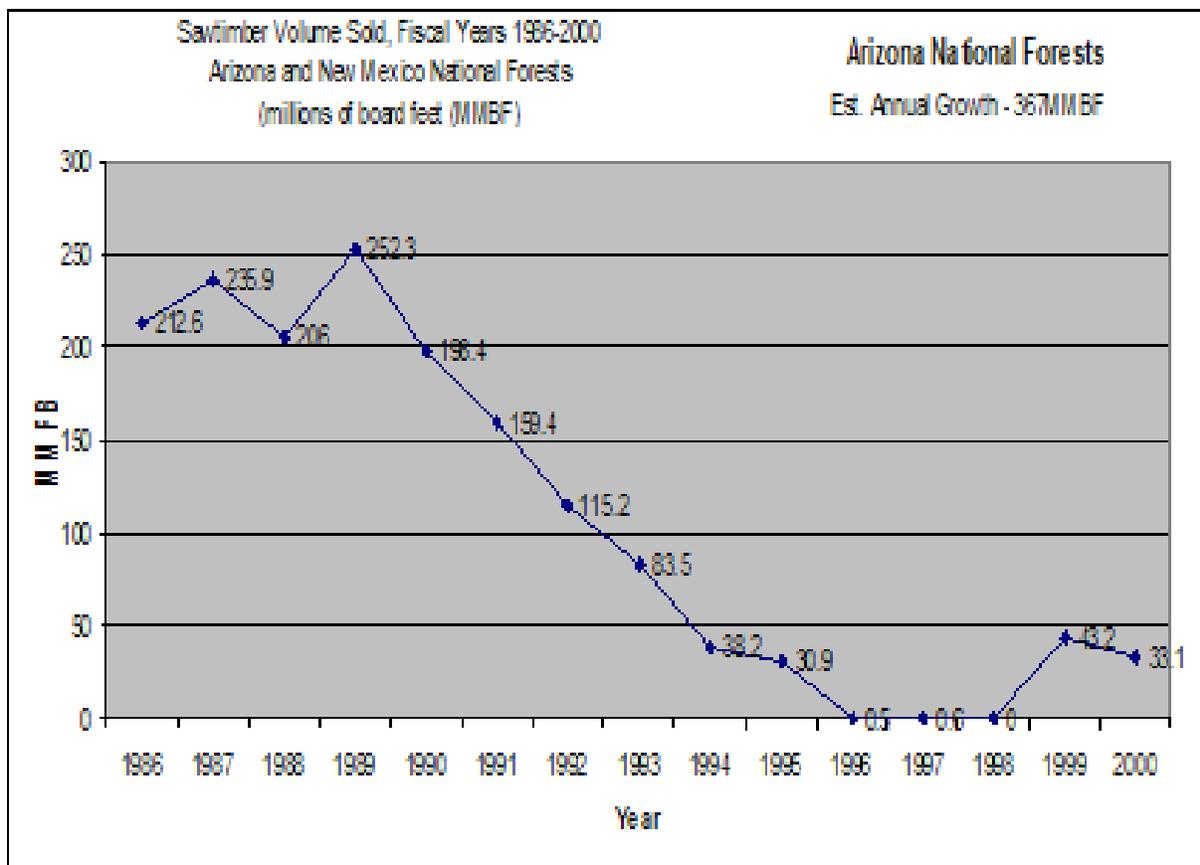
I am going to take a few minutes to disassemble these bombs to see what the individual pieces look like. But I first must warn you about how others talk about these bombs. Because they say 100 years ago we started suppressing fire; they say about 100 years ago the climatic conditions were perfect for sprouting Ponderosa Pine and we sprouted too many trees; they say 70 years ago we let livestock take too much forage and let the small trees grow; they say 50 years ago we let loggers take out too many old growth trees; and on and on... and I say – yesterday they burned down our back yards; yesterday they damaged our livelihoods; yesterday they polluted our environment, air and water like no one has ever before in our history. So don't talk to us about 100, 70, or 50 years ago – talk to us about yesterday and today!

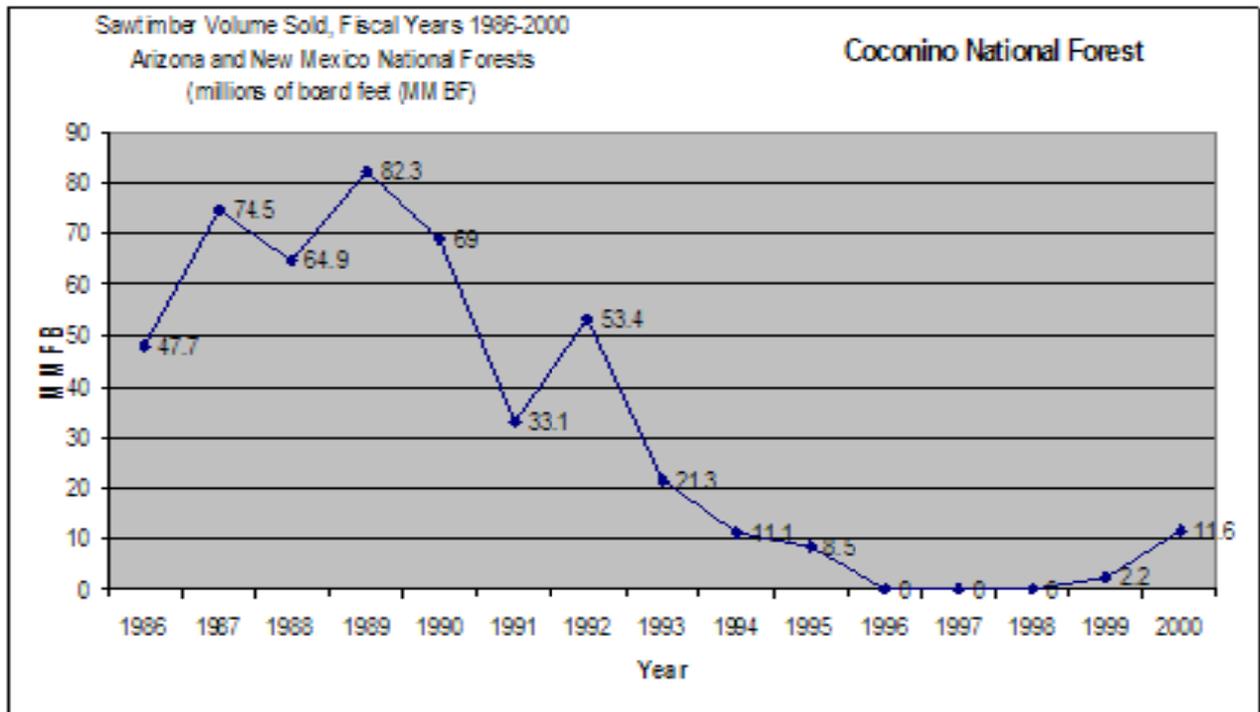
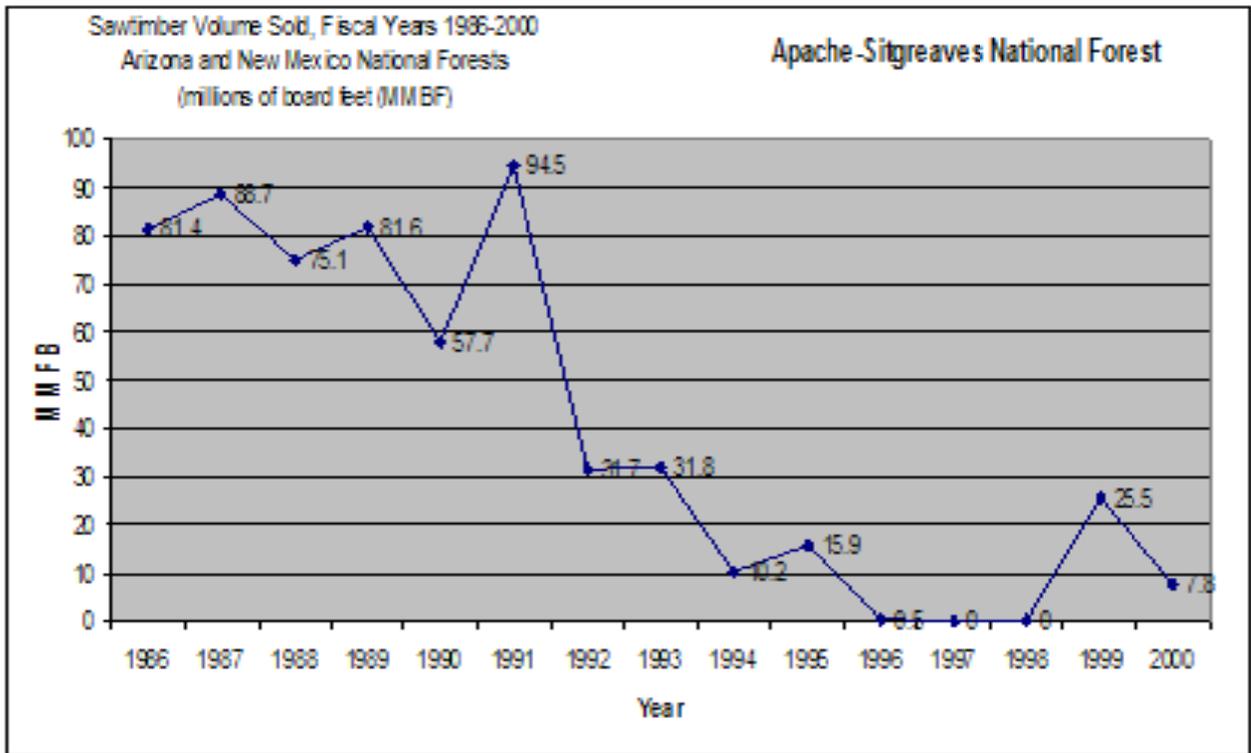
Now -- The first critical component of these bombs was to remove and reduce management and it started in the early 1980's. We started to burden and bury the Forest Service in process, paperwork, lawsuits and appeals. Most of this was done to reduce management, remove multiple uses and remove us and our local communities from utilizing our forests for the good of mankind.

Take a look at a couple of slides which demonstrate the reduction of management and the exponential growth of fuels(which is only the saw timber not including the other woody and plant products) in Arizona's forests which was the first component of the bomb we now call the Wallow Fire.

USFS Estimate of Annual Growth of Sawtimber in Arizona Forests 1986 - 2000

- The United States Forest Service estimated that from 1986 – 2000 Arizona's Forests grew by 334 Million Board Feet (MMBF) each and every year.
- That's a total of 5,505,000,000 Board Feet from 1986 – 2000.
- During the same time frame the amount of sawtimber sold was 1,609,080 Board Feet.
- When Wallow blew up we had 3,896,000,000 Board Feet of sawtimber fuel that had built up in Arizona's Forests from 1986 – 2000. *This does not include other plant fuels which grow in our forests.





All of this was the explosive in the bomb – the plants and the trees.

The second component of the bomb was process. We call it Process Paralysis and the Forest Service is buried in process; forced to reduce management; and tied up in statutory, regulatory and administrative processes with Litigation, appeals and objections. They have been shot at so many times through this process – they are like a shell shocked soldier sitting in a bunker – they can hardly hear anything and when they hear a leaf drop – they duck their head.

In 2002 the Forest Service prepared a report called the “Process Predicament.” I’ll quote from this Report: “Despite a century of devotion to conservation, the Forest Service today faces a forest health crisis of tremendous proportions.” The Report went on to say: 73 million acres of national forests are at risk from severe wild land fires that threaten human safety and ecosystem integrity. Well --- we now know what that looks like in northeastern Arizona. The Forest Service themselves said this framework of Excessive Analysis impedes nearly every aspect of multiple use management. These processes are called NEPA; ESA; and Forest Planning Rules. The next couple of slides are only a sampling of these impediments:

Figure 16: Treatment Methods and Appeals, by Region, Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002

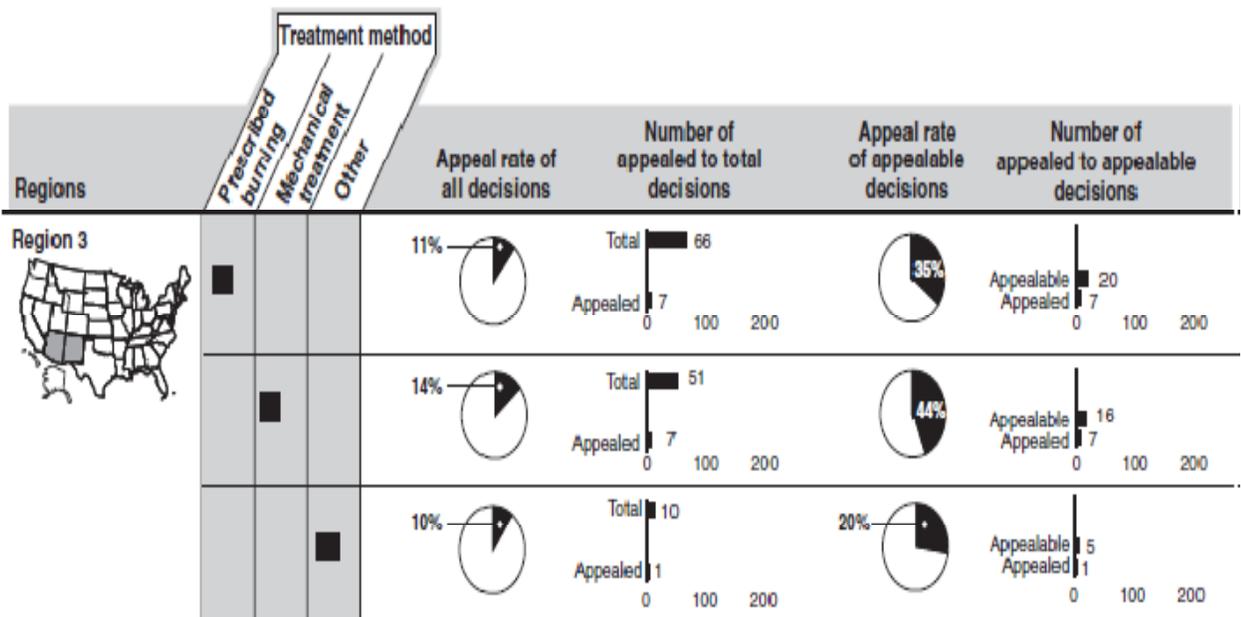


Figure 6: Number of Decisions Subject to Appeal and Objection, and the Number and Frequency of Appeals, Objections, Exemptions, and Litigation, by Treatment Method and Forest Service Region

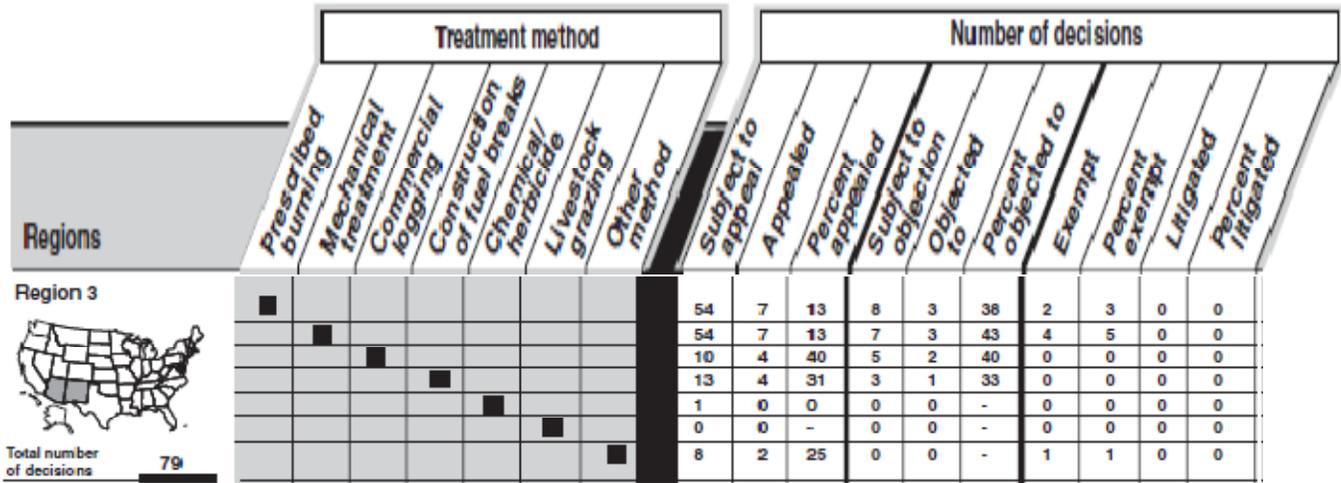
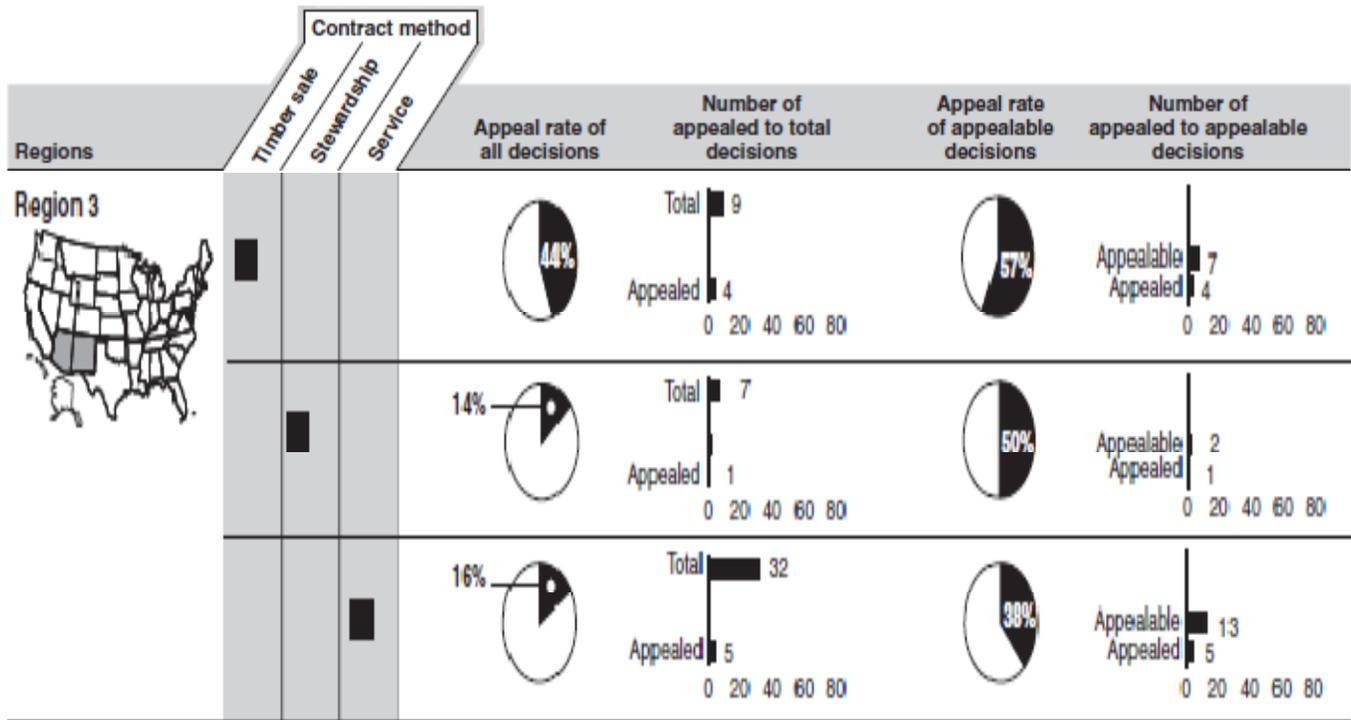


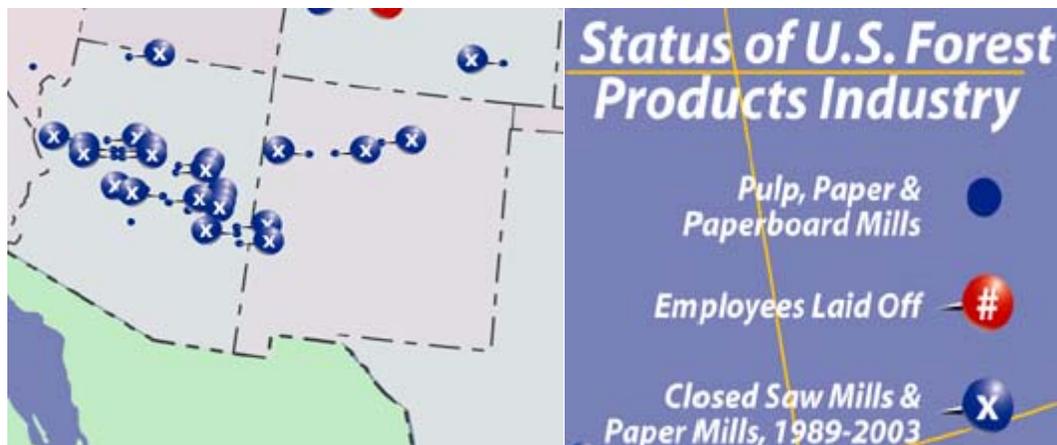
Figure 17: Types of Contracts Used in Decisions with Fuels Reduction Activities and How Frequently Decisions Involving the Contract Types Were Appealed, by Region, Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002



Ladies and gentlemen because of these lawsuits, appeals and objections - we have sent the Forest Service to work with inadequate tools and they have been worn down; they have become shell shocked and we won't let them do their job and implement their mandate for Multiple Use Management! This was the second component of the bomb and the trigger mechanism.

The third component of the bomb was the removal of critical infrastructure for harvesting economically valuable wood products and reducing fuels. We used to have approximately 20 pulp, paper or saw mills in Arizona in the early 1980's. We have lost 16 of the total of those mills and even worse – we have basically lost every viable “logline” sawmill in our state.

In the 1980's “Malthusian” environmental groups – for those of you who might be wondering what “Malthusian” means – it comes from the last name of a philosopher named Thomas Malthus. Thomas Malthus believed that man served no redeemable value except to soil and ruin their environment and we had no capacity to solve the problems we create. Well these groups petitioned to list the “Mexican Spotted Owl” as endangered the Forest Service did its research and resisted the listing because they did not think it was warranted –for nearly 10 years they were wound up in this process until the mid-1990's when these environmental groups won a decision in Judge Carl Mueke's Court which shut down basically all commercial timber harvest and drastically reduced livestock in the forests of New Mexico and Arizona. These Malthusian groups celebrated the decision like it was something good. I wonder if they are cheering now. This slide demonstrates where these mills have closed in Arizona and New Mexico.



This loss of infrastructure was the vessel for the bomb.

There you have it. These are the components of the bomb we now call the Wallow Fire.

The maker of the bomb was the lawsuits – these legal decisions changed prior understood rules; they removed the knowledge and expertise of locals who lived in; worked in; and understood the tree and the forest; and finally they spooked and scared the Forest Service. They were shot at and hit so many times these lawsuits created a “muscle memory” – every time one of the culprits appeared they froze and flew from the risk. Here is a list of the groups who have been filing actions against projects and management in our forests:

49. Montana Ecosystem Defense Council	1									1
50. Montanans for Multiple Use	1									1
51. Montanans for Property Rights	1									1
52. National Audobon Society					1					1
53. National Forest Protection Alliance	8	1		3	10	5				27
54. Native Ecosystems Council	6	3		1						10
55. Native Forest Network	1									1
56. Northwest Environmental Defense Center						4				4
57. Northwoods Wilderness Recovery								4		4
58. Oregon Natural Resources Council						24				24
59. Pacific Rivers Council	1									1
60. Payette Forest Watch				4						4
61. Plumas Forest Project					2					2
62. Potlatch Corporation								3		3
63. Rajala Companies								4		4
64. Ruffed Grouse Society								3		3
65. Santa Fe Forest Watch		2								2
66. Seagull-Sag Property Owners Association								1		1
67. Sequoia Forest Alliance					2					2
68. Sierra Club	8	3	1		4	5		1		22
69. Sky Island Alliance			1							1
70. Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project								2		2
71. Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance				1						1
72. Southwest Forest Alliance			1							1
73. Superior Wilderness Action Network								3		3
74. Texas Committee on Natural Resources								2		2
75. Tule River Conservancy					2					2
76. Upper Arkansas & South Platte Project		2								2
77. Utah Environmental Congress				7						7
78. Vallecitos Stables			1							1
79. Washington Wilderness Coalition							1			1
80. Western Watersheds Project				4						4
81. White Mountain Conservation League			1							1
82. Wild Watershed			3							3
83. Wilderness Society	1	2								3
84. Wildlands Center for Preventing Roads		2								2
85. Wildlaw							1	1		2
Total for interest group appellants, by region	163	47	18	43	90	77	8	36	0	482

Now when a bomb goes off – the first thing we do is send in the First Responders. They assess the situation; rescue the people; secure the area; collect information; and clean up the mess.

Who is going to be a first responder for the Wallow Fire? Who is going to help facilitate the harvest and cleanup of the salvage timber? Who is going to call for the

implementation of soil and plant health restoration with disturbance and intensive livestock management?

It's far past time to usher in a new era for Arizona's forests. An era marked by common sense, reason, and private investment in forest management and the enhanced harvest of wood and plant products and forest wide health. This will create meaningful partnerships and vitality in our communities.

Some first response Ideas:

- Ask Congress and the Forest Service to expand the "Categorical Exclusion" process from NEPA to any forested area deemed at risk from excessive loads of fuel (wood and plant). Make these projects unappealable.
- Ask Congress and the Forest Service to implement "The Require Environmental Integrity" Act or the "Tree" Act as we will call it. The "Tree" Act will require anyone appealing or suing on a proposed fuel reduction project by the forest service – to sign a declaration document. This document will outline that the appellant understands the appeal may potentially delay the fuel reduction activity proposed and that the project area is deemed vulnerable to wildfire.
- Ask the Forest Service and Congress to cancel and redo the Forest Service's currently proposed "Planning Rule." This rule contains an undefined and previously never mentioned (in the National Forest Management Act - NFMA) "Species Viability" provision which will hinder future fuel reduction activities in the forest.
- We need to accelerate: Mechanical Treatments; using livestock to reduce fuels and harvest forage; and the use of controlled fire. We need the Forest Service to offer longer term (10 to 20 year) contracts for small and larger diameter trees to be harvested and clean our forests. The government isn't going to clean our forests – the government isn't going to pay to clean our forests; the Forest Service culture is to monolithic and scared. We need private industry investment in and around the forest communities.

So that is the bomb – its parts were: Remove and Reduce Management; Process Paralysis; and the loss of infrastructure. What a terrible devastation it left us.