

## **Testimony of Bill Crapser**

### **U.S. House Agriculture Committee**

#### **Field Hearing**

**May 4, 2010 Cheyenne, WY**

Good morning and welcome to Wyoming. My name is Bill Crapser, I am the State Forester for Wyoming and I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today.

Wyoming has approximately 11.5 million acres of forests within its borders. Of these forests 9 million acres are in federal ownership, and 2.5 million acres are private and state lands. The State and Private programs authorized by Congress and administered by the US Forest Service, along with the forestry programs in the Farm Bill are invaluable tools in helping the state provide technical and financial assistance to private land owners promoting the stewardship and health of our forests. Without these programs much of the long term value (ecological, financial, societal) of these forests would be lost.

Like all areas of our country the forests of Wyoming face many challenges and threats. We have heard and seen a lot about bark beetles and fires of late, but these are just two of the challenges we face.

Under the 2008 Farm Bill states were directed to develop a Statewide Forest Resource Assessment along with Strategies to address issues raised in the assessment. I am proud to say that Wyoming has completed this task, and that our documents are being submitted to the US Forest Service this week. We do not have time today to review the entire document, but I would like to take this opportunity to hit on a few of the high points.

Our Assessment and Strategies were developed with the help and input of wide variety of agencies, interest groups, and individuals. The assessment is a geospatial analysis using fourteen key data layers identified by our partners including: Development Risk, Forest Fragmentation, Wildfire Risk, Insect and Disease, Aquatic Habitats, Terrestrial Habitats, Water Quality and Supply, Economic Potential, Green Infrastructure, Community Forestry, Agro-Forestry, and land Stewardship Potential. These data layers allowed us to identify priority landscapes, and to focus on issues and threats that are facing our forests.

With the help of our partners we then developed fifteen threats that are facing the forest of Wyoming along with strategies to deal with them.

Threats and Strategies:

- **Threat 1:** Wyoming is facing forest health issues that are probably unprecedented
- **Threat 2:** lack of a viable forest products industry

- **Threat 3:** In many areas, older forests are being converted to young forests on a large scale due to bark beetle epidemics.

1. Increase age class and species diversity
2. Use fire as a tool
3. Ensure a predictable, dependable supply of forest products
4. Develop additional forest products markets
5. Retain whitebark and limber pine

- **Threat 4:** The threat of fire in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is significant and expanding.

- **Threat 5:** Wildfires in areas outside of the WUI are also a threat.

1. Mitigate risk of catastrophic fires in WUI areas
2. Increase training and capacity
3. Actively manage suitable lands
4. Reintroduce prescribed fire
5. Utilize natural fires
6. Continued cooperation between agencies

- **Threat 6:** Wyoming's low elevation riparian forests are in decline

1. Increase stream flow rates
2. Manage ungulate populations
3. Manage upstream forests
4. Forest management activities in riparian areas to increase forest health
5. Increase the public's understanding

- **Threat 7:** Aspen is a growing focus of concern within the Rocky Mountain region.

1. Increase regeneration of aspen
2. Analyze current and potential aspen sites
3. Manage ungulate populations

- **Threat 8:** There are numerous challenges to maintaining healthy community forests in Wyoming

1. Enhance species and age diversity
2. Increase local community forestry expertise
3. Enhance funding and build capacity
4. Measure progress within communities
5. Build green infrastructure

- **Threat 9:** In an arid state like Wyoming, water quality and quantity will always be important issues.
  1. Compliance with Wyoming's Silviculture BMP's
  2. Conduct forest management activities
  3. Emphasize riparian forest restoration
  4. Reduce runoff from urban areas into watersheds
  5. Evaluate community tree canopies
  
- **Threat 10:** Terrestrial habitat is under pressure in Wyoming.
  1. Encourage landscape level planning
  2. Provide management information
  3. Maintain continuity across ownerships and programs
  4. Mimic natural disturbance regimes
  
- **Threat 11:** Fragmentation of land ownership is likely to adversely affect natural resource management in Wyoming.
  
- **Threat 12:** Access for management is becoming more complicated.
  1. Cross-boundary collaboration
  2. Manage subdivisions as one land unit
  3. Landscape-level travel management plans

4. Provide incentives to conserve working forest lands
  5. Keep forestry practices financially viable
- **Threat 13:** Management guidance for private lands is increasingly important.
    1. Emphasize stewardship plan development
    2. Provide information and education to private landowners
    3. Better inventory on private lands.
    4. Establish/maintain a local contractor base
    5. Provide financial incentive for management
    6. Develop and implement Certification programs for landowners
- **Threat 14:** Wyoming will be on the leading edge of the impacts of global climate change.
    1. Explore the carbon sequestration potential
    2. Address forest management under a changing climate
    3. Adapt water management to accommodate changes
- **Threat 15:** Invasive species, both insects and plants, pose a threat to forested lands.
    1. Monitor invasive insects, pathogens, and plants

2. Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) guidelines
3. Build awareness of invasive species
4. Focus efforts on the control and management
5. Develop rehabilitation and restoration strategies
6. Encourage management techniques that do not promote the spread of invasive species
7. Manage forests and rangelands to increase resistance

We plan to use these documents to help in focusing our efforts and limited funds (both federal and state) in areas and on projects that will deliver the maximum return on our investment.

We believe that the partnership between the state and the federal agencies, both the US Forest Service and the NRCS are important to all of our success, and that the forestry programs in the Farm Bill are important facets of that success.

Thank You.