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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORESTRY AND HORTICULTURE

AMERICAN LOGGERS COUNCIL TESTIMONY
SCOTT DANE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PROMOTING FOREST HEALTH AND RESILIENCY THROUGH
IMPROVED ACTIVE MANAGEMENT

Chairman LaMalfa and Committee Members, on behalf of the American Loggers Council, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding *Promoting Forest Health and Resiliency Through Improved Active Management*.

I am the Executive Director of the American Loggers Council which represents members in 49 states.

I would like to begin by addressing silviculture (forest management), which is the **science** of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, and health of forests and woodlands and societal objectives, such as producing timber, maintaining wildlife habitat, improving forest health, recreation, and protecting watersheds on a sustainable basis. This is accomplished by a range of practices including planting, thinning, and harvesting to guide the development of a forest stand for desired outcomes.

These sustainable forest management activities are not being fully utilized on our National Forests, particularly as they apply to timber harvesting. Over the past



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few decades, the volume of timber harvest on National Forests has declined by over 75%, from a high of 13 billion board feet to 3 billion board feet.

Additionally, silvicultural standards establish tree stand density (trees per acre) that is optimal for achieving healthy forest objectives. According to top forest researchers: "... low-density stands that largely eliminate tree competition are key to creating forests resilient to the multiple stressors of severe wildfire, drought, bark beetles and climate change." They conclude that "managing for resilience requires drastically reducing densities - as much as 80% of trees, in some cases." ¹

Tree mortality for the first time (2016), according to USFS reports², exceeds tree growth by two times. Let me repeat that – twice as many trees are dying in the National Forests than are growing. Much of this mortality is driven by wildfire. It is not timber harvesting. Timber harvesting is only 25% of the net tree growth, and seven times more trees are dying than are being harvested. Logging isn't the problem; in fact, it is the solution. I have included a copy of this report for the Congressional Record.

These statistics clearly indicate that National Forest management policy for the past three decades has not worked. The health of National Forests is in severe decline.

This brings me to wildfire. Millions of acres of forests burn annually. Fire **science** is basic. Three components are necessary for fire: an ignition source (quite often lightning strikes), oxygen, and fuel. The only one that we can control is fuel, and in the case of wildfires, unhealthy forests that are overstocked and filled with dying and dead timber.

In an effort to begin reducing hazardous fuels from National Forest lands, the American Loggers Council, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, developed the Biomass Transportation Incentive Pilot project that removed 120,000 green tons of hazardous fuels (primarily biomass) and utilized it as feedstock for



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biomass power generation. This successful demonstration evolved into the USDA/USFS Hazardous Fuels Transportation Assistance Program that continues to remove hazardous fuels from National Forest landscapes.

This public/private partnership is one of many opportunities available to collaboratively mitigate wildfire threats and severity by reducing fuel loads and addressing the backlog of landscape treatment.

The USFS has developed a Wildfire Crisis Strategy to begin addressing 50 million acres of high-risk forest firesheds. The primary component of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy is fuel (timber) reduction.

The Administration recognizes these facts and has issued numerous Executive Orders, initiated trade investigations, issued policy directives, and taken other actions to improve forest management and support the U.S. timber and forest products industries.

These directives need to be codified to ensure their long-term implementation. This crisis is a problem - decades in the making and it will require decades to correct. The most comprehensive legislation to codify this and other forest management reforms is the Fix Our Forests Act. Passing this legislation will ensure that forest management and wildfire mitigation regulations, policies, and procedures survive political cycles.

With the new Congress and Administration, the American Loggers Council prepared *A Road Map to Recovery*³ that identified the top seven priority issues and actionable Congressional and Administration responses. I have included a copy with my testimony to be included in the Congressional Record.

With over 150 mills closed across the country in the past 36 months, markets are seriously compromised. To Promote Forest Health and Resiliency Through Improved Active Management, markets are necessary.



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NO MARKETS, NO MANAGEMENT

We are at a crossroads. Congress and the Administration must take action to improve forest health through active management, before the logging and mill infrastructure deteriorates to a point that forest management will not be possible.

¹ *Operational resilience in western US frequent-fire forests*

www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378112721010975?dgcid=author#preview-section-abstract

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² *Annual Net Growth, Mortality, and Harvest on National Forest on National Forest Timberlands 1952-2016*

³ *A Roadmap to Recovery*, American Loggers Council 2025