

Death by a Thousand Cuts

A Timeline of Bush Administration Actions that Endanger America's National Forests

“The plan Bush announced looks more like a boon to timber interests than a genuine attempt to reduce hazards to human communities.”

– *Denver Post*

“The Healthy Forests Initiative has less to do with preventing disastrous fires, and more to do with opening a back door to allow more commercial logging in national forests.”

– *Tacoma News Tribune*

“The Bush plan opens the possibility of a replay of the notorious 1995 ‘salvage rider,’ in which Congress suspended environmental regulations under the pretext of fire prevention. The loosened laws led to a frenzy of logging – and damage to forests and streams.”

– *San Francisco Chronicle*

“It comes as no surprise that in a dispute over federal forest land, the Bush administration would tilt toward timber interests. Mr. Bush is also backing a fire-prevention plan that calls for expanded logging in national forests”

– *St Louis Post Dispatch*

“[The Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003] will do far more to improve the economic health of logging companies...than it will do to improve the health of forests or to reduce the threat of wildfires.”

– *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

“Under the pretense of preventing wildfires, the Bush scheme would exempt Forest Service tree-thinning projects from environmental reviews, make it tougher for citizens to challenge those operations and, ultimately, make it easier for timber companies to harvest old-growth trees.”

– *Gainesville Sun*

“The Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 isn't about forest health – it's about logging. And the bill's efforts to weaken the nation's environmental laws isn't about eliminating meddlesome lawsuits – it's about muzzling the public.”

– *Idaho Falls Post Register*

• **January 20, 2001: Rollin' Back Environmental Safeguards Since Day One**

On Inauguration Day, President Bush orders all federal agencies to propose no new regulations, withdraw all new regulations that had not been published in the Federal Register and postpone – for sixty days – any new regulations that had been published. This begins a concerted effort on the part of the Bush Administration to rollback safeguards that protect our nation's clear air, clean water and public lands.

• **May 4, 2001: Promises, Promises...**

The Bush Administration announces that it will uphold the popular Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which protects 58.5 million acres of intact wild forests in our national forest system from most forms of logging and road construction.

• **July 10, 2001: Pickin' the Right Fox for the Henhouse**

President Bush nominates Mark Rey – a former logging industry lobbyist – to oversee the U.S. Forest Service as Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. After serving 18 years as the logging industry's principle lobbyist, Rey made his name in politics as a staff member with the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee where he was the “key architect” (*National Journal*, 1997) of the “logging without laws” Salvage Rider,” which the Washington Post called, “arguably the worst piece of public lands legislation ever.” Under the Salvage Rider – with environmental laws suspended and meaningful public participation banned – enough trees were cut from America's national forests to fill log trucks lined up for over 6,800 miles!

• **August 12, 2001: ...Promises Broken**

The Forest Service – under Bush-appointed Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth – issues a policy that temporarily exempts Alaska's Tongass National Forest and 11 other national forests from the Roadless Rule until all logging industry legal challenges to the rule are resolved. The policy also gives Chief Bosworth the authority to allow road building and logging in roadless areas on all other national forests at his discretion while the legal challenges are under review.

• **October 2, 2001: The Fox Assumes Control of the Henhouse**

Former logging industry lobbyist Mark Rey is sworn in as Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. In this position, Rey is responsible for the management of America's 155 national forests, 19 national grasslands on 192 million acres of public lands.

• **November 27, 2001: Cutting the Public Out of Public Lands**

In order to push through one of the largest logging projects in agency history – the Bitterroot National Forest's Burned Area “Recovery Plan” – Forest Service Chief Bosworth declared that he would circumvent the public appeals process by having Mark Rey sign off on the massive logging plan. This blatant disregard for public involvement left the 4,400 citizens who commented on a draft of the plan out in the cold. A federal judge later criticized the Forest Service's move by saying the agency had elected “to take the law into its own hands.”

• **December 14, 2001: Promises Broken...Yet Again**

The Forest Service announces new guidelines that further reduce protections for roadless areas. Under the new guidelines smaller, undeveloped forests adjacent to larger roadless areas are no longer protected from development. The changes also end mandatory environmental impact reviews of the effects of logging and road building in these areas and stop requiring public participation in the consideration of these projects.

• **January 18, 2002: See No Evil**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, under former industry lobbyist Gale Norton, concludes that 150 years of logging “has not appreciably affected” spotted owls, despite the fact that 90% of the spotted owl's habitat has been destroyed. This opens the floodgates for increased logging in the last ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest.

• **February 6, 2002: Giving Away the Public's Land**

President Bush's 2003 budget authorizes the creation of “charter forests” – whereby the management of publicly-owned national forest lands would be turned over to local private partnerships.

• **April 12, 2002: Taking Out the Teeth**

A draft report by the U.S. Forest Service reveals that the agency intends to “streamline” rules protecting the environment and limit public challenges to its decisions. Within two years the agency would implement regulations limiting external review of the impacts of projects on endangered species.

• **August 22, 2002: Horizontal Forests Initiative**

President Bush unveils the so-called “Healthy Forest Initiative,” which would limit citizen involvement and undermine the nation's environmental laws in order to dramatically increase logging in national forests. Predictably, the logging industry – which has given more than \$10 million in campaign contributions to Bush and the GOP since the 2000 election cycle – hails the initiative as the best thing since the invention of the chainsaw and the perfect way to restore “forest health.”





• **August 30, 2002: Toss Another Fox in the Henhouse**

Allan Fitzsimmons – who has published articles denying the existence of ecosystems and stated that the extinction of the nation’s 1,200 threatened and endangered species, “would be a disconcerting loss but would not constitute a crisis” – is hand-picked by the Bush Administration to serve as Wildlands Fuel Coordinator for the Department of Interior. Fitzsimmons not only lacks experience in the field of forest ecology or fire management, but he considers efforts to manage ecosystems to be an opportunity for new federal controls that infringe on economic activity and property rights.

• **September 30, 2002: If You Can’t Play By the Rules...**

In reaction to a federal court ruling halting timber sales in the ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest for failure to comply with environmental regulations, the Bush Administration proposes to eliminate those regulations.

• **November 26, 2002: Thanksgiving Turkey**

The Bush Administration proposes a radical rewrite of the regulations implementing the National Forest Management Act that would eliminate habitat protection, public participation and scientific review in order to increase logging, mining, grazing, drilling and other commercial activities on 192 million acres of national forests.

• **December 11, 2002: Greasing the Skids for More Logging**

The Bush Administration proposes “streamlining” rules by eliminating environmental regulations on logging projects whenever the Forest Service claims that the purpose of the logging is to reduce fire risk. The change includes limiting the ability of the public to oppose illegal logging projects on public lands. This, despite the fact that a recent Department of Agriculture report found that, “The removal of large, merchantable trees from forests does not reduce fire risk and may, in fact, increase such risk.”

• **January 27, 2003: From the Redwood Forests...**

Under the guise of “fuel reduction,” the U.S. Forest Service issues a draft plan to resume the logging of giant ancient sequoia trees in the Giant Sequoia National Monument and two national forests in California’s Sierra Nevada mountain range. The plan would sidestep wildlife and watershed protections to allow logging companies to cut down more than 2,000 log trucks full of the nation’s oldest and grandest trees every year.

• **February 28, 2003: A Big Fat Zero**

The Bush Administration completes a court-ordered analysis of potential wilderness areas on the Tongass National Forest in Alaska – part of the world largest remaining coastal temperate rainforest. The Bush Administration recommends that none of the 9.8 million remaining acres of intact ancient temperate rainforest be protected as wilderness, leaving them open to road construction and logging.

• **May 20, 2003: From the White House: “More Logging”**

During a White House ceremony, President Bush urges the U.S. House of Representatives to pass the “Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003.” This misguided and misnamed bill limits citizen involvement, undermines key environmental laws, interferes with the U.S. judicial system and authorizes an additional \$125 million in taxpayer subsidies to log tens of millions of acres of federal public lands. Meanwhile, the bill includes no specific provisions or resources to help rural homeowners protect themselves from wildfire. The Senate is expected to consider the bill in September 2003.

• **May 27, 2003: Don’t Seek and Ye Shan’t Find**

The Bush Administration agrees to demands by logging companies in Oregon to stop requiring federal land managers to survey for sensitive plant and animal species before allowing logging in ancient, old-growth forests.

• **May 30, 2003: Loopholes for Larger Logging Trucks**

The Bush Administration puts new regulations in place that allow the Forest Service to log areas up to 1,000 acres in size with no analysis of the environmental impacts. Incredibly, the Administration claims that logging an area the size of 930 football fields will result in “no significant environmental impact.” The exemptions apply to projects throughout national forests, including the remote backcountry.

• **May 30, 2003: Administration to Endangered Species: “Don’t let the door hit you on the way out!”**

The Bush Administration continues its efforts to undermine the protection of threatened or endangered species by announcing a new proposal that gives the Forest Service the ability to avoid involving federal wildlife agencies in logging and other projects that may degrade threatened or endangered species and their habitat.

• **June 5, 2003: Triple the Logging in California’s Sierra Nevada Mountain Range**

The Bush Administration announces that it will scrap the current Sierra Nevada Framework – adopted in 2001 following eight years of scientific study – with a plan that will triple logging levels in 11 national forests in California. The Bush plan opens spotted owl reserves to logging and allows the cutting of fire-resistant trees as large as 8 feet in circumference under the guise of “fuel reduction.”

• **June 9, 2003: Promises Shattered**

Mark Rey announces that the Bush Administration will completely dismantle the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. According to Rey, the Administration will settle a lawsuit with the logging industry and exempt 14.7 million acres of ancient rainforest in Alaska’s Tongass and Chugach National Forests from protection under the Roadless Rule. He also announces that the Bush Administration will give state governors the ability to open wild national forests in their states to the logging industry.

• **July 23, 2003: More Loopholes for More Logging**

During a press conference with the media and the logging industry, Mark Rey announces a new regulation that allows the Forest Service to log live trees on 70 acres and dead, dying or diseased trees on 250 acres with absolutely no environmental analysis or public input.

“This policy of saving the forest by destroying the trees would help line the pockets of timber companies.”

– *Boston Globe*

“The administration has ignored governors in the West, denigrated outside experts and rewarded friends with this legislation. This is what passes for environmental policy in the Bush White House.”

– *Nashville Tennessean*

“The answer is not in allowing timber companies to indiscriminately rev up their chain saws or in undermining the nation’s basic environmental protection laws.”

– *Los Angeles Times*

“The Bush administration is trying to disguise a deplorable assault on the environment by cloaking it in language that makes it appear the country’s largest national forest will be protected. In truth, though, vast tracts will be vulnerable to new commercialization.”

– *Albany Times-Union*

“President Bush is back at it, working hard to live up to his growing reputation as the most environmentally irresponsible president in modern history.”

– *Louisville Courier-Journal*

“The White House pines for the days after World War II, when demand for wood spiked, federal lands seemed an inexhaustible asset primed for profit, and public dollars paid for clear-cutting that encroached ever more steadily into fragile areas.”

– *Philadelphia Inquirer*

“When the Bush administration puts its hands on the dials of environmental regulation, it’s a safe bet they’ll be turned to a lower setting. The administration has dialed down the restrictions on drilling for oil and natural gas on public land....Last week it proposed to adjust a ban on cutting trees in roadless areas of the national forests.”

– *San Jose Mercury News*

“It is becoming the Bush Administration’s most recognizable MO: Embrace an emotional issue to grease ulterior motives.... And now it’s using the devastating fire season out West to defend stepped up logging and scaled back environmental regulations.”

– *Daytona Beach News-Journal*