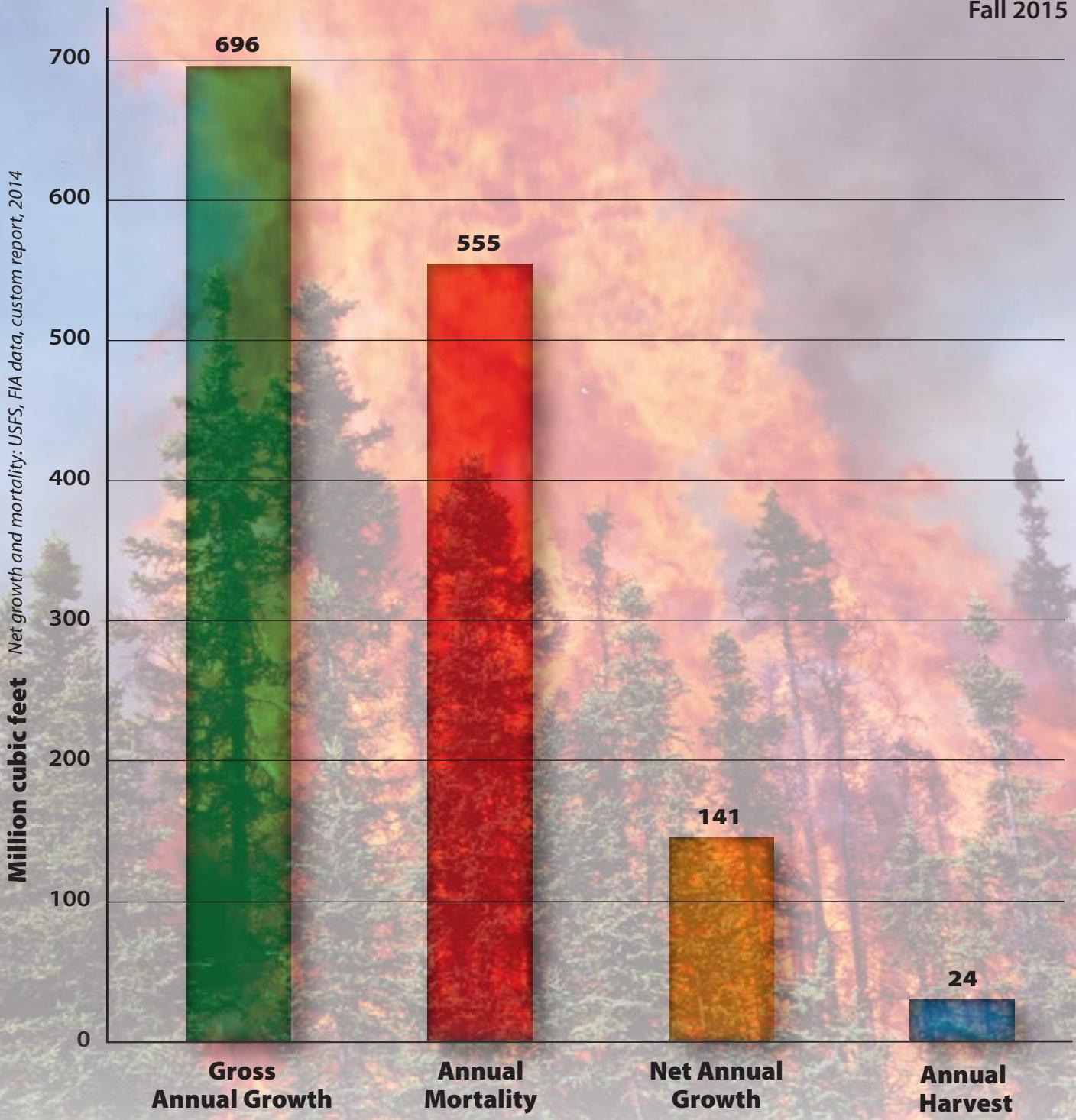


EVERGREEN

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**The Ticking Time Bomb in Idaho's National Forests
Where do we go from here?**

Idaho's ticking time bomb:

IN SUMMARY

The bar graph on our cover is the central feature in the most important Evergreen report we have published in our 30-year history. It quantifies the natural disaster that is unfolding in Idaho's National Forests, a calamity unprecedented in state history.

Frankly, the data represented on this chart is last thing we expected to find when we began our seven-month investigation of forest collaboratives at work in Idaho's national forests. In hindsight, we should not have been surprised that our research also took us to western Montana and eastern Washington where we are still working.

This report is specific to Idaho's National Forests. The news is terrible. By volume, 80 per cent of gross annual growth on timberlands in Idaho's National Forests dies annually: 555 million cubic feet – a solid block of wood the size of a football field stretching 1.8 miles into the sky. 1.8 miles this year and another 1.8 miles – or more – next year. And so it goes, year after year.

Insect and disease infestations are the driving forces behind ecological collapse in Idaho – and across the 11 western states. Federal forests hold too many trees for the carrying capacity of the land. Resulting systemic stresses – triggered mainly by drought – attract insects and root diseases that are killing trees by the hundreds of millions. Catastrophic wildfire is the inevitable result.

West-wide, the U.S. Forest Service reports that some 80 million acres of federal forestland need treatment of one kind or another. Whether triage teams arrive in time will be a function of Congress' willingness to stop feeding the litigation beast that is preventing large scale forest restoration projects from moving forward.

Here is a summation of what we have learned thus far that explains why forest collaborative volunteers at work in Idaho's national forests are both frustrated and worried sick about their inability to move fast enough to pull Idaho's prized national forests back from the brink of ecological collapse.

Forest collaboratives are not new. Remember northern California's Quincy Library Group from the 1990s? Much touted, it failed, despite strong



Day or night, fighting big wildfires in Idaho is tough and deadly business

bi-partisan support, because Congress failed/refused to close the litigation loop hole, allowing serial litigators who refused to join collaboratives to continue to hide behind byzantine federal regulations created by the same Congress that blessed collaboration. What were they thinking?

The "new" collaboratives come at a time when Congress is tiptoeing up the reality that litigators who refuse to collaborate will continue to sue for as long as they can – and they can and will until Congress forces them to collaborative tables that are being set across the rural West.

Collaboration is a throwback to the old town hall meetings that were so prevalent in the New England states during our nation's formative years. Folks drawn together by common interest and need work cooperatively to solve problems that are impeding progress in their community.

We're still getting used to the idea that the forest collaboratives have drawn conservationists and lumbermen to the same tables. But they have and the results have been spectacular. Common need has become the glue

that binds them tightly to one another. The need is to find ways to rescue forests that are falling apart before their very eyes.

The strongest collaboratives are the ones that draw participation from citizens whose cultural values and interests in forests and forestry vary widely. This may seem counterintuitive to skeptics, but it is hard to argue with the wisdom behind decisions made by groups that represent and respect every political, social, economic and environmental point of view in a given community.

Two necessities are driving every successful collaborative we visited. For conservationists, it is a deeply felt desire for more designated wilderness. For lumbermen, it is all about the federal log supply, just as it has been since the end of World War II.

The two old enemies now agree that the West's federal forests are big enough to accommodate both needs. Conservationists now pound the table for federal logs for their local sawmills and lumbermen write letters to their congressional delegations in support of wilderness designations in roadless

areas. Collaboration needs no more proof of its worth or its problem solving potential.

Collaboration's soft underbelly is its inefficiency. Building trust among old adversaries can takes months or even years. But now the collaboratives are up and running and anxious to take on larger projects. But first Congress needs to remove some regulatory hurdles that make the process terribly inefficient.

We address these in our Findings and Recommendations on Pages 4 and 5. Collaboration is easily the sharpest tool in the Forest Service's toolbox. But it is not the only tool Congress has authorized the agency to use. We touch on these in our Findings and Recommendations. But here we want to call attention to our own sense that the Forest Service is often afraid of its own shadow. It shrinks from project size and speed because it fears nuisance litigation.

Bonding and baseball-style arbitration, both cited in our Findings and Recommendations, trump ecologically and economically devastating litigation. Again, Congress needs to stuff the litigation genie back in the bottle. The bar graph on the cover and Page 16, the watershed map on Pages 6 and 7 and the Condition Class map on Page 12 explain why this experiment in "citizen suits" is a colossal failure.

The manner in which Congress funds its forest fire fighting budget is also a colossal failure. It worked back in the 1950s and 1960s, when annual losses were less than one million acres, but this year we blew past 9.5 million acres. "Fire borrowing" from the Forest Service's annual budget is ridiculous. It takes money and people away from forest restoration work designed to prevent wildfires. Anyone besides us see something wrong with this picture?

The current flurry of activity for the House Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is a positive sign, but the already congressionally blessed collaboratives aren't even scratching the surface of the West's ecological crisis. Nor are their Forest Service partners. Congress needs to quickly clear away years of redundant regulatory rubble that are impeding progress and investment in sustainable and economically viable solutions to the ecological crisis that has engulfed our national forests.



FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nearly 80 percent of Idaho's 21.4 million-acre forest land base - some 17.3 million acres - is federally owned. The Forest Service recently estimated that about 15 million of these acres need restoration work of one kind or the other.

Because about 3.7 million acres of Idaho's national forest lies within designated wilderness areas that are reserved from management, and nine million more acres lie within politically contentious roadless areas where no management is occurring, it is difficult to determine just how many national forest acres in Idaho are legislatively and administratively available for restoration. We suspect it is somewhere near four million acres, which seems a terrible injustice given all that Idaho's forests mean to its citizens.

The cause of ecological collapse in Idaho's national forests is well known. Forests have grown too dense - a result of the public's historic intolerance for wildfires that kill everything in sight. But in short-circuiting fire's natural role, public policy has ushered in unanticipated ecological change, none less understood than the subsequent invasion of shade tolerant tree species, principally grand fir and white fir.

These more shade tolerant tree species are also more susceptible to insects, diseases and the killing heat of wildfire than once dominant western white pine and larch. But removing them is bound to stir controversy because we have three generations of Americans who are accustomed to their lush beauty. But they are the wrong trees in the wrong places.

Although science and technology provide all of the tools the nation needs to pull western federal forests back from the brink of ecological collapse, federal forest policy continues to feed a bitter debate between public's who favor science-based forest restoration and those that prefer to let nature take its course. We favor science-based restoration. Our post-industrial society has forest needs - economic, environmental, social and cultural - that cannot be met on nature's indeterminable timetable.

Restoration activities take many forms: replanting burned areas, thinning diseased trees, moving, repairing or decommissioning roads, adding woody debris to streams to increase fish habitat, using prescribed fire after thinning to eliminate excess woody debris, thinning forests that were replanted 25 or more years ago to prevent them from becoming too dense, or removing undesirable tree species and replacing them with trees best suited to Idaho's forest types.

Collaborative members we interviewed in Idaho, western Montana and northeast Washington work voluntarily. Most devote hundreds and sometimes thousands of hours of their time to collaborative projects in their areas.

Collaboration is one many tools Congress has granted the Forest Service, but it is the only one that has allowed long time adversaries to sit down at tables and get to know one another.

Other available tools include Stewardship Contracts, which allow the Forest Service to offset restoration costs by trading environmental services for trees removed from overstocked timber stands; Categorical Exclusions, which allow the Forest Service to fast track environmental reviews of proposed projects; Good Neighbor Authorities, which allow State Foresters to oversee timber projects on national forests after the Forest Service completes its environmental reviews; and 2014 Farm Bill provisions that enabled state governors to prioritize landscape scale treatment areas up to 3,000 acres. In Idaho, Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter worked with collaborative groups in the designation of 50 treatment areas totaling 1.8 million acres.

Collaborators we interviewed report that their success turns on trust and trust can take years to develop. Earned respect and a willingness to talk through one another's ideas are essential.

The most successful collaboratives involve the most diverse groups of stakeholders. This will seem counter-intuitive to skeptics, but it's true.

Although these collaboratives aren't even scratching the surface of

Idaho's national forest calamity, their modest restoration successes can be measured in at risk acres treated and logs delivered to Idaho sawmills.

Without infrastructure - loggers to thin trees from forests that have grown too dense, and mills to process and market generally low value wood fiber of all kinds - taxpayers could not afford the high cost of forest restoration.

Where restoration was once a byproduct of timber management, timber production has now become a byproduct of commonly shared restoration goals. This role reversal is key to public acceptance of myriad forest restoration activities the region's collaboratives are pursuing. Even so, forest restoration is not possible if wood processing facilities are not present.

Collaboration isn't negotiation. It is a problem solving exercise based on shared goals and objectives that are frequently committed to paper, then updated as needed.

Critics on the Left and the Right complain that collaborators lack the knowledge needed to make sound decisions where forest restoration is concerned. We respectfully disagree. Many collaborators have far more knowledge of local forest conditions - and history - than their Forest Service counterparts.

No one we've interviewed seems the least bit interested in "winning" at the expense of another collaborator's conflicting values, a point of view that suggests collaborators recognize that far more is gained through collaborative agreement than will be lost through litigation. Real friendships have developed between very unlikely partners, and real learning is occurring in some unlikely places - on wilderness hikes and in sawmills.

Everyone we've interviewed recognizes that the process is terribly inefficient. Likewise, everyone we've interviewed would prefer to work on much larger physical scales. Some have even suggested that collaboratives should focus on decadal forest plans and leave the details involving specific projects to the Forest Service. Others have suggested that decadal

planning isn't sufficient to justify capital costs associated with rebuilding lost wood processing infrastructure. They say a 20-year time horizon is needed to amortize the millions of dollars that will need to be invested in state-of-the-art logging and wood processing technologies.

Many conservationists are now quite vocal in support of their local mills and many lumbermen have endorsed wilderness proposals. Why? Because conservationists and lumbermen need one another to reach their economic, environmental and political goals, and because, in the words of the Land Council's Mike Petersen, "None of us were getting our needs met."

Likewise, some lumbermen are now publicly supporting designated wilderness. Idaho Forest Group Board Chairman, Marc Brinkmeyer, recently wrote the Idaho congressional delegation endorsing designation of the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Area near Sandpoint, Idaho.

Many in the Forest Service have embraced collaboration, but many more seem to view it as an affront to their professional capabilities, which explains why conservationists and lumbermen often agree that the federal agency is sometimes a bigger road-block on the road to Wisdom than are serial litigators. Collaborative groups we interviewed are blessed to be working with Forest Service partners who support collaboration.

My two cents worth: Congress has blessed collaboration. That's a start. But if it wants this process to work as well as I think it can, it must insulate volunteer collaborative partners from serial litigators. We cannot expect these people to sit around tables for thousands of hours ironing out their differences, only to have their work blown to smithereens by litigators who refuse to collaborate.

Requiring those who appeal or litigate proposed Forest Service restoration projects to post a "loser pays" bond would certainly bring a swift end to nuisance lawsuits filed by lawyers who have come to view the Equal Access to Justice Act as their private piggy bank. The State of Idaho requires such bonding from



those who challenge its forestry projects. Why not the federal government?

Baseball arbitration is another workable solution. It would force litigants to present alternative management solutions to collaborative proposals. No longer could litigators hide behind conflicting federal regulations. The final management decision would be made by a federally appointed arbitration judge whose decision would be based on project goals and objectives.

Forest collaborators agree that the current project review timeline is much too long and expensive – 19 to 37 months at an annual costs of \$350 million. This is a significant waste of time and money given the fact that every acre of timberland in Idaho that is classified as "suitable for management" has already been through extensive environmental review. In fact, most of Idaho's "suitable" acres have already been harvested at least once and, in some cases, twice. Why are additional project reviews needed?

It is long past time for Congress to meaningfully address the cost of owning, protecting and managing a 190 million acres federal forest estate. Stakeholders want many things from "their" forests, none of which can be sustained amid the current growth-mortality crisis illustrated by the bar graph on the cover and back cover of this report.

Speaking of the costs associated with our nation's 190 million acre forest estate, the "fire borrowing" budget mess needs to get fixed immediately. Why is the cost of battling wildfires subtracted from the Forest Service budget? We do not subtract the costs associated with earthquakes, floods, tornadoes or hurricanes from other federal

resource management agencies. The Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] picks up the tab, as it should with forest fires.

We hear lots of chatter about how the Forest Service could do more forest restoration work if it had more boots on the ground and a bigger budget. Maybe it could, but regulatory "analysis paralysis" sucks up 70 percent of the agency's annual budget. Why must we do new "NEPA" work on projects in forests that have been open and under management for 50-60 years? The requirement is a ridiculous waste of taxpayer dollars.

With so much interest in abating the carbon component in climate change, you would think Congress would want to reduce cancer causing smoke emissions from forest fires. Why store this carbon in our lungs when we can safely store it in forests and the wood products they yield.

There are no other structural building materials on earth – not concrete, aluminum or steel – that can match wood's soft environmental footprint. None consumes less energy in its manufacture or use, and none releases fewer pollutants into the atmosphere in its manufacture. Not even close.

Putting two and two together: we have forests with too many trees in them and we have wood grown by the free and non-polluting energy of the sun. So in the same smooth motion, we can restore forests that have too much carbon in them, while increasing our use of beautiful products that turn out to be very good places to store carbon that will otherwise go up in smoke as atmospheric carbon. Seems like a no-brainer to us.

Most forest restoration projects can pay their own way – meaning no taxpayer subsidies are needed – if the projects utilize all of the authorities Congress has given the Forest Service in recent years. But as this report indicates, more help is needed. These needs are addressed in legislation that should become part of the omnibus spending bill we hope Congress ratifies before it adjourns for Christmas.

Jim Petersen, Founder and President,
The Evergreen Foundation

Idaho's ticking time bomb:

"WE SHARE A BELIEF THAT THE SYSTEM IS BROKEN. AND IT IS."

Last April, the non-profit Evergreen Foundation launched a major and continuing investigation of the congressionally-blessed forest collaborative groups at work in Idaho, western Montana, northeastern Washington and elsewhere in the 11 western states.

These all-volunteer stakeholder groups come from all walks of life and represent an impressive array of economic and environmental values: wilderness advocacy, lumber manufacturing and everything in between. They make up the demographic profile the Forest Service has sought for years

Through patience, a gut sense for the moorings that add up to mutual respect and a willingness to talk through one another's ideas, they gradually formed trust relationships based on their shared interest in restoring Idaho's national forests. As a result, they have been able to craft project-level solutions to some of the more vexing problems facing federal natural resource agencies, especially the U.S. Forest Service.

Complete interviews with these dedicated and very creative men and women are posted on our website at www.evergreenmagazine.com. On these two pages you will find some of their more memorable observations concerning collaboration and the unmet challenges they face. Congress, take heed.

As a precursor to our upcoming essays, it is well worth noting that, amid the crazy quilt of environmental regulation Congress has written in the name of conservation, not a single federal forest plan prepared under the aegis of the 1976 National Forest Management Act has ever been fully implemented. Not one. No wonder anger and distrust still linger across much of the rural West.

Jim Petersen, Founder and President, The Evergreen Foundation, Dalton Gardens, Idaho

It helped that we shared a belief that the system is broken. And it is. So you promise each other you will stay at the table until you figure out how to fix it, and then you fix it one

project at a time. It isn't a very efficient way to do business, but we believe that success begets success.

But to your direct question about trust, you build it by doing what you say you will do and by not giving up in the face of disagreements that have to be resolved before you can move forward.

Mike Petersen, Executive Director, The Lands Council, Spokane, Washington

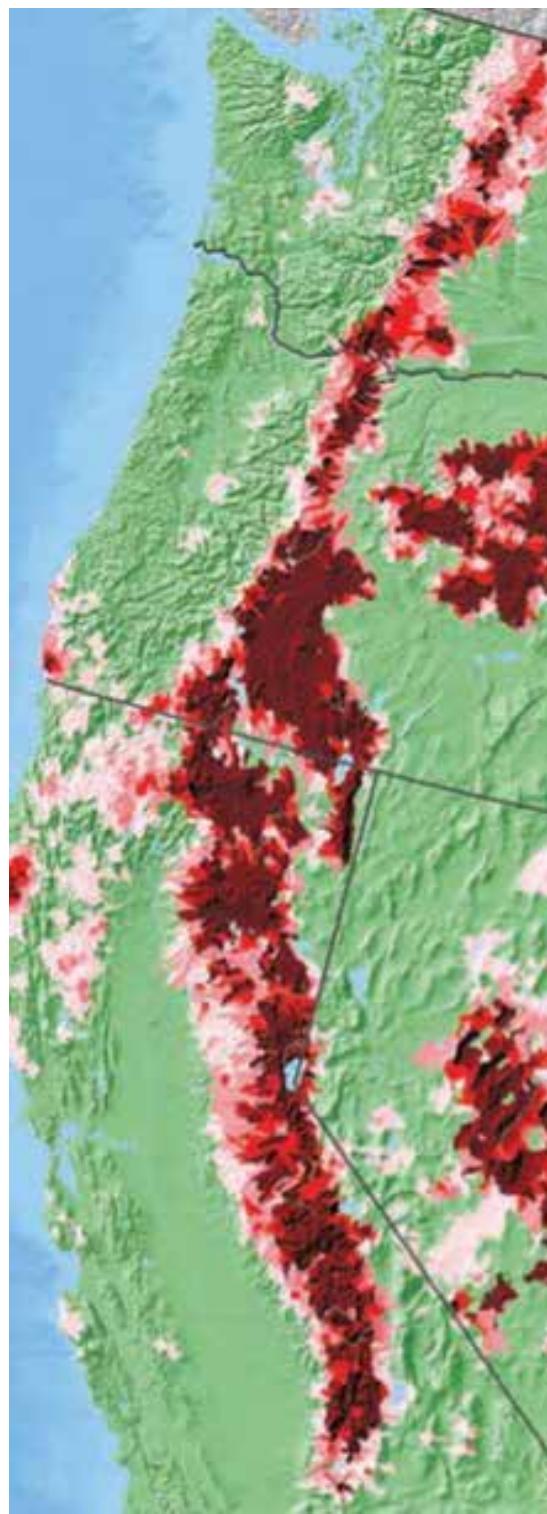
The Lands Council in Spokane, for years a litigator, has been an excellent partner. So has the Idaho Conservation League. There is also a Friends of Scotsman's Peak group that we really appreciate. Please understand that these relationships did not just fall out of the sky. They took time and effort to develop. We all want something here. Mills want logs, conservationists want more wilderness and counties want to be economically vibrant again. Others want more of the things they value. Fortunately, Idaho is a big place. It is possible for all of us to get our diverse needs met if we pull together on the same rope.

Glen Bailey, Bonner County Commissioner, Sandpoint, Idaho

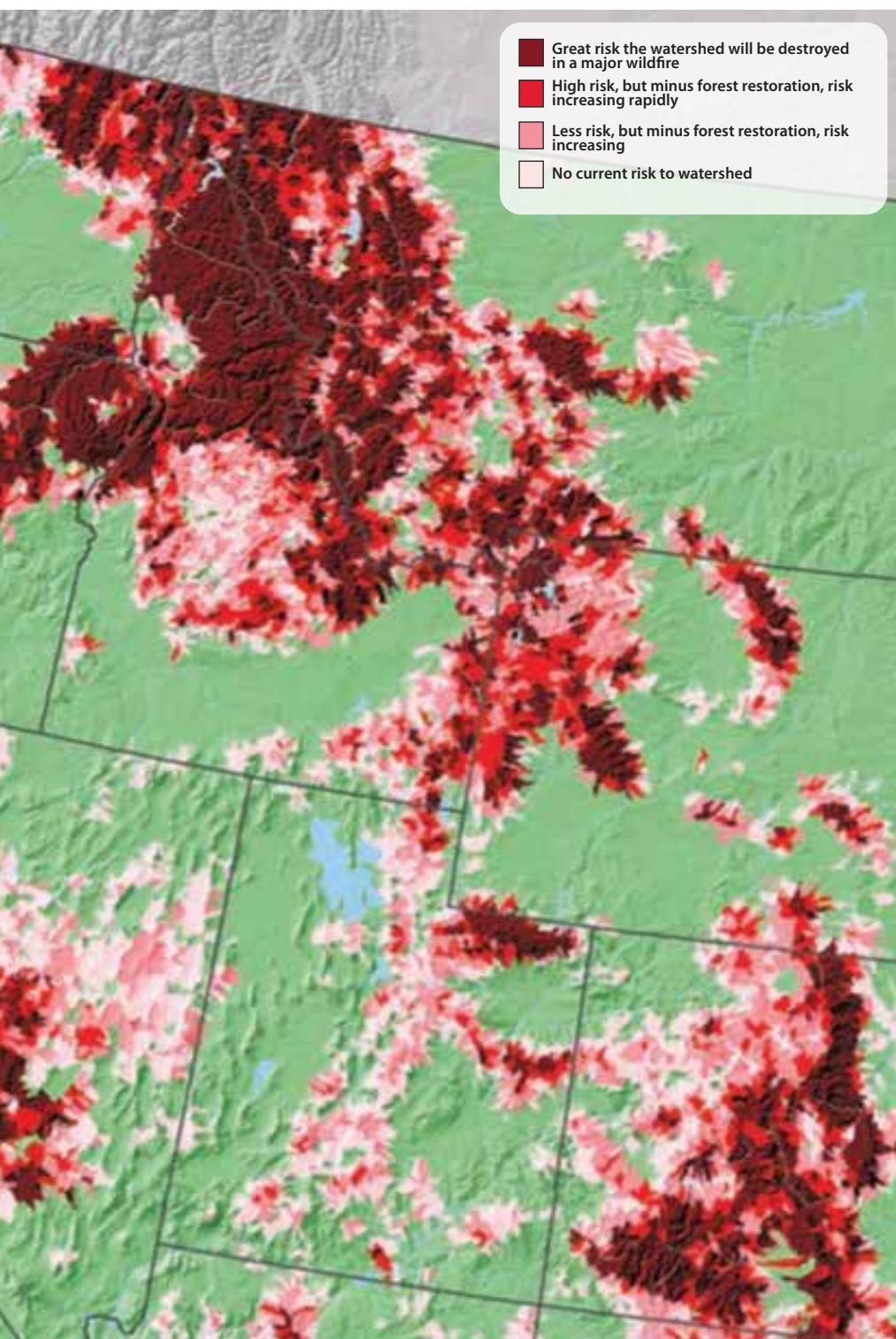
The collaboratives have helped us build better projects, such as the Bottom Canyon project, which went from a proposal for six million board feet of timber production to around 20 million. It also contains some important aquatics restoration work and some trail re-routing to address long-standing erosion issues. Through collaboration, we are able to spend less time mediating disputes, or defending ourselves in court, which means we get more work done on the ground.

Mary Farnsworth, Forest Supervisor, Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

The work involves the development and implementation of restoration projects in forested areas that are dying for lack of management. But please understand that our over-arching goal is to end political gridlock through collaboration – by



**Idaho's Ticking Time Bomb:
Watersheds at risk**



About 80 percent of all the tap water consumed in the western United States comes from national forests. Idaho's forested watersheds, which serve most of the state, are in perilous condition, as are the watersheds that serve Seattle, Tacoma, San Francisco, Portland, all of western Oregon and hundreds of communities that draw their water from California's Sierra Nevada range. The Forest Service values its watersheds at about \$8 billion, an estimate we believe is much too low given the fact that they are an irreplaceable source of water used – and enjoyed – by more than 50 million people living in the 11 western states. Bear in mind that these western watersheds provide far more than municipal water. They are also major fisheries that provide critical habitat for federally threatened fish populations including salmon, steelhead and bull trout.

presenting a united front composed of multiple and very diverse stakeholders who agree that action is better than no action and collaboration is better than litigation.

No boogey men and no backroom dealing. I don't throw stones at conservationists in our group and they don't throw stones at me. We are committed to talking through our differences of opinion. We sit around campfires and share stories – ideas, hopes and experiences – that help us to get to know one another better.

Because we share this planet, we have to learn how to co-exist with people who have different values than our own. We have much more in common than you might expect.

Russ Vaagen, Vice President, Vaagen Brothers Lumber Company, Colville, Washington

Most of the conservation community seems to share our hopes for collaboration as a problem solving tool. This is an evolving process. The more we do it, the more trust we build and the better at it we become. And here I use the collective we. This isn't all about IFG, or even about us needing a stable and adequate log supply. It's about finding pathways for resolving environmental conflicts that result from a collision of often vastly differing societal values.

Scott Atkison, President, Idaho Forest Group, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

I was your typical granola, flipping off logging trucks in the 1970s. My friends think it's funny, and I guess it was, but I was clueless about forestry and logging until we bought land and I began to see changes occurring in our trees. That was the beginning of discovery for me. Then I met a forester from Merritt Brothers Lumber Company, and he introduced me to a logger who did some thinning work for us. Needless to say, it changed my life.

Liz Gephardt-Johnson, Executive Director, Priest Community Forest Connection, Priest River, Idaho

Successful collaboration isn't horse-trading or negotiating, at least

Idaho's ticking time bomb:



Phil Hough

not in a win-lose sense. In a successful collaboration, all parties gain something – and one's gains are not made at the expense of someone else's values. For example, at Bottom Canyon, on the Fernan Ranger District east of Coeur d' Alene, the collaborative proposal increased the amount of timber scheduled for harvest, does more restoration work than was in the original plan and takes a more comprehensive look at cumulative impacts,, thus ensuring conservation values in the long run. Building trust among the collaborative participants was vital to bringing about these results.

Phil Hough, Executive Director,
Friends of Scotchman Peaks
Wilderness, Sagle, Idaho



Chad Hudson

Collaboration isn't easy. A lot of field time, face time, patience and a willingness to be completely open and transparent is necessary. Ultimately, much time is needed to create strong relationships among collaborative members and with the Forest Service. These relationships are critical to create a fully functioning and effective collaborative. A lot of credit goes to the members of the Panhandle Forest Collaborative. Their dedication and willingness to work together despite differing values resulted in an

effective team that I hope to work with on future projects.

Chad Hudson, Fernan District Ranger,
Idaho Panhandle National Forest,
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

"Certainty is a two-way street. We believe Idaho needs a wilderness bill for the same reasons that we need certainty in our raw material supply. There are still millions of roadless acres here in Idaho. Some of those acres belong in designated wilderness areas, some should be managed as back country and some should be allocated to active forest management with a goal of providing certainty for lumbermen, loggers and counties in which the largest landowner is the federal government. Our company will support wilderness legislation when the time is right."

Marc Brinkmeyer, Chairman of
the Board, Idaho Forest Group,
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho



Bob Boeh

We will be at the table as long as there is a table and we are moving forward, but there are currently 26 high priority forest restoration projects - 500,000 acres in total - on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest that were designated by a gubernatorial task force under the Farm Bill. These projects don't even scratch the surface, and yet at our current work pace, it will take us at minimum 25 years to complete. Those forests will be dead and gone by then.

Bob Boeh, Vice President,
Government and Community Affairs,
Idaho Forest Group

I am extremely frustrated. I am vice-chair of the Senate Finance Committee in Idaho and sit on the Transportation and Education committees. I know what's happening in our small towns. Places like Priest

River and St. Maries, Cascade and Kamiah. These are sawmill towns surrounded by federal forests that are fire traps. Everyone knows it, yet no one seems to know how to move faster. We have to move faster. Time is running out, not just economically but also environmentally. And, we could easily lose the skills and knowledge of our logging workforce as the next generation of logging families decides whether to stay in the business or look for other financially viable professions.

*Shawn Keough, Executive Director,
Associated Logging Contractors of
Idaho. Idaho State Senator, District 1*

Timber industry people who don't trust forest collaboration believe that those of us who participate in collaboratives are sleeping with the enemy. Environmentalists who would rather sue than participate in collaboratives think that environmentalists who collaborate with us are sleeping with the enemy. So it's unanimous. We're sleeping with our enemies. I don't care what our critics think. Collaborative groups, ours included, are solving political problems that should never have become political problems, and those problems are the reason why our forests are dying and burning before our very eyes. So if you really want to know what collaboration is all about, it's about protecting forests from the ravages of nature, not just for our benefit, but also for the benefit of future generations.

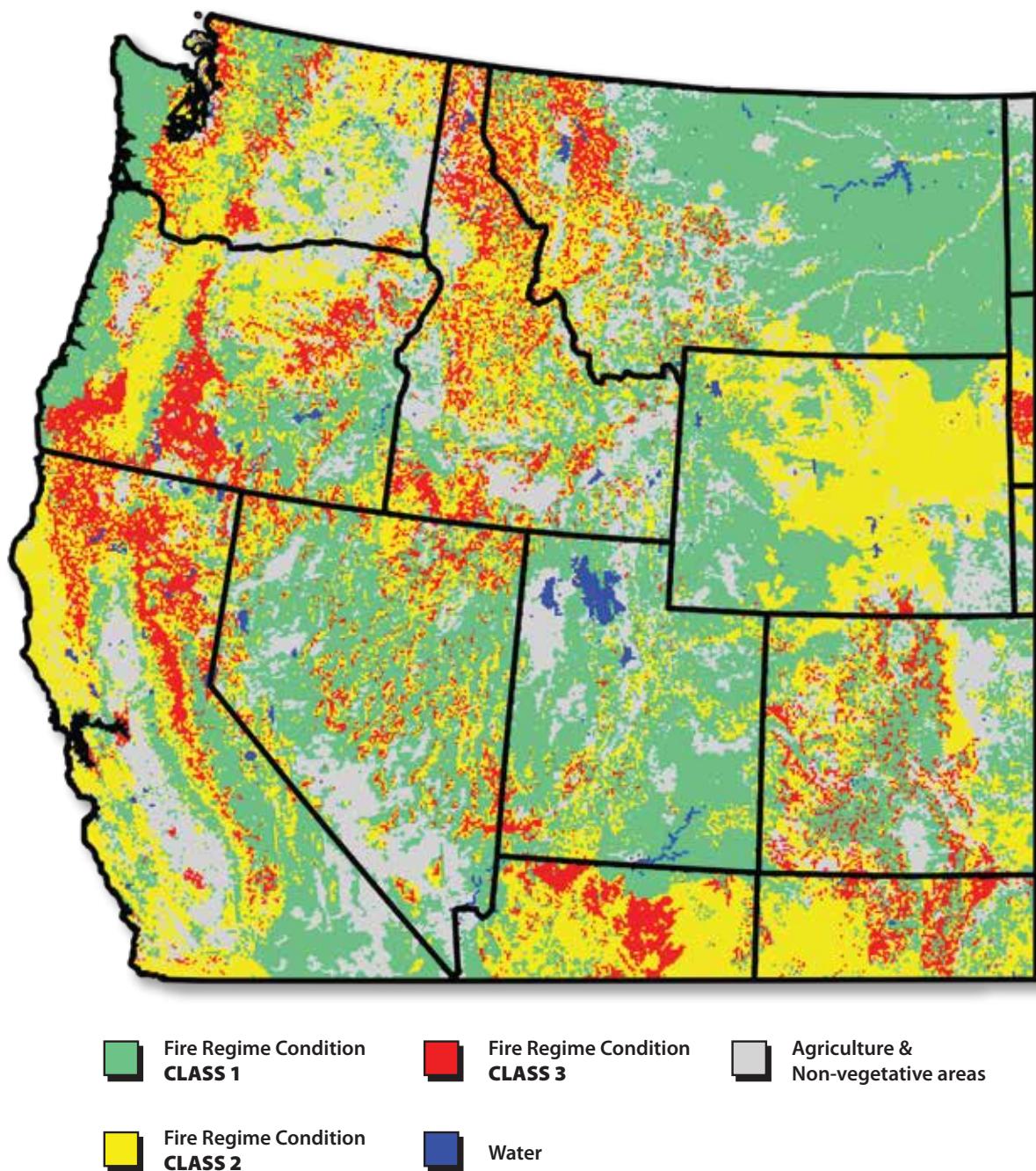
*Duane Vaagen, Chief Executive
Officer, Vaagen Brothers Lumber
Company, Colville, Washington*

We can work faster and more efficiently if collaboration and the NEPA process move concurrently to one another. But the Forest Service also needs more internal capacity to keep up with the necessary field work; site surveys, project design and layout. More capacity means more staffing which requires a stop to the erosion of the Agency's funding. Assuming sufficient staffing, there isn't any reason why the two years that collaborators now invest in 5,000-acre projects can't be invested in 100,000-250,000 acre projects.

*Tom Tidwell, Chief of the Forest
Service, Washington, D.C.*

Idaho's ticking time bomb:

MAPPING THE WEST'S ALMOST UNIMAGINABLE WILDFIRE CRISIS



This Forest Service map illustrates ecological conditions in the West's national forests. Fire ecologists use "condition classes" to describe the likelihood that a forest will burn and to what severity. Forests in Condition Class 1 are said to be healthy and able to recover naturally from wildfires that fall within what is called "the range of natural disturbances." Forests judged to be in Condition Class 2 are not as healthy, and will suffer far greater damage than forests in Condition Class 1. Condition Class 3 forests are in poor condition and are likely to suffer catastrophic damage. Virtually all of the West's national forests are in Condition Class 2 or 3.

Most of Idaho and western Montana – the pathway followed by the Great 1910 Fire – is in Condition Class 3. Short of a massive forest restoration effort, these forests will be lost in a stand replacing wildfire unlike anyone living in this region has ever seen. The region's highly prized four-season outdoor lifestyle will be lost for at least a century.

Idaho's ticking time bomb:

I don't just represent Avista in our Northeast Washington Forest Coalition. I represent the community at large; Kettle Falls, Colville, our smaller towns, all of us who live, work and play here. This is our home. It is where we raise our families and build friendships that will last a lifetime. It took me awhile to grasp the real significance of this whole idea. But now I have, and I can tell you that all of us who are members of this coalition share a deep sense of obligation to do what is right economically, environmentally and socially. We are striving to build a healthy and thriving community through a collaborative process that has us honoring and reaching for the different values that each of us brings to the table.

Ron Gray, Fuels Manager, Avista Utilities, Kettle Falls, Washington



Bruce Vincent and son Chaz

If the Forest Service's management goals and our collaborative conclusions are paralyzed by litigants and the courts, the concerned public has a right to ask the question we have posed in this interview; and the question is: 'Who is empowered to care for our forests?' From where we sit on the Kootenai, the unfortunate answer is, 'No one.'

This leads to a second unanswered question, which is 'How do we empower our local resolution process?' We've been collaborating locally – and pretty successfully - on the Kootenai National Forest for 25

years with very little to show for thousands of hours of hard work.

Bruce Vincent, Founder, Provider Pals, Libby, Montana

Our employees are experts in the science of forest health but there is more to managing public lands than science alone. Through the relationships we are building on the IPNF, we are gaining greater trust among our communities and building a reputation as a Forest Service unit that is able to accomplish more work in forest health restoration than we have in many years. We gain that trust not by simply telling our interested partners that we are experts and that they should trust us, but by actively involving them in discussions about how we do our work and why it is important. This level of transparency

Forest Service and our many forest stakeholders have been looking at overstocked forests and testing different treatments and thinning equipment for at least 25 years. We've done some things right and some things wrong. And then we've started over again in hopes of finding better results next time. I know this because I've participated in quite a few of these projects.

During the same time frame, we have watched mills disappear because they could not find enough timber to keep operating. Every time we lose a mill we end up hauling logs greater distances, which is more costly. The greater cost undermines the viability of thinning and restoration projects like this one. We don't need 50,000-acre projects that take ten years to complete. If we keep it practical, as we have here, we build a base of public acceptance and trust based on visible results that are pleasing to the eye as well as environmentally and economically beneficial.

Dave Ehrmantrout, Logger, Priest River, Idaho



Barry Wynsma

can be slow going at first, but as trust increases the conversations become more efficient and we are able to move forward on projects with the support of a diverse group of collaborative partners.

Mary Farnsworth,
Forest Supervisor, Idaho Panhandle
National Forest, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Many people have been chasing consistent and viable forest thinning programs, what you are calling 'certainty,' for most of their professional lives. The timber industry, the

I think it's a too little, too late band aid approach to a knot of problems associated with analysis paralysis. That's one problem – and a big one – but maybe the bigger problem is that the collaborative process remains very vulnerable to sabotage by non-participants, mainly the serial litigators that operate in Region 1. Congress needs to close this loophole because the stakeholders who are members of collaboratives are volunteering hundreds and sometimes thousands of hours of their personal time to developing forest restoration projects.

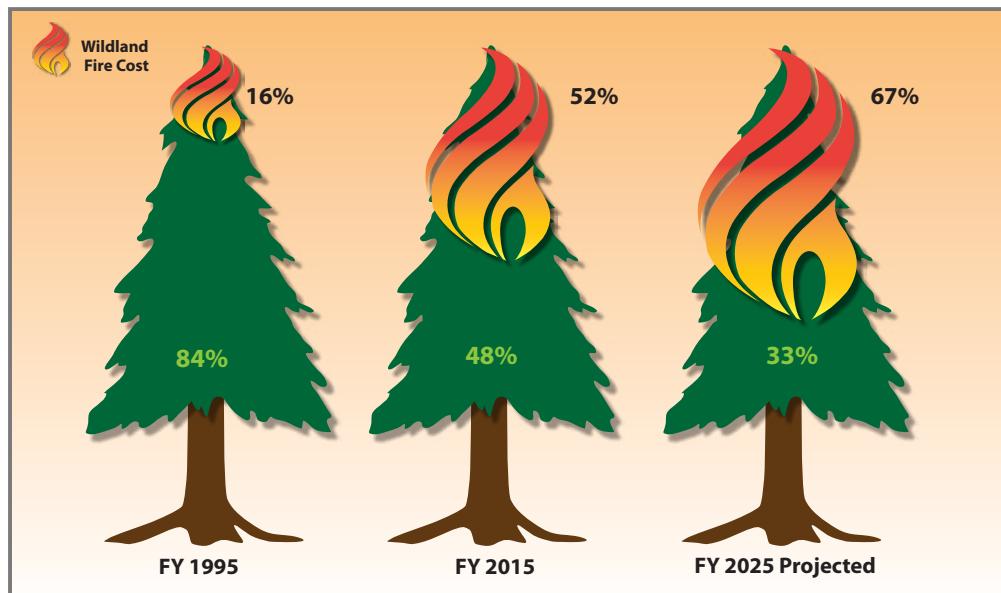
Barry Wynsma, U.S. Forest Service,
Retired, Bonners Ferry, Idaho



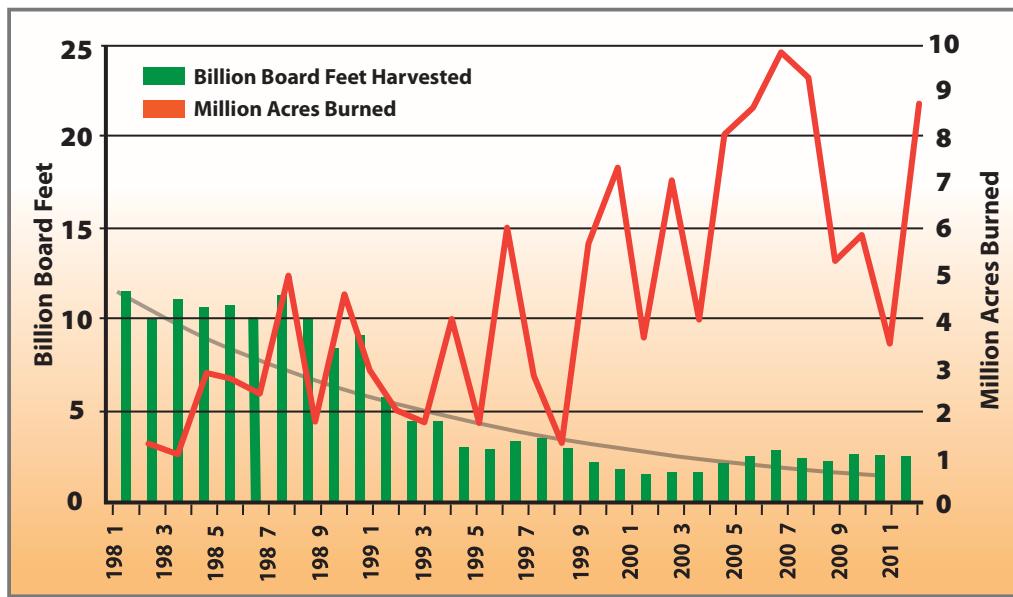
The North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River was flowing at ten percent of normal when this photograph was taken in August – a result of drought conditions that continue across the western United States. The North Fork is one of two major rivers that drain into Coeur d'Alene Lake, which is one of two major recreation areas in northern Idaho. The smoky haze you see is the result of several large wildfires that burned in the drainage this summer. The North Fork is a prized and very popular cutthroat fishery, but drought and weeks of heavy smoke made it less than desirable for most of the summer. During the worst of the fires, all of the river's Forest Service campgrounds were closed. One major collaborative restoration project is scheduled to begin next spring and a second is in the planning phase.

Idaho's ticking time bomb:

Wildland Fire Cost Consumes Forest Service Budget Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow



Timber Harvested vs. Burned on Federal Forests



The relationship between these two illustrations is startling.

"Timber Harvested versus Burned in Federal Forests" shows that as federal timber harvesting declined from 1985, there has been a dramatic increase in the millions of acres of forestland burned annually.

"Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" forecasts that by 2025, wildland firefighting costs will consume 67 percent of the entire Forest Service budget. Firefighting costs this year consumed 52 percent of the agency's budget, compared to just 16 percent 20 years ago. The forest restoration budget declines in direct proportion to the increase in firefighting costs.

The only possible way to end this vicious cycle is to significantly increase the number of acres of federal forestland that are treated annually. The dead and dying trees that are fueling these wild fires must be removed from as many acres as is humanly possible.

Treating at risk forests – those in Condition Class 2 or 3 {See maps on Page 6, 7 and 12} - before they burn is far less expensive than the costs associated with putting out a wildfire and restoring the land.

Idaho's ticking time bomb:

FOREST RESTORATION DEFINED



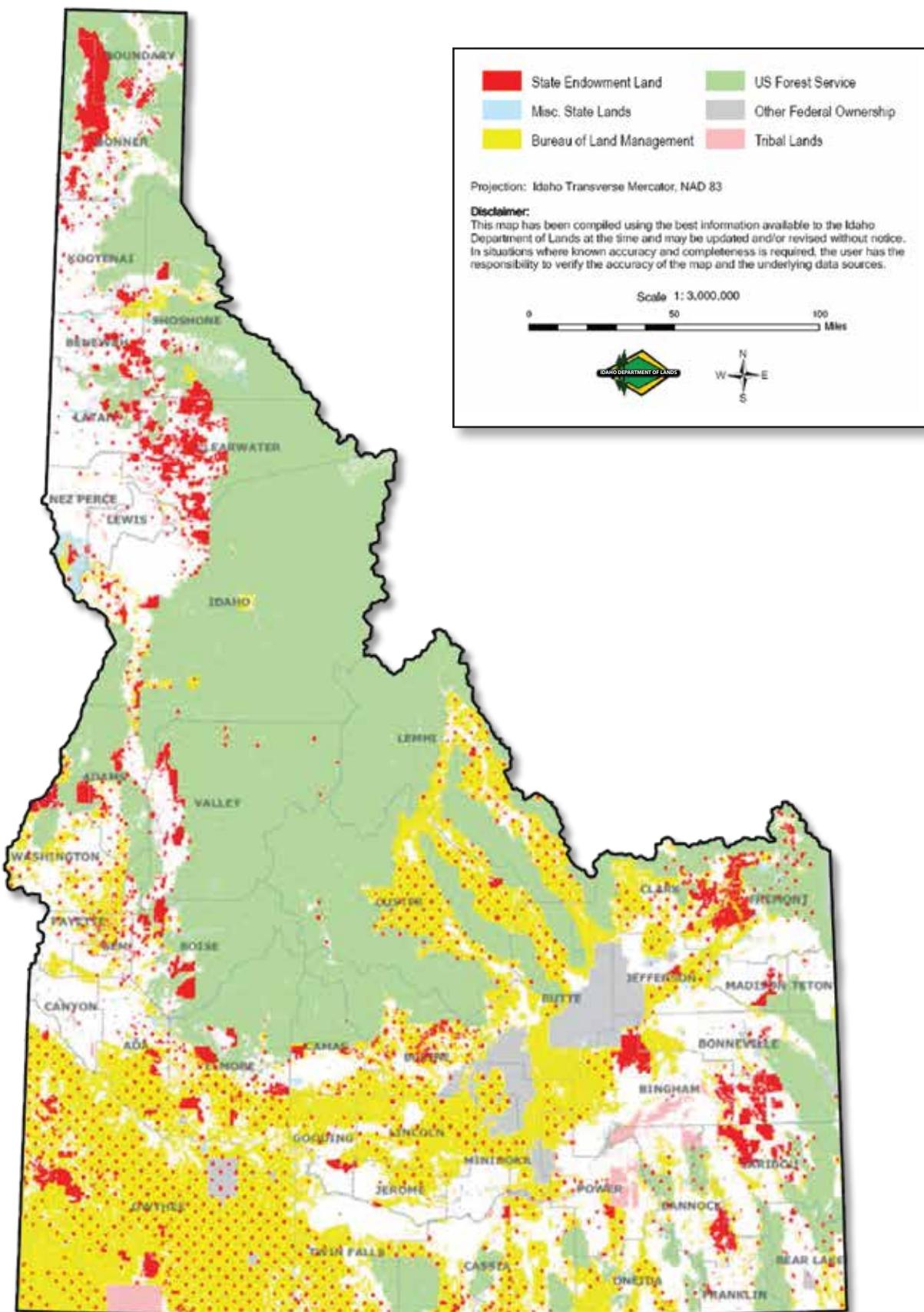
Forest restoration is a multi-faceted process that yields multiple benefits: removal of dead and dying trees or undesirable tree species, biomass disposal, replanting and natural reforestation, road repair, road closure, riparian zone repair, stream habitat restoration and bridge reconstruction or removal. Sometimes restoration yields sufficient usable timber to cover costs and sometimes government subsidies are needed. This project made money for the government.

Forest restoration sometimes yields unexpected benefits. Logger, Dave Ehrmantrout stands beside a western white pine he discovered while thinning a stewardship project near Bonners Ferry in northern Idaho. Conservationists want to restore western white pine in Idaho's forests, so Ehrmantrout carefully removed several nearby lodgepole pines so this 32-year-old tree can continue to grow in the full sunlight that it prefers.

Ehrmantrout named his 20-year-old log forwarder "Turtle." It hauls small diameter logs to decks beside a nearby road, where they are picked up by log trucks that transport them to a nearby sawmill. Without mills to process logs and biomass, forest restoration would not be possible.

See our full interview with Ehrmantrout at www.evergreenmagazine.com.

GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY LAND OWNERSHIP AND SURFACE MANAGEMENT

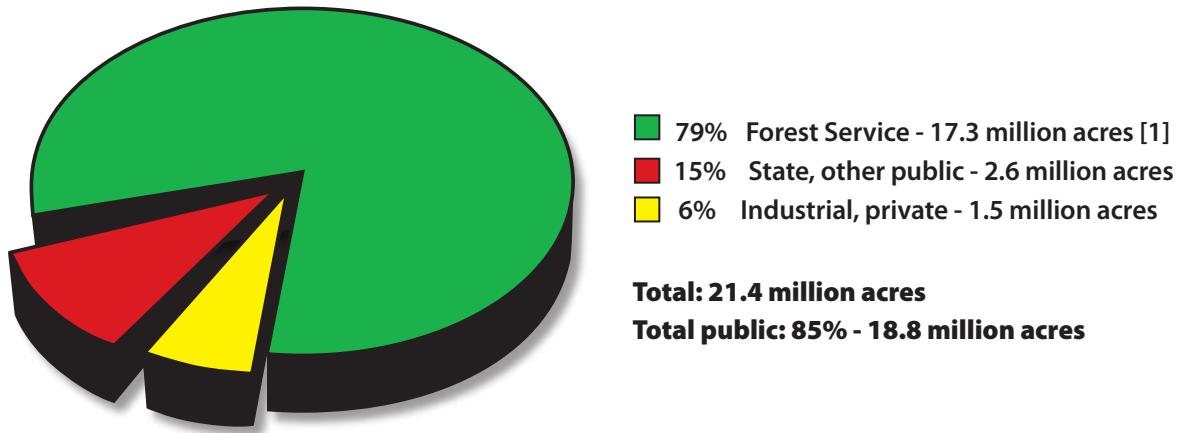


Idaho's ticking time bomb:

SOME FACTS FOR PERSPECTIVE

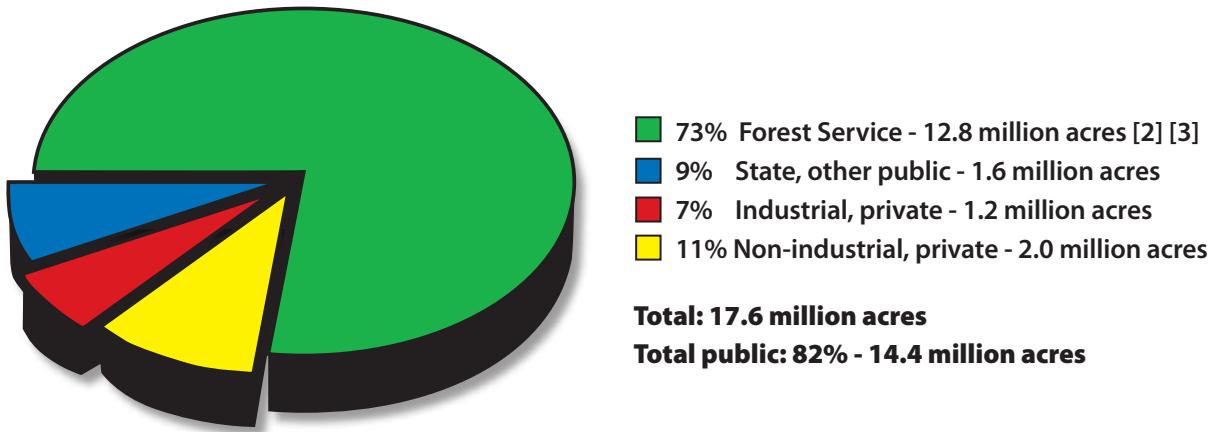
- ▲ Idaho is the 14th largest state
- ▲ Combining land and water area, it spans 83,570 square miles, about 53,500,000 acres
- ▲ Forests blanket 40.5% of Idaho, about 21,661,000 acres, about 33,512 square miles
- ▲ The rest of Idaho – some 31,832,000 acres – is non-forest
- ▲ Most forestland in Idaho is classified as timberland, meaning it is capable of growing 20 or more cubic feet per acre per year

Forest Ownership in Idaho



[1] Of these 17.3 million acres, more than 4 million lay within designated wilderness areas that are reserved from management and motorized travel

Timberland Ownership in Idaho



[2] Timberland is land that has not been reserved from harvest and is capable of growing a minimum 20 cubic feet of timber per acre per year.

[3] Although the Forest Service manages 73% of Idaho's defined timberland base, its annual harvest accounts for only about 7% of total harvest. This is because about 9 million of its 12.8 million acres of timberland are located within inaccessible roadless areas that have never been logged and collaborative group projects have thus far been limited to one in four acres of federal timberland in Idaho.

Idaho's ticking time bomb:

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

The bar graph on the cover of this report quantifies a natural disaster unprecedented in Idaho history. We built this graph from forest survey data assembled by the Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Analysis [FIA] group in Ogden, Utah.

FIA Data Collection

Among those who have need to quantify growth, harvest and mortality in western national forests, FIA data is the gold standard. It is based on decadal surveys of one-acre plots FIA has maintained in the West's national forests since the 1950s.

We don't know how many one-acre survey plots there are in the 11 western states but as an example, in just one northern Idaho county – Shoshone – there are 184. Every ten years, FIA examiners count every live or dead tree five inches or more in diameter in every plot. It takes a day to survey a single plot.

Every plot also has a micro-plot within it in which every live tree one or more inches in diameter is measured and every live tree less than one inch in diameter is counted. Nothing is left to chance, which is why the data illustrated on our cover is so undeniably sobering.

Interpreting the Graph

The Green Bar: Annual growth - by volume, 80 percent of annual gross growth in Idaho national forests dies [The Red Bar] in the same year.

The Red Bar: Mortality - what dies annually

The Orange Bar: Net Growth - what survives

Subtract annual mortality – 555 million cubic feet, from annual growth – 696 million cubic feet, equals net growth. Net growth shrinks annually as mortality increases. It will eventually reach “0” and fall into the negative column as it already has in neighboring Montana.

Translating from cubic feet to the more familiar board foot measure:

696 million cubic feet [the green bar] equal

3.028 billion board feet

555 million cubic feet [the red bar] equal

2.414 billion board feet

141 million cubic feet [the orange bar] equal

613.4 million board feet

The Blue Bar: Illustrates harvest - the amount of wood loggers engaged in forest restoration work are annually removing from Idaho's national forests.

24 million cubic feet, or about 104.4 million board feet

– 3.45% of gross annual growth, 4.3 % of mortality and

17 % of net annual growth on timberlands in Idaho's National Forests

By any measure one cares to apply, the federal government is stacking an enormous amount of firewood on Idaho's front porch.

The green, red, orange and blue bars perfectly illustrate the great sense of urgency shared by collaborators and their Forest Service partners. If something isn't done soon to diffuse this ticking time bomb, Idaho's national forests will perish in progressively larger and more destructive wildfires. No aspect of this state's much admired lifestyle will be spared. Our losses will be economic, environmental, social, cultural, human and historic.

The impact of mortality rate on Idaho's forests

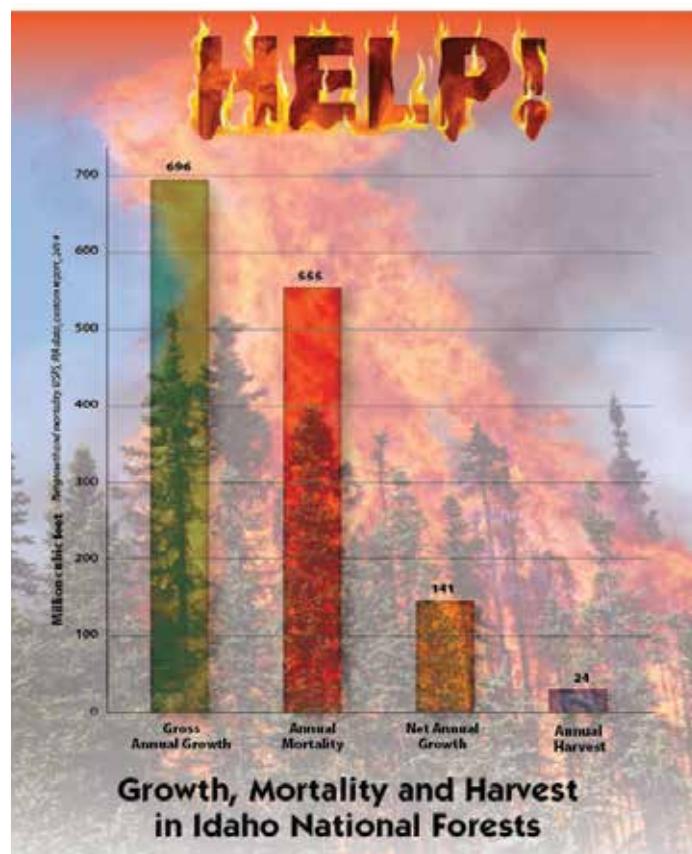
Just how much wood there is in 555 million cubic feet? Imagine a solid block of wood the dimensions of a football field stretching 1.82 miles into smoke-filled skies. That's how much of Idaho's forest future is lost every year to insects, diseases and wildfire.

Consider this:

It takes 20,000 board feet [4.598 cubic feet] to construct a medium-sized house, so the 555 million cubic feet that die annually in Idaho national forests, represent 120,645 houses – more than all of the new housing units that will be built in Idaho this year.

If the 555 million cubic feet that die annually could instead be harvested as part of a statewide forest restoration project, the harvest would generate 24,143 jobs, more than three times the current job level in Idaho's forest products industry.

Until the imbalance between growth, mortality and harvest is corrected – meaning a restoration program many times larger than the current program – Idaho's national forests will continue to die and burn in larger and larger wildfires.



About The Evergreen Foundation

The Evergreen Foundation is a 501(c)(3) corporation formed in 1986 to advance public understanding and support for science-based forestry and forest policy. Learn more at www.evergreenmagazine.com or contact our founder, Jim Petersen, jim@evergreenmagazine.com or our marketing and social media director, Julia Petersen, julia@evergreenmagazine.com.

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