

POSITION: Federated Women In Timber (FWIT) urges Congress and federal land managers to fund, support, promote and carry out active, sustainable management of federal forestlands as a way to provide economic and environmental sustainability.

BACKGROUND: It is an undisputed fact that all wealth originates from the earth, with the wealthiest nations having the abundance of natural resources. In recent history, the United States has made political decisions that discontinued or curtailed the use of many of its own natural resources. This has necessitated the import of natural resources from other nations resulting in huge trade deficits and degradation of the environment in other parts of the world, creating wealth for foreign nations while compromising the overall wealth of the United States as well as the environmental health of the planet.

Sustainable forest management means “the practice of meeting the forest resource needs and values of the present without compromising the similar capability of future generations.”¹

Current management of federal forest lands, particularly in the West, is not being done on a sustainable basis. Growth far exceeds removal (see graph), leading to overcrowding, insect and disease infestations and a dramatically increased incidence of catastrophic fire. Federal forest policy should encourage SFM by mandating active management to restore the health of our federal forests.

RATIONALE: Without sustainable forest management in the U.S. the wealth and stability of future generations is being compromised. Sustainable forest management on the nation’s 259 million acres of federally owned forest land is the responsibility of both the Congress and the Administration acting through the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

We strongly urge Congress to:

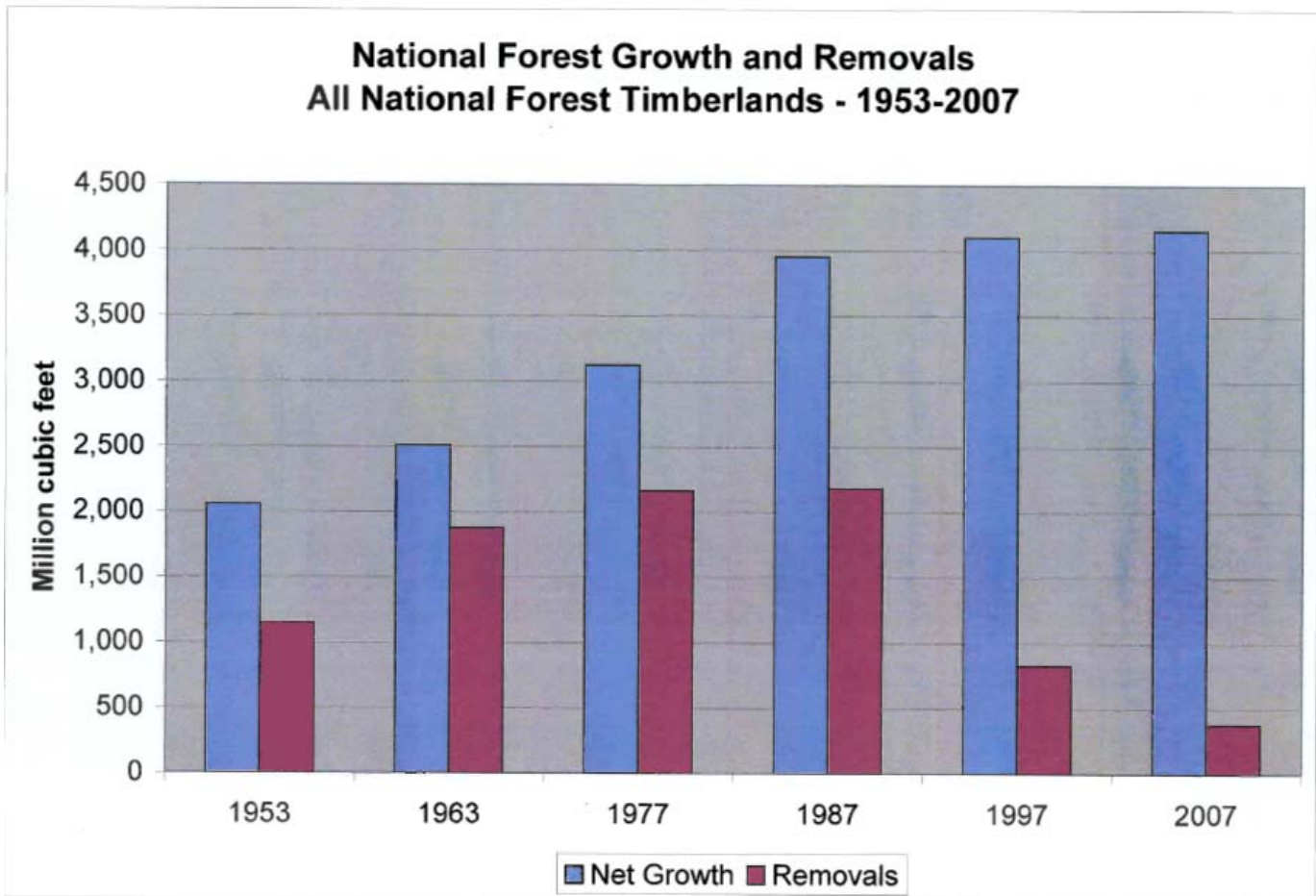
Pass HR 4233, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act Amendments Act of 2009 (HFRA II). The passage of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act in 2003 (HFRA) provided federal forest managers with important tools to improve the sustainability of our federal forest lands while streamlining the administrative appeals process that so often results in good projects not being implemented. HFRA II would refine this approach and give federal foresters and scientists the clear authority to use the proven-to-work tools in HFRA to address areas of the forests at highest risk of catastrophic wildfire.

Pass HR 4227, the Incentives to Increase Use of Renewable Biomass Act of 2009. This law would encourage the renewable biomass energy industry to take firm roots by encouraging universities, public schools, hospitals, local governments, and Tribes at non-gaming facilities to use clean biomass energy, heating, or cooling systems.

Appropriate sufficient funds. Unless Congress appropriates sufficient funds for forest management activities as part of the budgets for the USFS and BLM, forest health and economic well-being, particularly in the West, will continue to decline dramatically. We urge at least maintaining the current level of appropriations for these activities in FY 11 and increasing these appropriations over the next three fiscal years in order to attain a more sustainable timber harvest level from Forest Service lands of 4 billion board feet at the end of 4 years (“4 billion in 4”).

CONCLUSION: Congress should continue to refine the statutory framework within which the USFS and BLM manage our federal forest lands. Congress must provide oversight and funding of these agencies to assure that our nation's federal forests begin to be managed sustainably for the environmental and economic health of America for both current and future generations. Congress must provide adequate funding for USFS and BLM timber management programs. This will make possible both economic stability, especially for rural communities in the West, and the preservation of our logging and milling infrastructure without which the active management necessary to restore the health of federal forest land will not be possible.

¹ http://dictionaryofforestry.org/dict/term/sustainable_forest_management *Dictionary of Forestry*, Society of American Foresters, 2008



Source: USDA Forest Service.

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