

FEDERATED WOMEN IN TIMBER...by Holly McKenzie

Federated Women in Timber was organized 30 years ago in response to the growing number of issues that confronted the timber industry and those small businesses and sawmills dependent upon it. These timber dependent families were traditionally working long hours and found it difficult to devote much time to evening meetings and educational events. Therefore, a number of Californian women stepped forward to meet the challenge of increasing awareness about the timber industry through public education and input on political issues with the following focus:

- ◆ How and why we log to improve forest health and wildlife habitat.
- ◆ How logging provides thousands of products that this nation needs, wants, and uses everyday to make our lives better and safer, from lumber for homes, paper products, plastics, industrial products, and pharmaceuticals.
- ◆ That our forested communities are often called "timber-dependent" but in reality our nation is "timber-dependent" and we are providing the raw materials.
- ◆ That there is a balance which allows the environment and our communities to thrive.

Federated Women in Timber now consists of numerous State chapters that represent Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, The Black Hills of South Dakota, and Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan (Lake States Women In Timber). Unfortunately, we have lost our once powerful Alaska and Arizona chapters due to huge declines in forest management for those regions. Overall our mission is to promote a positive image of the timber industry while fostering better communication between the workers, the regulators, and users of the forest.

Representatives from the different state chapters meet up two or three times annually as a "Federated" group to plan out our annual trip to Washington D.C. and organize participation in other events (In Woods Expo in Arkansas, American Tree Farm National meetings, etc.). The Washington D.C. trip is an intensive week where we take personal stories of the timber industry and our forest communities to share with U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Interior, (BLM and Park Service) officials, as well as Congressmen and Senators. The ladies also make cold calls to each and every congressional and senate office to visit with aides and drop off packets full

of information and position papers. This year, we have developed positions on the following issues:

**2009 Position Papers Written by Federated Women in Timber
for Washington D.C.**

1. *Sustainable Forestry (California WIT)*
2. *Climate Change (Lakes States WIT)*
3. *Forest Service Fire Funding (Black Hills WIT)*
4. *Biomass / Renewable Energy from the Forest (Montana WIT)*
5. *Gross Vehicle Weights (Lakes States WIT).*



Federated Women In Timber

**Federated Women in Timber is represented by 11 forested states who believe in the preservation of some resources, the conservation of all resources, and the unique and continuing renewability of the forest resource to the benefit of all people.*

We are very well received in Washington as our entire group is made up of volunteers who speak from the heart and know the issues they speak of. These ladies are some of the most amazing women I've ever met! They are sawmill owners, loggers, foresters, timber cruisers, equipment saleswomen, log truck drivers, log home builders, paper mill employees, tree farmers, mothers, daughters, wives, County commissioners, ranchers, and more. They fight the tough fight all year long in their own home towns because they know we are doing the right thing.....that the forest needs to be managed.....must be managed or we stand to lose it entirely. Common logic would dictate this pendulum of public opinion would have already swung back as millions of acres burn in wildfires that we spend billions of state and federal tax dollars to put out. We've watched millions of

acres of mountain pine beetle and spruce bud worm epidemics turn the mountains red with dead trees....trees we leave for nature so the fires can rage on.

We've watched 300,000 million wood hungry U.S. citizens build homes while 43% of our domestic wood supply is imported from other nations..... Not because we can't grow enough trees here on our own home turf.....not because we don't have enough job hungry citizens to work in the woods or at the mills, and not because we lack the ability to manufacture trees into quality lumber, paper, electricity, and cellulose. Our citizens and government have simply been given the wrong message about our environment and our forests, and socially, it is more acceptable to save the trees in favor of wildlife habitat.

Ironically, we are in a situation now that is even more difficult to comprehend. With this economic downturn, many jobs have gone overseas.....new homes are not being built...and lumber is not selling because of it. Now we must figure out a creative way to stimulate the lumber markets so that forests and logs are once again a commodity. If the mills fold in this economic downturn, the logging contractors won't be far behind and that would leave us without any means of managing these stands to keep them healthy for future generations. One only needs to look at Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah to see where a lack of sawmill infrastructure would leave us.

Federated Women in Timber plans to work hard at convincing our government officials that a healthy renewable forest is the answer to our Nation's concerns about storing carbon, creating renewable energy, green building, and biodegradable furniture. Even if we are shipping one truck load of lumber or logs down from a non-U.S. source (as close as Canada for instance) we are burning up 600 gallons of diesel fuel to move that wood. This simply isn't acceptable if one wants to argue about the merits of preserving domestic forests for wildlife habitat and carbon storage while we use wood and bamboo from far away lands where large quantities of fossil fuels are burned to ship it here.

Our government and citizens must take a more common sense approach to how we manage our forestlands and Federated Women in Timber, along with her affiliate State Chapters.....is continually here to spread that message. If you wish to join FWIT or just have questions about us, please feel free to contact me at hmckenzie@centurytel.net We can set you up with a local Chapter in your State or you can be part of Women in Timber at Large.