

THE INTERIOR WEST'S DILEMMA

A Tragedy of the Commons

FIRE

MOUNTAIN PINE BEETLES

A LOOK AT PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT
BY THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

The Cover

The cover photo, taken in British Columbia, dramatically captures the essence of the major problem facing resource managers in the Western U.S. and more particularly in the Interior West. Here, political, economic and social concerns have compounded the difficulties of responding to the challenges of managing an ecosystem that is being subjected to the natural forces of a prolonged drought in a changing global climatic regime.

The red –topped trees clearly visible in the left foreground are dead lodgepole pine, killed by a region-wide epidemic of the mountain pine beetle. The high-intensity fire in the upper-right is being fueled by beetle-killed trees.

The United States Forest Service is the largest single owner of timberland in this Region and its management will shape the destiny of its forests. What will the future hold?

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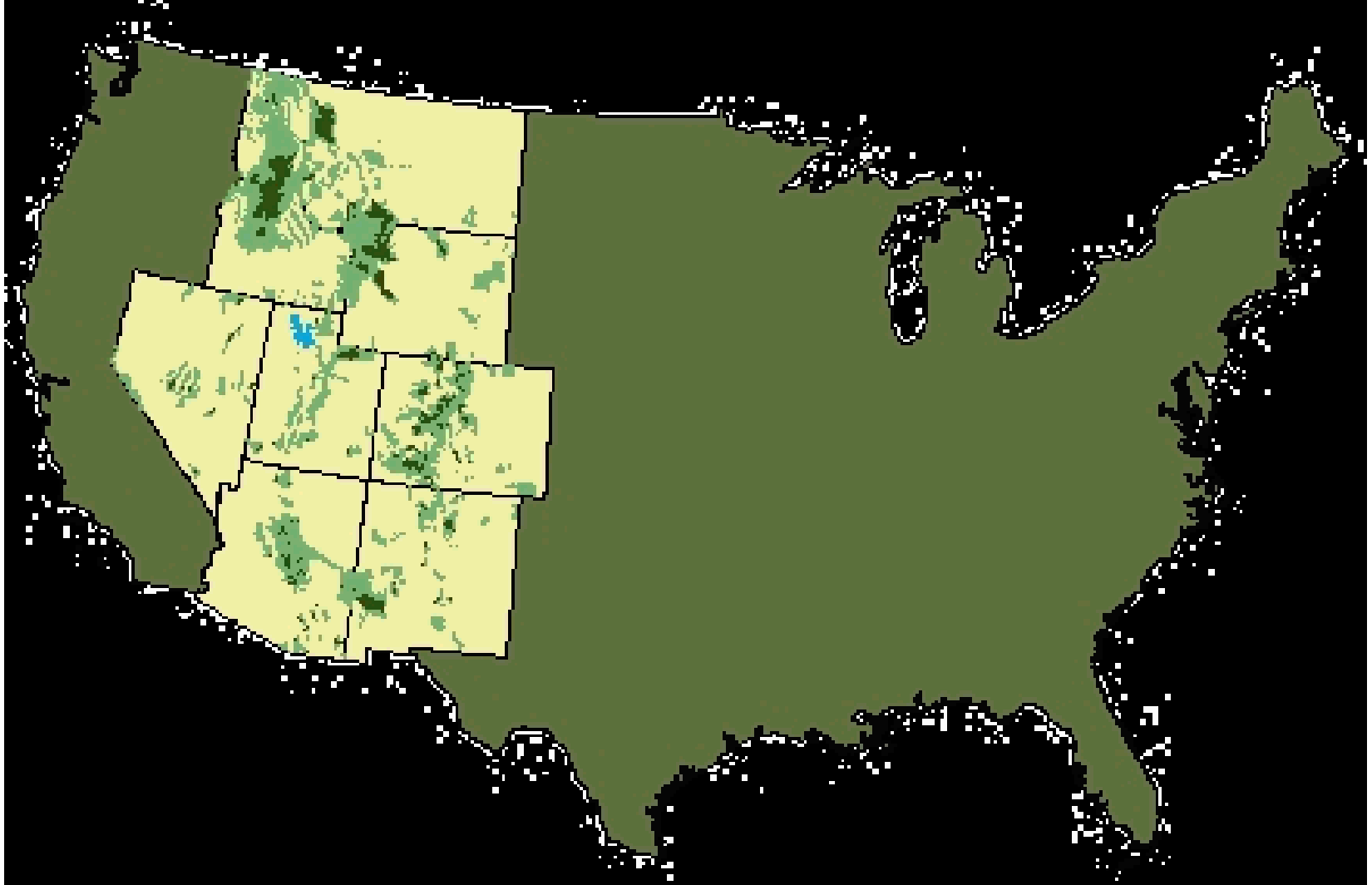
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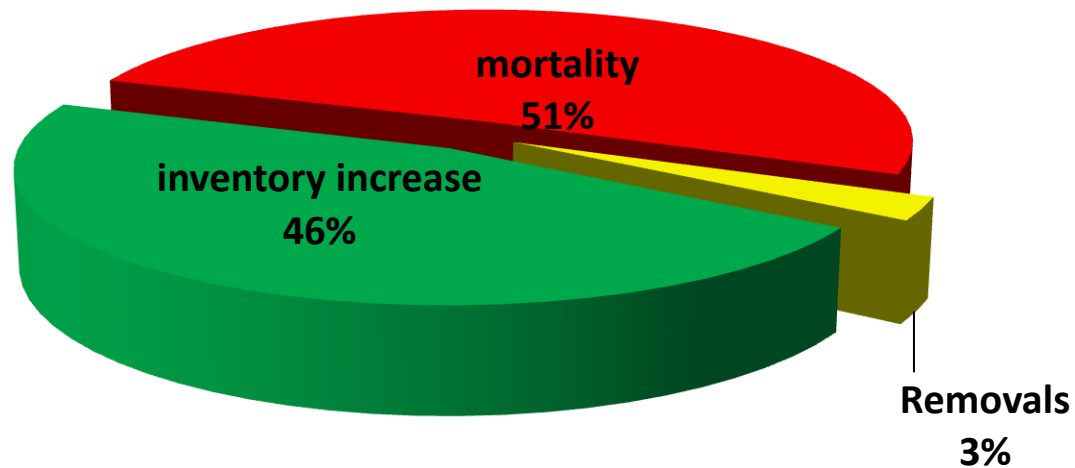
The Interior West, covering 8 states and 22 National Forests, contains 45% of the total National Forest non-reserved forest land and 36% of the total volume . It is representative of National Forest System management. What are the results of Forest Service Management of the timber resource in that region?

THE INTERIOR WEST

Results of Forest Service Timber Management

The Interior West covers all of the Western U.S. east of the Pacific Coast States and west of the Great Plains. Timber harvesting there has closely paralleled the national trend but tree mortality is greater than the average while the timber harvest is lower. This is the region most impacted by management of the timber resource.

Inventory increase + mortality + removals = total growth = 2,172 Million Cubic Feet (MMcf)

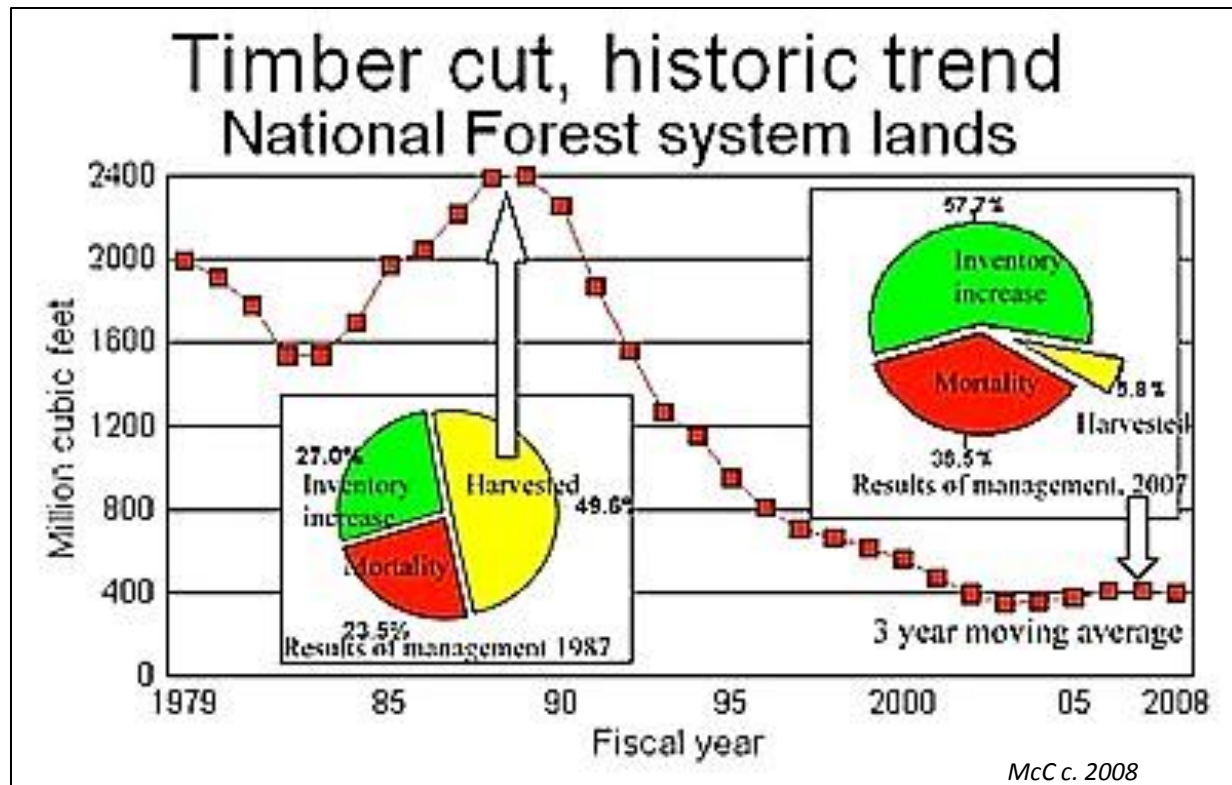


The region harvested 3% of the total growth- - -

51% died.

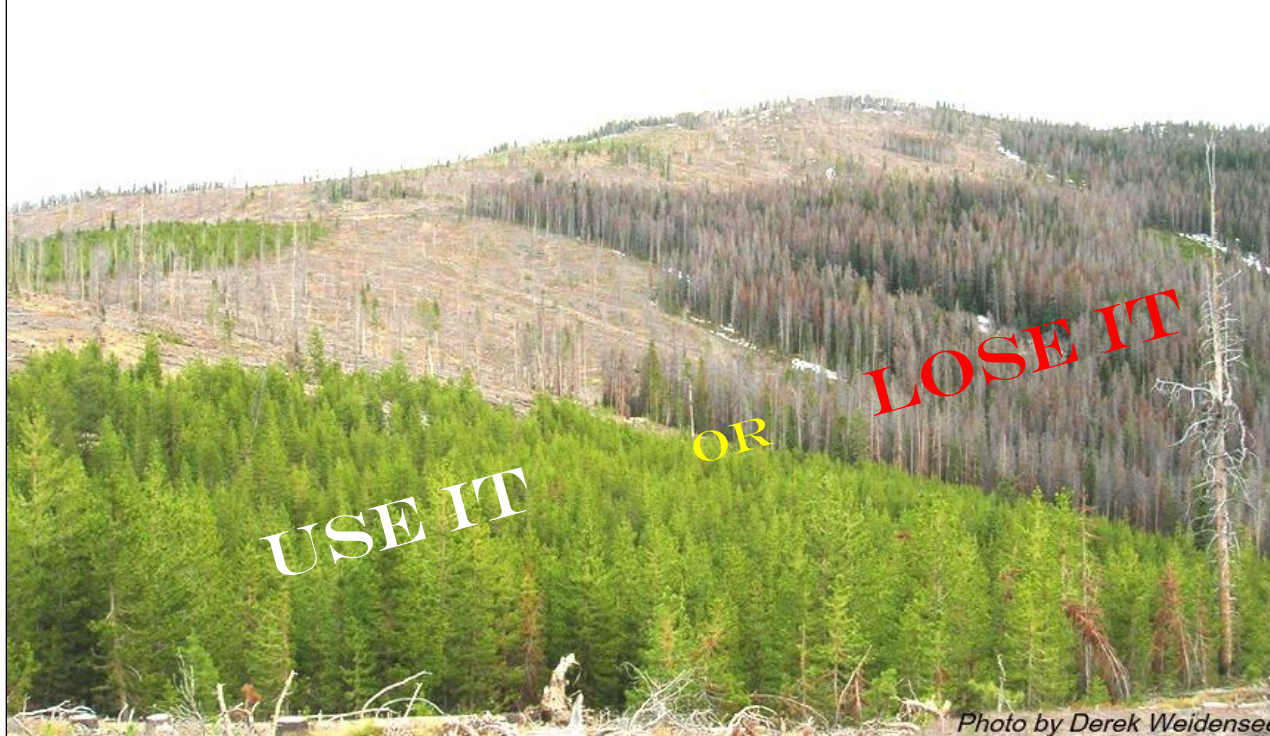
The Interior West is not alone in having these problems.

While the severity of individual impacts varies by forests and by Regions, the harvest decline has been nation-wide and the results have been similar.



Impacts of timber non-harvesting

- ❑ As forests age, forest health declines and mortality (insects, disease) increases .
- ❑ Salvage is curtailed and fire hazard increases.
- ❑ Fire intensity, acres burned, and control costs increase as resources are damaged, homes are destroyed, and lives are lost.
 - ❑ Forest dependent industries downsize or shut down.
 - ❑ Jobs are lost and communities suffer.
 - ❑ Roads and schools are harmed as payments to the counties decrease (A critical factor after Secure Rural Schools legislation expires in 2011).
 - ❑ Harvesting infrastructure is lost.
 - ❑ Income to the landowner (people of the U.S.) decreases.
 - ❑ Sale costs increase and per-unit profit declines.
 - ❑ Stands become over-dense; basal area increases.
 - ❑ Quality growth slows.



WHEN INSECTS AND DISEASE ATTACK ---

Young trees survive

Old trees die

The young healthy green trees in the foreground are lodgepole pine growing on a clearcut made 25 years ago on the drainage of the Williams Fork of the Colorado River, Sulphur Ranger District, Arapaho National Forest in Colorado. On the right, the over-mature dead pines, weakened by drought and vulnerable because of age and overcrowding, have succumbed to attack by the mountain pine beetle. On the slope to the left and along the ridge, the Forest Service has salvaged some of the dead trees –now worth only a fraction of their original value - in an attempt to reduce the fire hazard and provide employment for local residents, raw material for industry, and revenue for the counties and for the nation.

WHY?

What are the causes for this virtual non-management of the timber resource on the Nation's single largest forest-land ownership? They are many and their relative importance has been debated. Here are some frequently advanced reasons for the existing management gridlock and the resulting adverse impacts:

- ❑ Unending protests, appeals, and litigation with varying Judicial interpretations.
- ❑ Competing special interests with narrowly-focused agendas.
- ❑ Shifting priorities by the Public and the Executive Branch (along with a failure to recognize unexpected consequences).
- ❑ Lack of, or conflicting, Congressional direction.
- ❑ Excessive Planning and Environmental Analyses
- ❑ Diversion of resource funds to fire control.
- ❑ Inadequate funding. (In large part a “non-people” problem that could have an achievable solution. [More on this](#))

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Some thoughts on solving the timber program funding problem:

- ✓ Secure adequate congressional funding. (probability - zero to negligible)
- ✓ Amend NEPA/ESA as needed to increase appellant and litigant accountability.
- ✓ Reorder forest priorities and shift funds. (Include Resource Advisory Committees (RACs) as full participants in every National Forest's annual planning and project selection process)
- ✓ Secure Congressional approval for selected National Forests to test the feasibility of timber program self-financing as is now done on DOD land (Title 10, USC 2665. **This may be a best bet for solving the "non-ideological" problem of inadequate funding. The 2 following slides will provide background .**
- ✓ Simplify environmental documentation (EISs & EAs).
- ✓ Outsource field work and writing of EISs/EAs and sale preparation

When all else fails:

- ✓ Transfer/sell manageable timber land to other federal, state, NGO, or private entities with restrictive covenants and convey the balance to the State or U.S. Park Services.

This extract from United States Code may serve as a template for the development of Legislation designed to test the use of self-financing of the Timber Resource Management Programs on selected National Forests.

[TITLE 10](#) > [Subtitle A](#) > [PART IV](#) > [CHAPTER 159](#) > § 2665

§ 2665. Sale of certain interests in land; logs

- (a) The President, through an executive department, may sell to any person or foreign government any interest in land that is acquired for the production of lumber or timber products, except land under the control of the Department of the Army or the Department of the Air Force.
- (b) The President, through an executive department, may sell to any person or foreign government any forest products produced on land owned or leased by a military department or the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating.
- (c) Sales under subsection (a) or (b) shall be at prices determined by the President acting through the selling agency.
- (d) Appropriations of the Department of Defense may be reimbursed for all costs of production of forest products pursuant to this section from amounts received as proceeds from the sale of any such property.**
- (e) (1) Each State in which is located a military installation or facility from which forest products are sold in a fiscal year is entitled at the end of such year to an amount equal to 40 percent of (A) the amount received by the United States during such year as proceeds from the sale of forest products produced on such installation or facility, less
(B) the amount of reimbursement of appropriations of the Department of Defense under subsection (d) during such year attributable to such installation or facility.
- (2) The amount paid to a State pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be expended as the State legislature may prescribe for the benefit of the public schools and public roads of the county or counties in which the military installation or facility is situated.
- (3) In a case in which a military installation or facility is located in more than one State or county, the amount paid pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be distributed in a manner proportional to the area of such installation or facility in each State or county.
- (f) (1) There is in the Treasury a reserve account administered by the Secretary of Defense for the purposes of this section. Balances in the account may be used for costs of the military departments— (A) for improvements of forest lands;
(B) for unanticipated contingencies in the administration of forest lands and the production of forest products for which other sources of funds are not available in a timely manner; and
(C) for natural resources management that implements approved plans and agreements.
- (2) There shall be deposited into the reserve account the total amount received by the United States as proceeds from the sale of forest products sold under subsections (a) and (b) less— (A) reimbursements of appropriations made under subsection (d), and
(B) payments made to States under subsection (e).
- (3) The reserve account may not exceed \$4,000,000 on December 31 of any calendar year. Unobligated balances exceeding \$4,000,000 on that date shall be deposited into the United States Treasury.

Some Pro and Con arguments for a Self Financed Timber Program:

Pro-

- ❑ Will provide the means, not now available, for the U.S. Forest Service to follow Congressional direction for resource management as expressed in the National Forest Management Act of 1976, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and related legislation.
- ❖ Will create jobs by providing raw material for forest product industries, especially the rapidly developing renewable energy sector.
- ❑ Will help insure continued economic survival of N.F. dependent counties after the expiration, in the year 2011, of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000.
- ❑ Will allow increased local participation in decision making through Resource Advisory Councils.
- ❑ Will provide an incentive for efficient management and be budget neutral or positive.
- ❑ A trial run of the program on selected forests will allow an assessment of its impacts on the returns to the treasury and on the Federal budget; on the social and economic condition of counties, communities and forest industries; and on the quality of resource management.
- ❑ The concept is simple, easy to apply, and has been thoroughly tested on timberlands managed by the Department of Defense .

Con –

- ❑ Is politically unattainable.
- ❑ Will reduce Congressional oversight of National Forest management and reduce Legislative control over the expenditure of federal monies.
- ❑ Will result in negative “scoring” in returns to the treasury and in an increase in the public debt.
- ❑ Will encourage continued dependency of Forest Counties on the Federal Government and discourage self-sufficiency and problem-solving through private enterprise.
- ❑ Will promote unrestrained, irresponsible logging and massive resource damage.

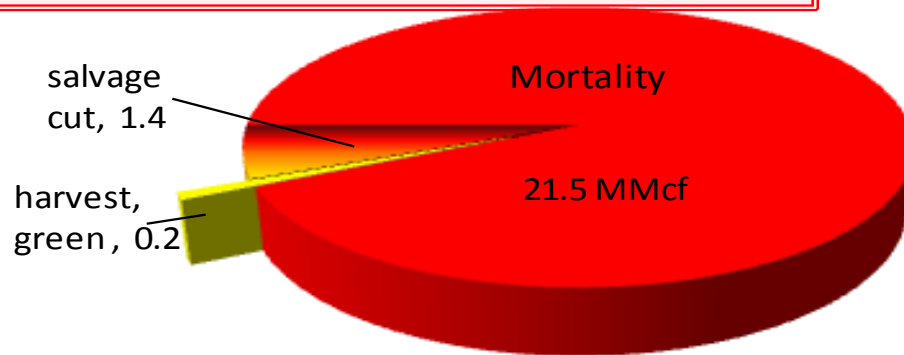
THE FUTURE UNDER THE “NO ACTION” ALTERNATIVE

The future of the timber resources on public land under existing legislation and continued non-management as currently practiced by the U.S. Forest Service can be seen on the Dixie National Forest. Here decades of “hands tied” management, combined with the natural forces of drought, climate change, insects, disease, and fire have resulted in the end-game condition in which there is an annual net volume loss of 1.2 million cubic feet (MMcf), 1% of the gross growth is harvested as live trees, and 93% of the growth dies and is not salvaged.

Dixie National Forest, Utah. Results of Management on 599,700 acres of non-reserved timberland

In 2008 the forest had a net growth of -1.0 MMcf and its growing stock inventory was reduced by 1.2 MMcf.

*Mortality (21.5) + green harvest (0.2)
+ inventory change (-1.2) =
gross annual growth 20.5 MMcf.*



Growth and Mortality: FIA ,FIDO. 2008 timberland data.
Harvest : 3 yr, avg. USFS annual cut report (2007-2009), R-4, Dixie. ~90% of cut is salvage.

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