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EVERGREEN

Which Montana Do You Want?

Which Montana?

In this special *Evergreen* report, we pose a timely question.

Which Montana do Montanans want?

The one that is green and beautiful or the one that is black and ugly?

The photographs on the cover beg this question.

It's safe to say we all want the Montana illustrated in the photograph of Sophie Petersen with her enormous rainbow trout – the first one she ever caught. That's Dave Blackburn, a Kootenai Anglers guide, holding Sophie's fish.

It's also safe to say none of us want the Montana depicted by the 300-foot flames lighting the night sky but this is our future if we don't support Forest Service and State efforts to reduce the size, frequency and destructive force of the wildfires that are incinerating *The Last Best Place* - the title of an anthology assembled by the late William Kittredge, a legendary University of Montana creative writing instructor.

Montanans are very proud of their "Last Best Place," but there is disagreement about the best way to protect it. A good place to start is with the sobering graph on Page 4. It quantifies the wildfire-forest health crisis that Montanans face.

The U.S. Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Analysis science team in Ogden, Utah assembled this data for the non-profit Evergreen Foundation in 2020. The situation is much worse today.

The bar graph on Page 4 illustrates a shocking truth about the health of Montana's National Forests: Tree mortality exceeds growth in 9 of 10 National Forests in our state. These forests span 17 million acres.

The only National Forest in which growth is positive is the 2.2 million acre Kootenai in Northwest Montana. The combined annual net loss [net growth minus mortality minus] in the other 10 National Forests is 1.41 billion board feet.

Bottom line: Montana's National Forests are dying faster than they are growing.

Herein, we explain the complex multiple relationships between National Forest tree mortality, catastrophic wildfires that are sweeping our state, disagreements about how best to protect the last best place and the looming collapse of what remains of Montana's forest products industry.

BBER 1972 **1**

We do not seek to blame anyone, past or present, for what has happened over the last 35 years. Our desire is to do our part to help save The Last Best Place from ash and ruin. Montanans can do this by protecting the essence of Big Sky Country: Clean air, clean water, abundant fish and wildlife habitat and a wealth of year-round outdoor recreation opportunity.

Many Montanans are concerned about the impacts for forestry on climate change. Pages 6-7 hold excerpts from What Is Climate Smart Forestry, published this spring by Peter Kolb, Montana State University's Extension Forestry Specialist. Kolb, and Evergreen Foundation Director, Kolb holds a PhD in Forest and Range Ecophysiology from University of Idaho. He is also an Associate Professor of Forest Ecology and Management at the University of Montana.

Our report relies exclusively on four publicly funded sources:

- Kolb's aforementioned What is Climate Smart Forestry?
- The Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Analysis Group [FIA] which has been surveying forest growth, harvest and mortality from coast to coast since the 1930s.
- The Montana Forest Action Plan, published in December 2020, under the aegis of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.
- The University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research [BBER] has been monitoring the ups and downs in the state's forest industry manufacturing complex since 1972.

BBER's 1972 report [1] – *Wood Products in Montana* – was commissioned by the Montana State Department of Planning and Economic Development. It was the first such report in state history and was researched and written by the late Maxine Johnson. It appears on Pages 17-19.

In her 1972 assessment, Johnson, who was then BBER's Assistant Director, traced the industry's development from 1950, noting that employment increased dramatically as the federal timber sale program established after World War II gained momentum, especially in Montana's eight western counties.

Statewide, 5,420 new manufacturing

WAGE & SALARY WORKERS IN THE WOOD PRODUCTS INDUSTRIES 1950–1971

YEAR	ALL WOOD PRODUCTS INDUSTRIES Number	Index	LUMBER & WOOD PRODUCTS Total	Logging Camps & Contractors	Sawmills & Planing Mills	Millwork & Related Prod.[a]	Misc. Wood Products[b]	PAPER & ALLIED PRODUCTS Total[c]
1950	5,374	100	5,374	983	3,898	417	76	0
1951	6,109	114	6,109	1,288	4,333	367	121	0
1952	5,873	109	5,873	1,169	4,207	384	113	0
1953	5,776	108	5,774	1,046	4,369	283	76	2
1954	6,160	115	6,157	1,262	4,420	381	94	3
1955	7,150	133	7,146	1,573	4,991	475	107	4
1956	7,651	142	7,645	1,686	5,242	558	159	6
1957	6,622	123	6,590	1,307	4,587	578	118	32
1958	6,725	117	6,589	1,214	4,654	581	140	136
1959	7,613	142	7,472	1,540	5,128	655	149	141
1960	7,406	129	7,230	1,506	4,880	704	140	176
1961	7,654	142	7,433	1,507	4,776	1,025	125	221
1962	8,232	153	8,008	1,475	5,362	1,052	119	224
1963	8,757	163	8,512	1,587	5,583	1,224	118	245
1964	8,692	162	8,439	1,703	5,307	1,315	114	253
1965	8,911	166	8,641	1,759	5,315	1,423	144	270
1966	9,201	172	8,872	1,944	5,389	1,359	180	329
1967	9,064	169	8,650	1,720	5,531	1,247	152	414
1968	9,386	175	8,945	1,878	5,757	1,179	131	441
1969	9,314	173	8,857	1,957	5,661	1,119	120	457
1970	8,603	160	8,125	1,614	5,229	1,148	134	478
1971[r]	8,773	163	8,305	1,576	5,397	1,199	133	468

This table originally appeared in Maxine Johnson's 1972 University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research report detailing the wage and economic impacts of the timber industry's presence in Montana. It was the first such report ever published. We have colored the table to make it easier to read.

jobs were created between 1950 and 1968. Of these, 3,500 [65 percent] were in lumber and paper.

Sawmill employment increased some 38 percent between 1950 and 1971 - from 5,374 to 8,733 between 1950 and 1971. Paper mill employment lagged far behind until the Waldorf Paper Co. built its mill at Frenchtown in 1957. Between 1957 and 1971, it rose from 32 to 468 – a 1,362.5 percent increase. Logging employment nearly doubled in the same period.

By the early 1970s, timber was the only basic industry in Montana that was growing. Railroads, agriculture and mining were shrinking. Construction of Libby Dam and Anaconda Aluminum at Columbia Falls made up for some of the loss.

BBER reported 25 sawmills and one plywood plant in its 2018 report. Employment was 7,981 and employee earnings were $364 million. These numbers have declined significantly over the last seven years.

Today, six major primary breakdown mills remain: Sun Mountain, Deer Lodge; Sun Mountain, Livingston; Stoltze, Columbia Falls; Weyerhaeuser [stud mill & plywood plant], Kalispell and Thompson River Lumber, Thompson Falls. There are also several small sawmill and post and pole manufacturers.

Montana's only paper mill, Smurfit-Stone at Frenchtown, closed in 2010 and Roseburg Lumber closed its Missoula particle board plant in May 2024 followed by Pyramid Lumber at Seeley Lake in July. Combined direct and indirect job losses topped 1,700.

Montana needs to recruit new manufacturing and/or energy facilities that can provide markets for the restoration work needed to reduce the risk of wildfire in our state's National Forests. There are many reasons to be hopeful, including the fact that standing dead Douglas-fir and western larch in our forests will remain strong and useful for about 10 years. Just because it's dead doesn't mean its junk.

Stakeholders are considering a new mill in Montana. The collaboratively developed Montana Forest Action Plan [2] would be the road-map to this venture. We reference the Plan several times in this report.

Several factors have contributed to the decline in Montana's timber industry – none greater than political pressure and environmental litigators.

Other factors – some self-inflicted – have also impacted the industry and its future prospects.

- Economic recessions: eight since 1960, none worse than the 2007-2009 global economic collapse. It crushed the nation's housing and wood products industries.
- Labor saving technologies increase efficiency but also cost jobs. Other technologies create new products and new jobs. More is needed, especially technologies that can profitably utilize small diameter trees and biomass.
- Too much harvesting in the 1970s and early 1980s forced the Forest Service and private forestland owners to reduce harvest levels in the late 1980s.
- Montana's recreation industries are growing, but logging and mills jobs pay two to four times as much. Wildfires and carcinogenic smoke are destroying what tourists come to enjoy: clean air, clean water, abundant fish and wildlife habitat and a wealth of year-round outdoor recreation.
- Stock market manipulation of Internal Revenue Service regulations in the early 1980s allowed corporate raiders to extract millions of dollars from private forest landowners in the U.S. Among the victims, St. Regis Paper, which had purchased Montana's J.Neils Lumber Company in 1957.
- Plum Creek's 1999 IRS Real Estate Investment Trust ruling allowed REITS to pass their profits directly to shareholders. BBER subsequently subtracted private forest harvest volume from its reports because harvest volumes could not be reliably forecast.
- With federal funding, the Montana Legacy Project and the Trust for Public Lands and the Nature Conservancy are merging 310,000 acres of Plum Creek forest land in Missoula, Mineral, Lake and Powell counties with interspersed federal parcels. The result will be a series of conservation easements that permit active forest management.
- Stimson Lumber Company has partnered with the Trust for Public Land for three conservation easements for some 193 thousand acres it owns in Montana, Idaho and Washington. Long-term timber production is the goal.
- The 2020 Montana Forest Action Plan, collaboratively developed by more than 20 public and private partnerships, remains the most comprehensive, science-based assessment of the current situation. It sees logging and forest products manufacturing as byproducts of forest restoration work that will rescue forests that being killed by insect and disease infestations and wildfire.
- 300 million board feet of timber are currently tied up in litigation in Montana federal district court – enough to keep the last surviving mills in business for a year.
- In 2018, the last year for which comprehensive BBER data is available, [3] 376 million board feet of timber were harvested, including 143 million board feet from National Forests, about 20 percent of the 1972 harvest.

Honest public dialogue is needed. On Pages 20-21 we offer some recommendations worth considering. These are steps we hope Montanans will take as quickly as possible to help their struggling wood products industry get back on its feet.

Last December, 39 Montanans signed a Resolution on Forest Products and Conservation Values stressing their support for fixing the "wildfire and forest health crisis" Montana faces as a result of "current and historic actions" that have pushed the state's forests to the precipice. Their letter and signatures appear on Pages 22 and 23.

Among the signers: Alan Townsend, Dean, Franke College of Forestry at the University of Montana and representatives of 38 organizations including the Montana Department of Natural Resources, Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Montana Forest Owners Association, Weyerhaeuser, Montana Forest Products Association, Sun Mountain Lumber, Montana Logging Association and the Wilderness Society.

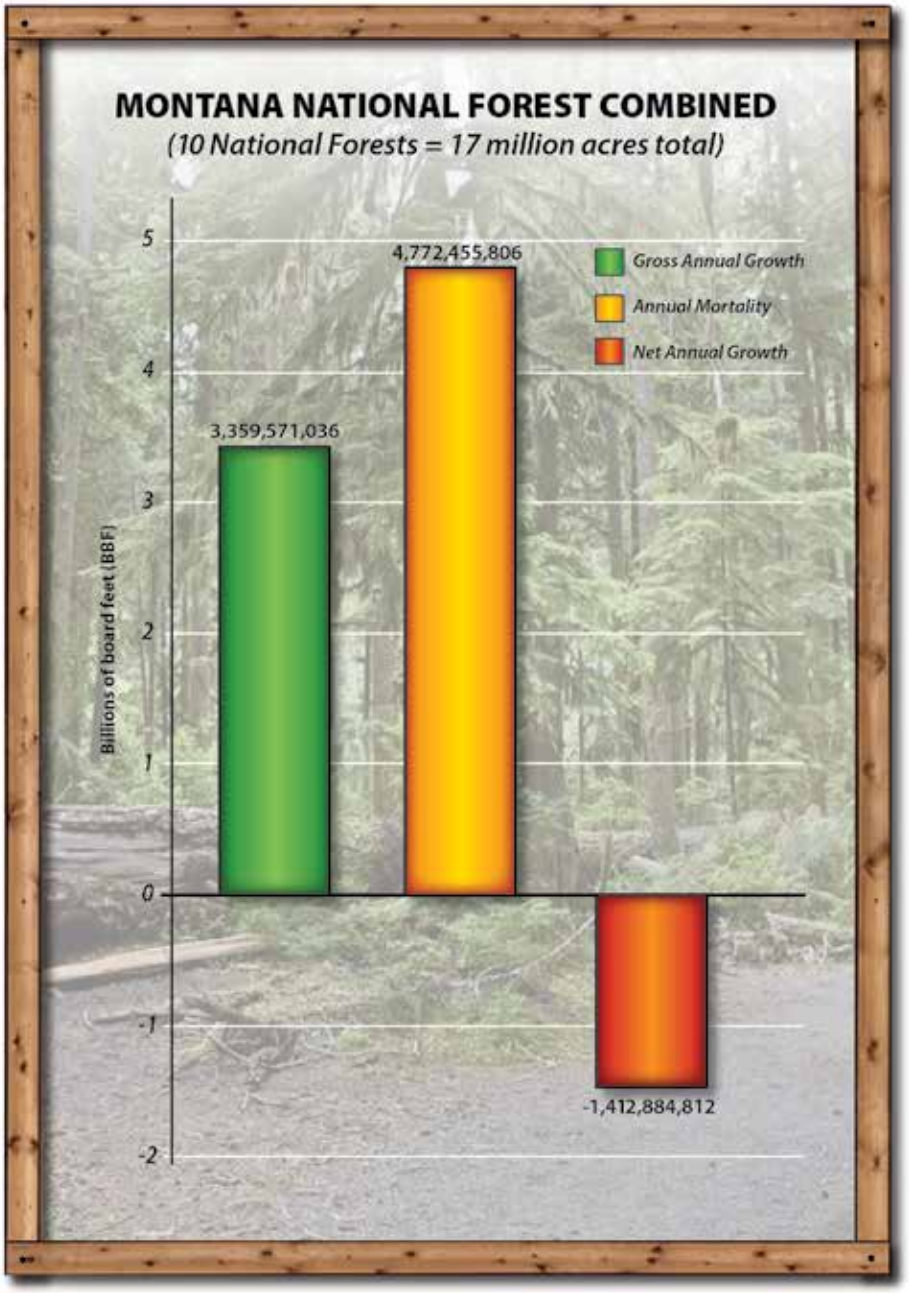
These signers understand that Montanans hold their destiny in their hands.

Jim Petersen,
Founder, Evergreen Foundation

2 **Forest Action Plan**

3 **BBER 1988**

Montana National Forest: Fire Changes Forests, Fire Changes Lives



Mortality from wildfire, insects and diseases exceeds growth on 9 of 10 National Forests in Montana by about 1.4 billion board feet – enough to build 2,000 square foot, three bedroom homes for 111,100 families. The cooler and wetter 2.2 million acre Kootenai in Northwest Montana is the only National Forest in our state that is growth positive. This means that 14.8 million National Forest acres are dying faster than they are growing. FIA: The Gold Standard,[4] an Evergreen Foundation report completed eight years ago traces the history of the Forest Service's FIA [Forest Inventory and Analysis] group.

4
FIA

What's a Board Foot?!?!?!

Most Montanans who read this booklet live in larger communities – Missoula, Helena, Great Falls, Butte and Billings – and probably have no idea what a board foot measures.

A board foot measures one foot by one foot by one inch.

You will see other board foot measurement scales in this booklet:

1 BF = one board foot
1 MBF = 1,000 board feet
1 MMBF = one million board feet
1 MMMBF = one billion board feet

If you were building a starter home – say 1,500 square feet – you would need 9,450 board feet of lumber delivered to your home site.

The rule of thumb here is 6.3 board feet = one square foot of space in a house.

A log truck can carry about 5,000 board feet of logs, so to keep things simple, let's say that it will take two truckloads of logs to build your house.

There are several charts and graphs in this booklet that reference sawmills and mill capacity. Capacity is measured in board feet or the number of log truck loads the mill processes daily.

The average primary breakdown mill in Montana – the ones that convert logs to lumber – consumed 40 truckloads of logs per day.

Restoration Forestry is Key

My introduction to what is widely referred to as "restoration forestry" came courtesy of the late Steve Arno, a PhD forest ecologist who worked for the Forest Service for 25 years. He tossed me in his pickup early one morning in 1995 and drove me to his Lick Creek demonstration site in the Bitterroot Valley about an hour south of Missoula. We walked through one research plot after another for most of the day.

In a matter of hours I became a Disciple of the Forestry World According to Steve Arno, so much so that he and I returned to Lick Creek several times, once in the company of Carl Fiedler, a PhD research silviculturist at the University of Montana .

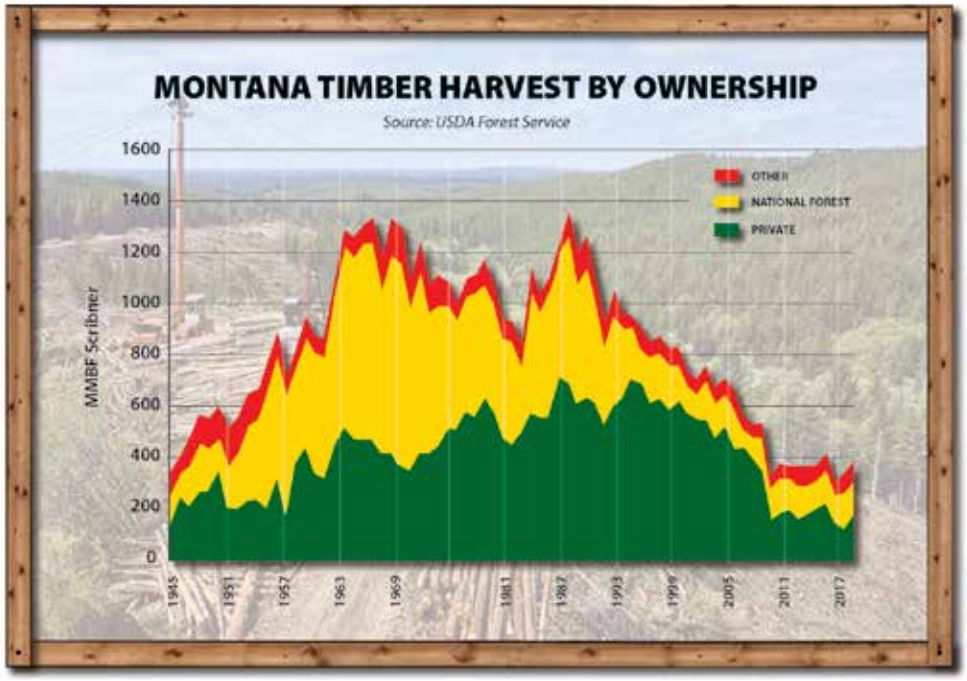
I had interviewed Fiedler a couple of years earlier after discovering that he and Charles Keegan were working on a multi-state research project designed to determine which forest restoration projects might pay for themselves and which ones would require federal subsidy.

Keegan was then the Director of Products Industry Research within the University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research. Their key finding was that a surprising 60-plus percent of all forest restoration projects would pay for themselves if a few commercial-sized trees were included in the restoration mix. Entirely appropriate in Arno's universe.

Fiedler was with Arno and me the day we ventured into nearby Blodgett Canyon to look at the results of restoration harvesting units that included everything from mechanical thinning to horse logging. The horses were fun to watch but to my surprise their hooves put far more pounds per square inch on soil than do rubber-tired harvesting machines and skidders.

Steve Arno took the nearby photograph at one of his Lick Creek research plots as it was beginning to green up following a treatment that included thinning and prescribed fire. He described the beginnings of his trailblazing work in fire adapted Northern Rockies ecosystems in the preface to Mimicking Nature's Fire, one of two books he co-authored with Fiedler.

"Soon after earning my PhD in 1970, I got the opportunity to help inject new thinking into western forestry by building the case for ecologically based management," Arno wrote. "A small group of us at the U.S. Forest Service Intermountain Research Station developed the 'habitat type' land classification system, which helped thousands of employees of the Forest Service and other agencies incorporate ecological knowledge and considerations into forest management."



This U.S. Forest Service graph traces the rise and fall of Montana's forest products industry from 1945 through 2017. Harvesting on public and private lands peaked in 1988 and has since fallen steadily, giving rise to unprecedented insect and disease infestations in Montana's National Forests. Had the Forest Service embraced Steve Arno's thinning and prescribed fire work at Lick Creek in the Bitterroot Valley south of Missoula the wildfire crisis currently facing Montanans would not exist. Arno, a PhD forest ecologist, worked for the Forest Service for 25 years.

Arno used the system to develop forest habitat type classifications for western larch, Douglas-fir and ponderosa and whitebark pine ecosystems that have persisted in the Northern Rockies for eons. This system was the genesis of the thinning and prescribed fire plots that he and Fiedler established at Lick Creek in 1991.

Arno had never liked the clearcutting-cookie cutter approach that maximized timber production at the expense of other forest values. "Applying such heavy handed methods to natural forest ecosystems in western North America seemed strange and inappropriate to me and to many other foresters young and old," he wrote in his portion of the preface to *Mimicking Nature's Fire*." [5] Increasingly, members of an environmentally conscious public became alarmed by these methods and some eventually rejected all forms of timber harvesting on public lands."

The subsequent collision of economic and environmental values in

This is one of Steve Arno's photos from his Lick Creek Project in the Bitterroot Valley south of Missoula, Montana. It has been thinned. Prescribed fire comes next. It will remove most of the ground fuels, providing an excellent bed for natural reseeding by the residual trees. Arno, a PhD forest ecologist, worked for the Forest Service for 25 years and wrote or co-wrote several books in which he and his University of Montana research colleagues, worked to explain the roles that prescribed fire and thinning can play in reducing wildfire risks in western National Forests.

With the help of Charles Keegan III, a widely published University of Montana research economist, Arno and Fiedler were able to determine that much of the thinning and restoration work that needed to be done in several western National Forests could pay for itself if a few commercially valuable trees are added to the thinning mix. Now retired, Keegan was then the Director of Products Industry Research within the University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research. The 1969-1994 BBER [6] report was largely his work.

Montana is well illustrated by the nearby Forest Service line graph. It tracks annual harvest, net growth and mortality in Montana's National Forests from 1962 through 2016. Tree mortality increased 223 percent, net growth declined 46 percent and harvest declined 80 percent.

Peter Kolb, PhD, Montana State University extension forester, discusses this problem and its solution in What is Climate Smart Forestry [Pages 7-11] Restoration forestry is key. The use of thinning and prescribed burning techniques that Arno pioneered at Lick Creek are the starting point for landscape scale mosaics that feature meadows and groups of trees of varying species, age classes and stand densities.

5 **Mimicking Nature**

6 **BBER 1969–1994**

What is Climate Smart Forestry?

Peter Kolb's latest Montana State University Forestry Extension Service report [7] is the most comprehensive climate and forestry assessment I've ever read. We are including it in *Which Montana* because we know many Montanans have serious questions about the impacts active forest management has on our changing climate.

As MSU's extension forester, Kolb offers advice and counsel to the state's 29,000 non-industrial private forest landowners who own 10 or more acres of land. Most own around 100 acres. Collectively, they own some 3.5 million acres, in western and central Montana.

Kolb holds a PhD in Forest and Range Ecophysiology from the University of Idaho. He was a Fulbright Scholar to the Bavarian Institute of Applied Forestry in Freising, Germany, where he continues to study the long term effects of intensive forest management in the Northern Alps. The 144-year-old Institute was founded by Bavaria's King Ludwig II in 1881.

Quoted above is the opening paragraph from his *Climate Smart Forestry* report.

"The science behind this topic is incredibly complex," he wrote in a subsequent email to us. "Multiple interacting factors, including the impacts of human-activity-produced gases, such as carbon dioxide [CO2] and methane on atmospheric energy – primarily Troposphere temperatures – have been accepted by the mainstream academic world as having strong potential influences on all ecosystems across the Earth."

Given how seamlessly Kolb's report fits within the narratives advanced by Steve Arno and Carl Fiedler [Pages 4-5] the charts and graphs included in his Climate Smart report do a nice job of quantifying climate fluctuations, especially the line graph on Page 17 that tracks carbon dioxide [CO2] concentrations and temporal changes on a geological time scale that begins 57 million years ago. Perhaps surprising to some readers, these fluctuations have been more moderate over the last 10,000 years. Earth was not "climate friendly" for millions of years.

Kolb returned to the area he had photographed in 2019 after the fire to see how it had been impacted, especially after the fire's Incident Commander told him that "nothing survived up there due to the severity of the fire."

Kolb hypothesized that the old clearcuts had not burned as severely as nearby older forests "because the live trees would have had higher live needles water content, preventing them from burning." But he wanted to see the burnt area for himself. We asked him to tell us whether his hypothesis had been affirmed on his return trip. Here is his email reply.

"Everything except the past harvest units burned, much of it with great intensity and severe effects. I have seen this same pattern on every mid-to-high elevation Montana forest that burned over the last 30 years. The severely burned area has been simplified to supporting only lodgepole pine because it is the only seed source that survived.

"Alternately, the past harvest units that did not burn have conserved the genetics of the many other tree species that have persisted on these landscapes for potentially thousands of years. They now act as localized native tree and plant species refugia – and are sources of species seeds and thus repopulation across severely burned landscapes. The previous Administration plan would have protected these overpopulated forests as "old growth," the exact opposite of what needs to happen to conserve these forests."

Elsewhere in his explanation, Kolb wrote that his photograph illustrated the contrast between late succession lodgepole that had mostly died from drought stress and a subsequent mountain pine beetle attack. More shade tolerant subalpine fir and Douglas-fir was taking over the burnt area and the result would be a significant increase in the amount of woody biomass that could fuel a reburn.

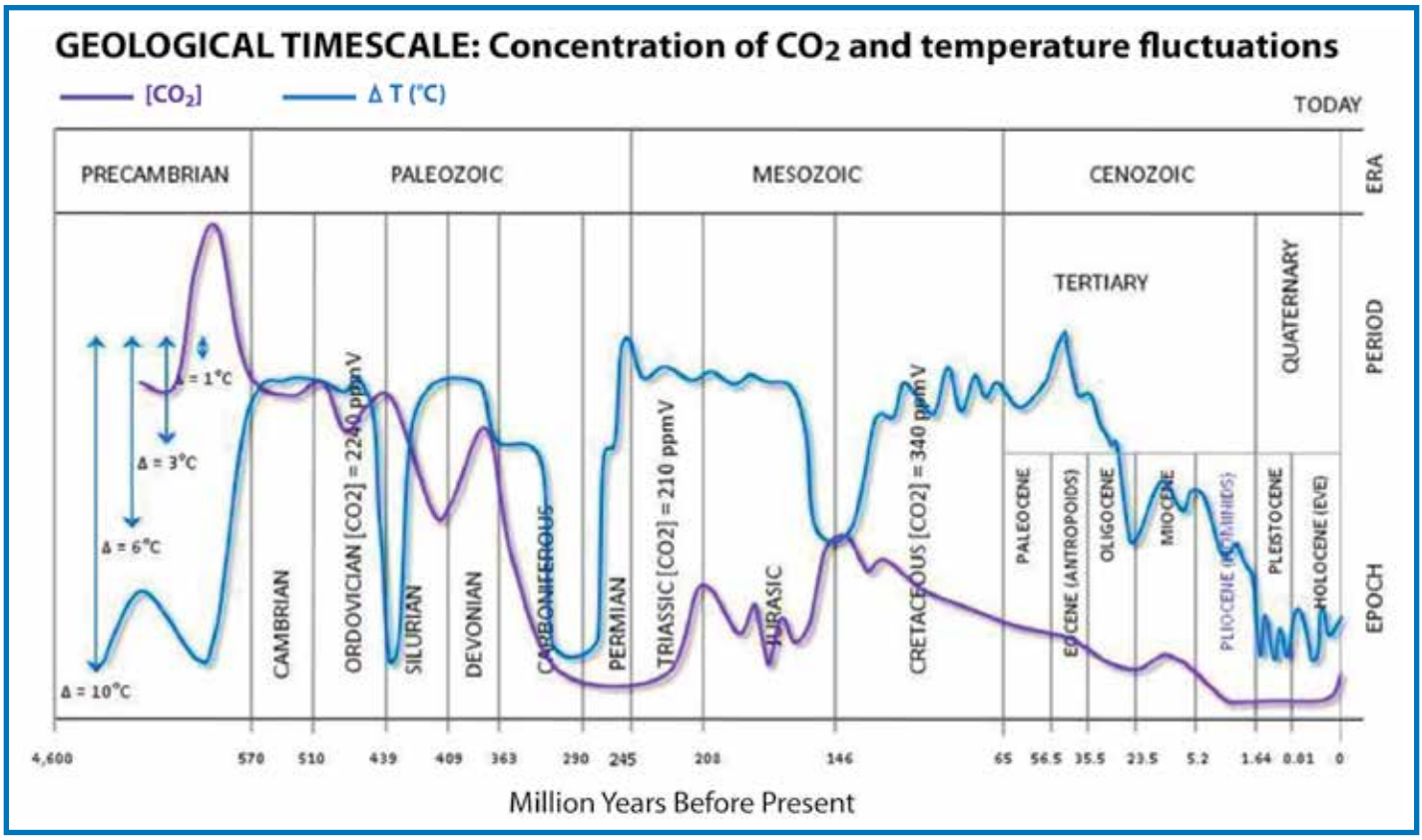
"This in contrast to the now 30- year-old regeneration of multiple species in the clearcuts," he wrote. "Since the regeneration units have less leaf area, there is less evapotranspirational water loss and less snow interception by the canopy resulting in the younger stand remaining fairly well hydrated throughout the growing season. In the Northern Rockies, tree density is an important attribute that can determine tree species health and growth."

Ironically, Kolb had photographed the burnt area the year before it burned.

"I had no idea this would happen," he recalled. "I simply wanted to document the difference between the past harvest unit and the bordering unmanaged areas. It was

Peter Kolb working on his Tree Farm near Arlee, Montana. He thins periodically to maintain the health and vigor of his trees. His home sits amid his forest overlooking the Mission Mountains.

7 Kolb Report



Climate changes over the past 57 million years. The past 10,000 years of more moderate climate luctuations are on the far right denoted as the Holocene.

Source: 1 – Analysis of the Temperature Oscillations in Geological Eras by Dr. C. R. Scotese © 2002. 2 – Ruddiman, W. F. 2001. Earth's Climate: past and future. W. H. Freeman & Sons. New York, NY. 3 – Mark Pagani et al. Marked Decline in Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide Concentrations During the Paleocene. Science; Vol. 309, No. 5734; pp. 600-603. 22 July 2005.

Carbon dioxide and temperature fluctuations have remained remarkably stable for the lasts 1.64 million years. Not surprising considering the fact that the first trees appeared on Earth about 385 million years ago. Archaeopteris - woody precursors to trees – had a significant impact on the atmosphere because they absorbed carbon dioxide and released oxygen into the atmosphere.

stark, so I knew the unmanaged area would burn sometime soon."

The contrast is easily seen in the nearby photographs marked "Pre-fire 1 and Pre-fire 2.

Because Kolb is a scientist first, last and always, he hiked around until he found a control site in an adjoining Woods Creek drainage where he could test his hypothesis concerning treatments. Save for a small lightning fire at the top of the drainage, nothing had occurred.

"You can see the effects for comparison," Kolb wrote in a subsequent email. "Although this picture supports the argument that letting fires burn can also recreate mosaics, wildfire cannot be planned, manipulated to burn where we want them to burn or relied on to treat the areas we have identified as in critical need of treatment."

What started as science driven research about human impacts on the Earth's atmosphere and climate has also become a social and political controversy that is not likely to end any time in the near future.

Peter Kolb, PhD,
Forest and Range Ecophysiology,
Evergreen Foundation Director

"Many of the mature trees had been killed by a combination of mountain pine beetle and white pine blister rust," he continued. "There was significant regeneration, arguably from individuals that naturally had some resistance to blister rest. Unfortunately, the magnitude and severity of this fire killed both surviving mature trees and regeneration except where it occurred in past harvest units."

We encourage you to read Kolb's entire report, Peter is a member of the Evergreen Foundation Board of Directors and a frequent contributor to our work.

Peter Kolb took this photograph in 2020, the year after the Woods Creek Fire struck the Belt Mountains northeast of Townsend, Montana. The lightning caused blaze scorched 15,250 acres but left quite a noticeable green patch in the foreground and some others in the background. He was eager to see how the fire had behaved, especially after the fire's Incident Commander told him that "nothing survived up there due to the severity of the fire."

Having studied fire effects for more than 20 years, Kolb suspected that the old clearcuts had not burned as severely "because the live trees would have had higher live needles water content, preventing them from burning. I went because I wanted to test my hypothesis."

Peter Kolb is not the first forest scientist to go in search of answers. In Kolb's case, he wanted to know why the large green patch – an old clearcut – had survived the fast moving 2021 Woods Creek Fire while the forest surrounding it was killed by flames.

In 1953, the U.S. Forest Service asked the late Leo Issac to review a series of scientific studies focused on harvesting practices in mature and old growth forests in the Douglas-fir region.

Issac, who worked for the Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station in Portland for 32 years, was an internationally recognized authority on Douglas-fir silviculture. .

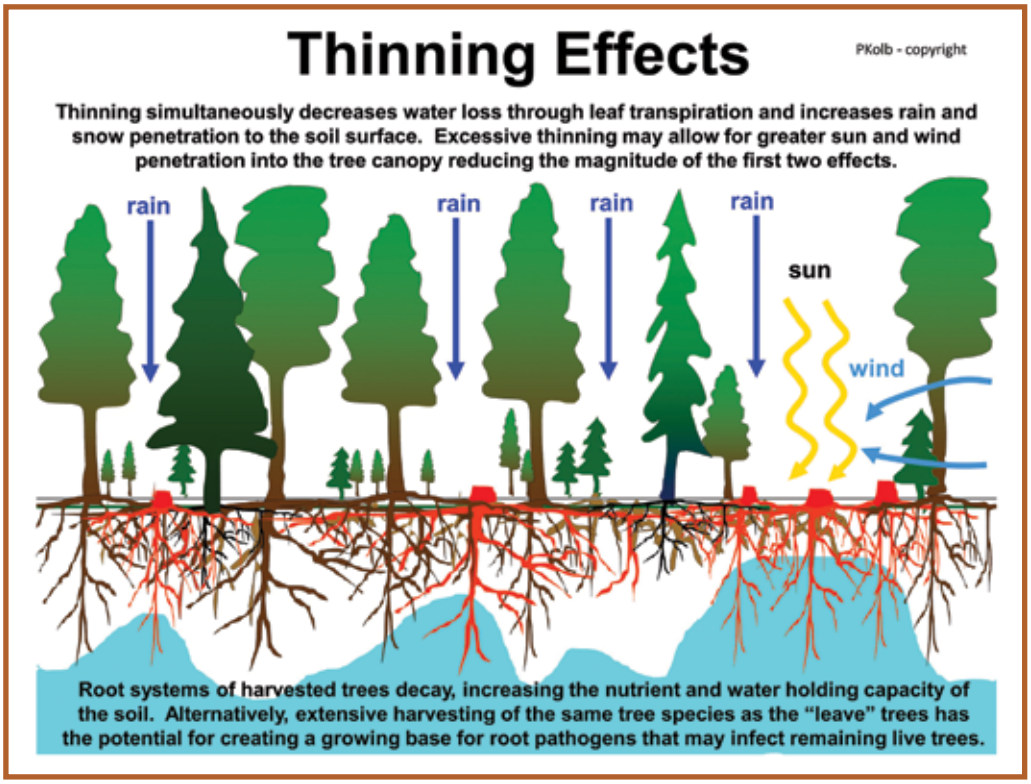
His 48-page *Research Paper No. 16: Place of Partial Cutting in Old Growth Stands of the Douglas-Fir Region,* published in March, 1956, remains the defining discussion paper for anyone seeking a detailed assessment of the benefits and impacts of partial cutting and clearcutting.

He concluded that partial cutting had not proven to be a successful method for converting a normal virgin forest to a new forest. However, in subsequent research he found that scorching summer temperatures made selective harvesting the best choice on south facing slopes from Roseburg Oregon south into Northern California.

Issac's silvicultural research – and that of today's PNW station – are tightly focused on the Douglas-fir region. To learn about Montana forests you must do as we did in this report. We turned to the Rocky Mountain Research Station at Ogden, Utah, Todd Morgan and his staff in Forest Industry Section at the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research and scientists like Peter Kolb and the late Steve Arno.

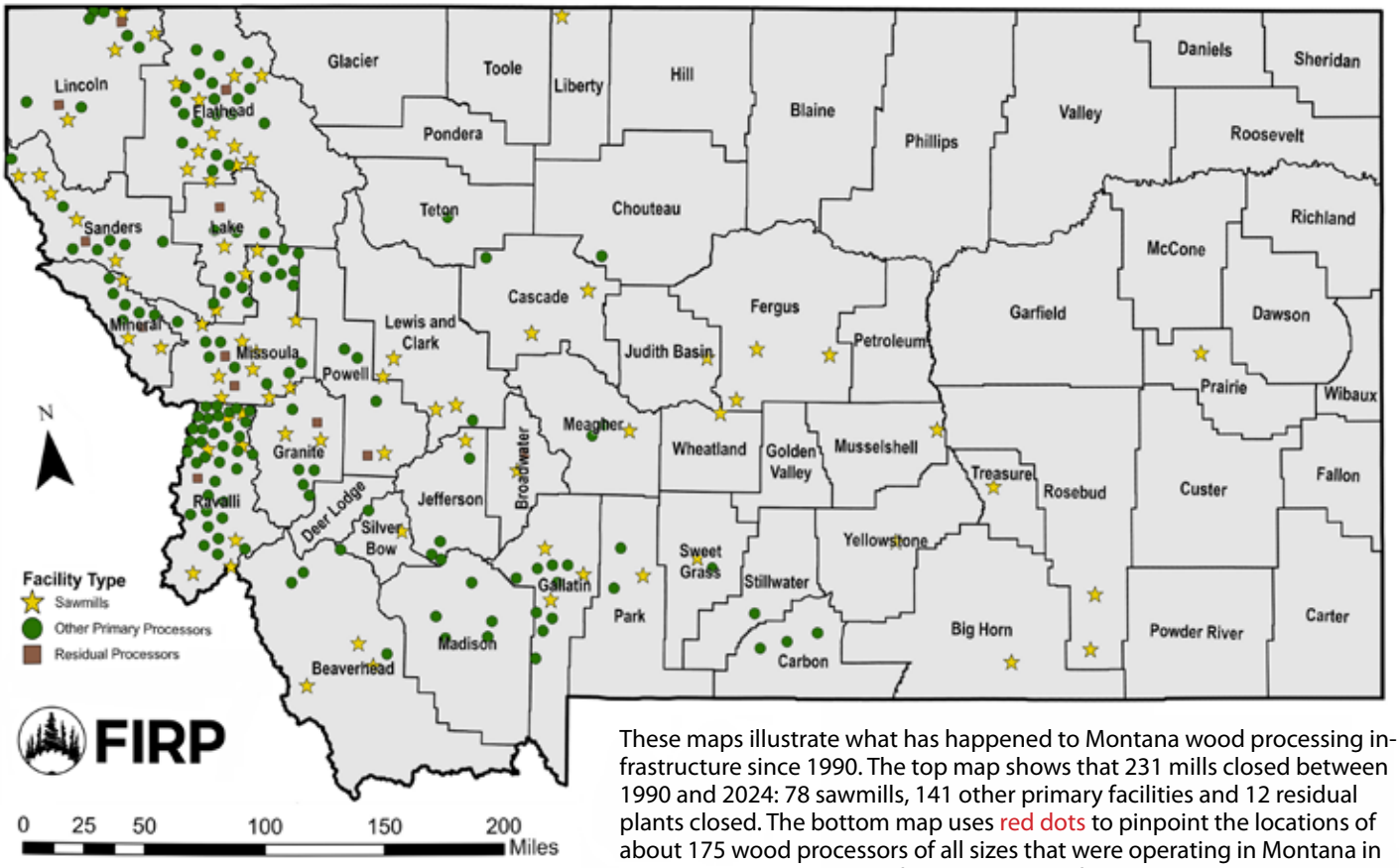
The main messages in their decades of research are [1] science-based boots-on-the-ground forestry is key to the survival and productivity of Montana's at-risk National Forests and [2] minus *significant* growth in diverse wood processing infrastructure forests in "The Last Best Place" will continue to die and burn.

In his Page 9 explanation of the Belt Fire, Kolb wrote that the Biden Administration's plan for protecting old growth forests would have protected younger forests that held too many trees. Here on Page 10 is a "pre-fire" photo and, below it, his "control" photo showing the devastation the Belt Fire caused in a stand of trees that should have been thinned. He illustrates alternative thinning models that could have been implemented on Page 34 of his full report.



Peter Kolb's thinning effects illustration from Page 34 of his *Climate Smart Forestry* essay is well complimented by this photograph taken in the University of Montana's Lubrecht Experimental Forest in the Blackfoot River drainage 30 miles northeast of Missoula. In the area that has not been thinned, there is no snow on the ground, but in the thinned area snow [moisture] has accumulated and you can see trees 3-5 feet tall in the background.

CLOSED MONTANA FACILITIES, 1990-2024

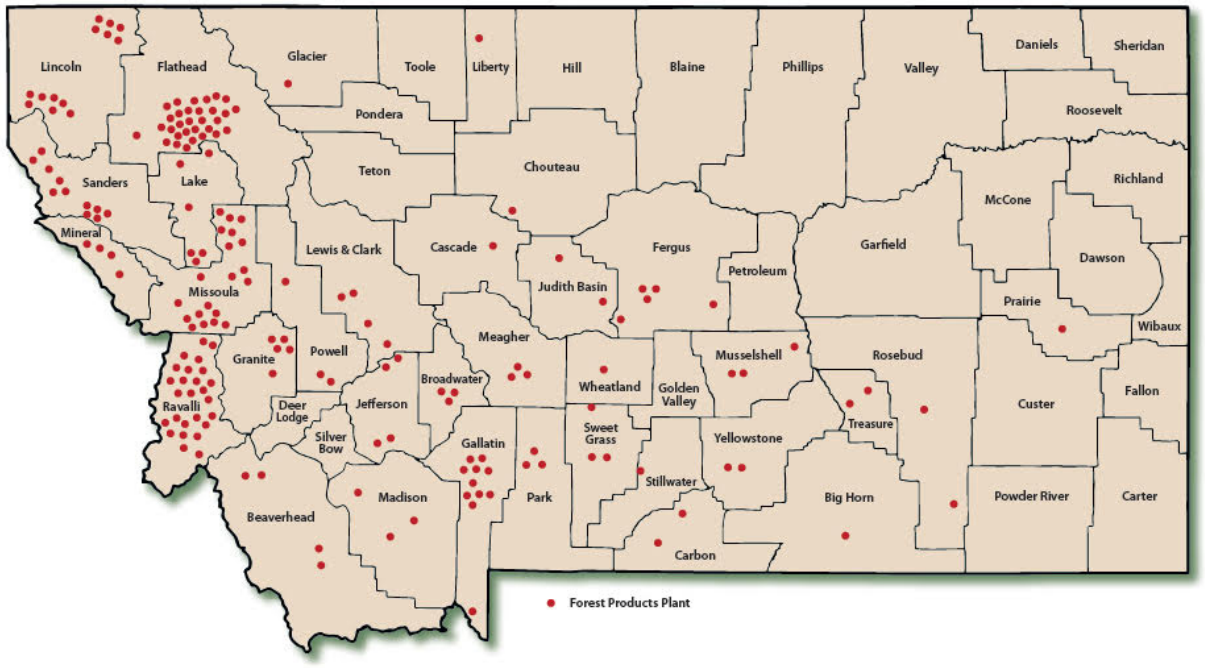


Other Primary Processors include: Log home, log furniture, plywood/veneer, post/pole/piling, other primary manufacturer, concentration/export yard and roundwood pulp-chip conversion facilities.

Residual Processors include: Particleboard/MDF, pulp/paper, biomass/energy, bark, shavings and fuel pellet/presto log facilities.

These maps illustrate what has happened to Montana wood processing infrastructure since 1990. The top map shows that 231 mills closed between 1990 and 2024: 78 sawmills, 141 other primary facilities and 12 residual plants closed. The bottom map uses red dots to pinpoint the locations of about 175 wood processors of all sizes that were operating in Montana in 1993. There were dozens of log home manufacturers in western Montana that have since gone out of business. Also many small sawmills that lacked the financial resources to compete as timber supplies declined. Red dots in eastern Montana were probably small post and pole makers. [Data for these maps came from the University of Montana BBER]

LOCATION OF MONTANA'S ACTIVE FOREST PRODUCTS PLANTS, 1993



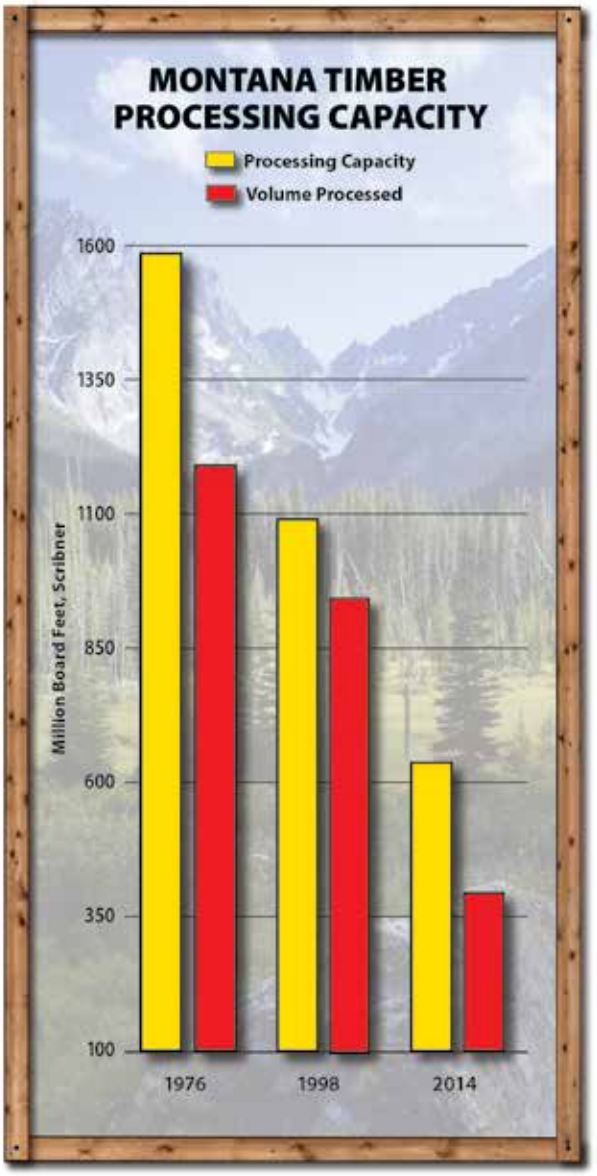
LARGE MONTANA MILL CLOSURES *SINCE 1990*

Year Closed	Facility and Location	*Employees	Timber Processed
1990	Champion International - Missoula	188	47
1990	F. H. Stoltze - Dillion	95	21
1991	Flathead Lumber Company - Polson	70	20
1991	WTD Forest Industries - Columbia Falls	90	30
1993	Champion International - Libby	200	126
1994	Crown Pacific - Superior	146	45
1994	Dargy Lumber - Darby	55	32
1994	Tricon Lumber - Drummond	50	25
1995	Missoula White Pine Sash - Missoula	190	22
1995	Louisiana Pacific - Libby	40	30
1996	Crown Pacific - Thompson Falls	120	38
1997	Idaho Pole Company - Bozeman	10	1
1997	Border Lumber - Rexford	30	6
1997	J D Lumber Company - Judith Gap	60	12
1997	Timberline Lumber - Kalispell	21	10
1998	Darby/Stoltze Lumber - Darby	90	24
2000	American Timber - Olney	160	50
2003	Crowder Lumber - Lewistown	60	5
2003	Stimson - Libby (plywood)	294	44
2003	Louisiana Pacific - Belgrade	110	34
2003	Vinson Timber - Trout Creek	65	12
2005	Owens & Hurst - Eureka	90	23
2007	Stimson - Bonner (plywood)	300	29
2008	Stimson - Bonner (sawmill)	142	52
2009	Plum Creek - Ksanka (studs)	83	40
2009	Plum Creek - Pablo (boards)	87	41
2010	Smurfit-Stone Container - Frenchtown	417	41
2016	Weyerhaeuser - Columbia Falls (sawmill)	90	48
2016	Weyerhaeuser - Columbia Falls (plywood)	120	22
2017	Tricon/IFG - St. Regis	100	35
2020	R-Y - Townsend	70	21
2024	Pyramid - Seeley Lake	100	40
2024	Roseburg (particleboard)	160	**150
34 Years	Total of 36 Mills Closed	3642 Jobs Lost	1,026 Annual Cap. Billion Brd. Feet

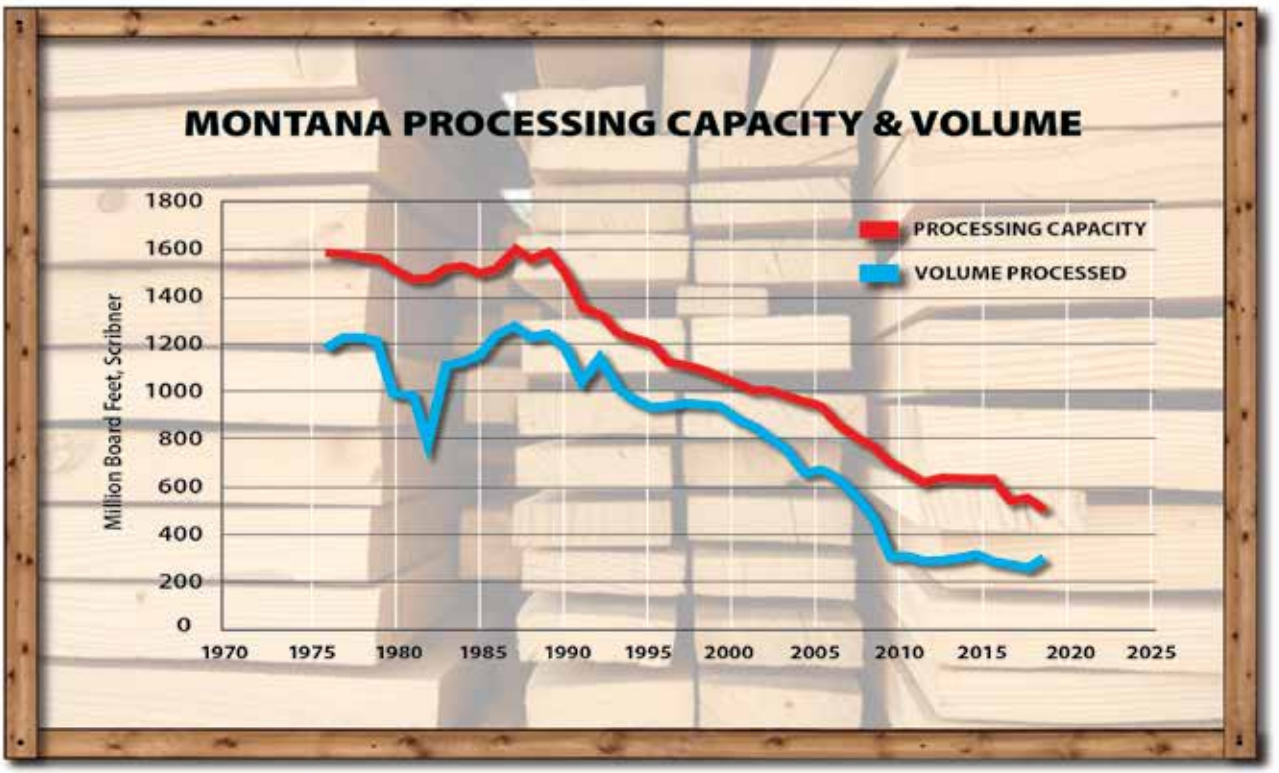
** Employees - refers to direct employment in mills. Does not include logging & other sectors.*

*** Million Square Feet*

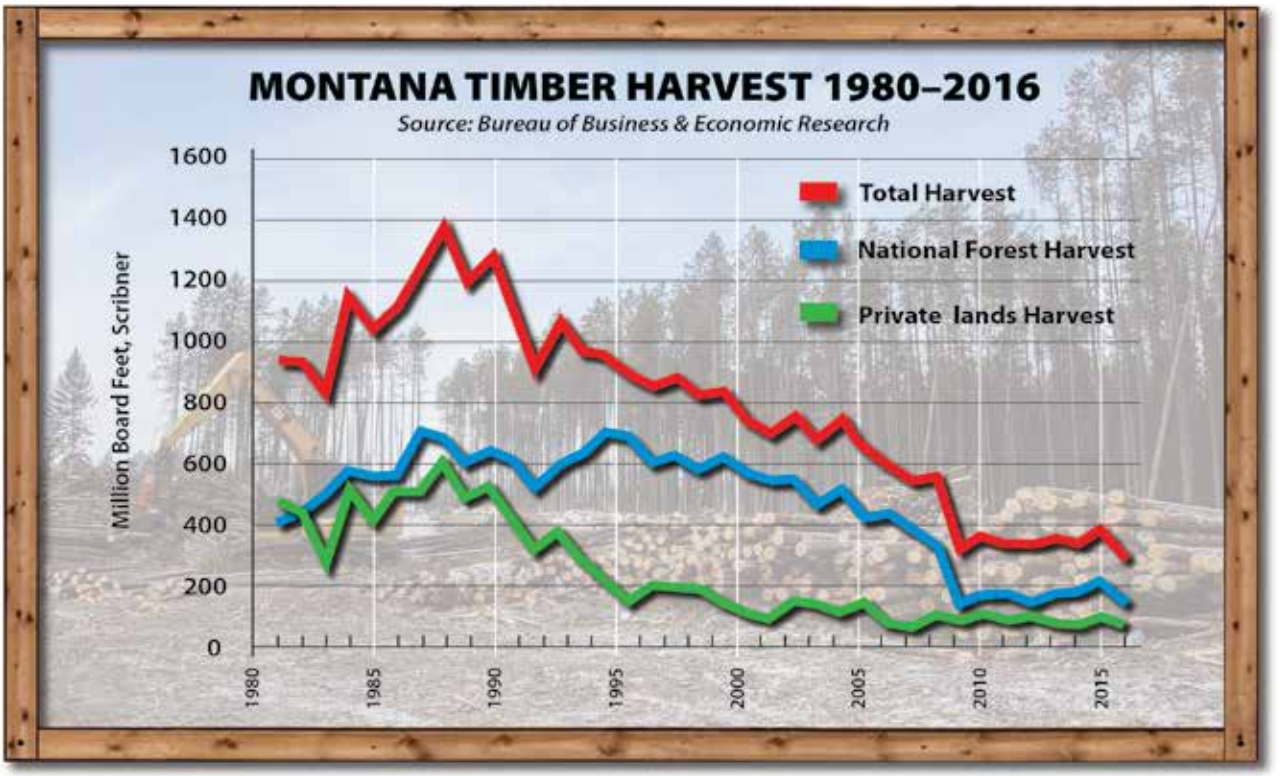
The chart above is a list of the mills lost and their locations, plus the number of workers who lost their jobs at each mill. It totals 3,643 jobs lost. The list was developed by the Forest Industry Research section at the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.
Six primary breakdown sawmills remain. If one more permanent closure occurs, Montana will lose the ability to restore its dying National Forests because there won't be enough milling capacity left to profitably process dimension lumber sold at your local lumber yard.



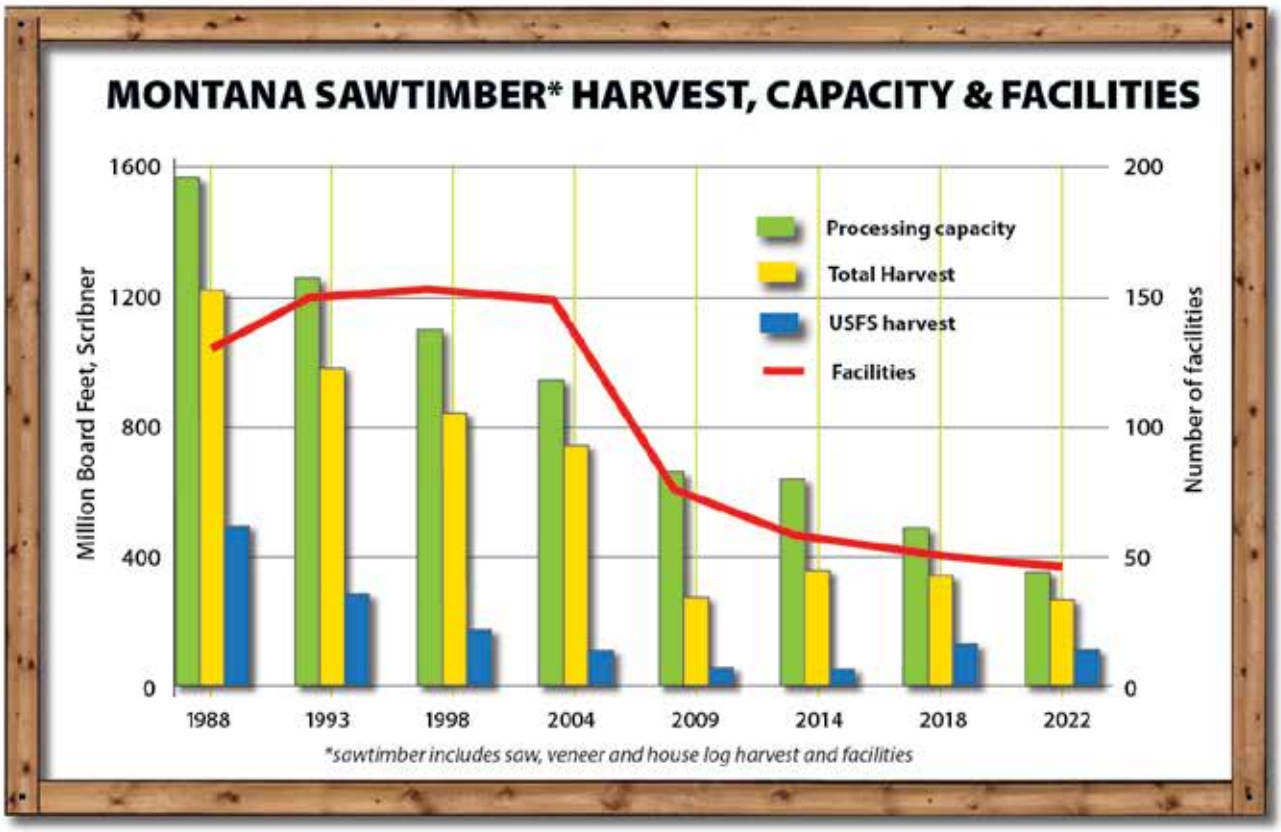
Harvesting in Montana's National Forests has been declining since 1986. Many factors triggered this decline: Increasing federal regulation, public unrest with logging's impact on aesthetic and recreational values and resulting litigation. This bar graph reveals that as mills closed processing capacity dropped by about one billion board feet, from about 1.6 billion board feet to 600 million. Likewise, volume processed dropped from about 1.25 billion feet to 375 million.



As Montana's sawmills and plywood plants closed [See Pages 12-13], the capacity to process logs and the board foot volume on logs processed both declined. Between 2014 and 2018 capacity declined by 23 percent.



Total combined harvest in Montana's forests – the red line – peaked at about 1.4 billion board feet in 1988 and declined steadily to about 325 million board feet in 2016. It is now about 300 million board feet, a 78.6 percent decline. Harvesting on private lands – the green line – peaked about 600 million board feet in 1988, then declined about 75 million board feet in 2016, an 87.5 percent decline. National Forest harvesting –the blue line– peaked at about 700 million board feet in 1995 and is now about 175 million board feet – a 75 percent decline. Declines in forest management are the primary reason mortality now exceeds growth in nine of Montana's 10 National Forests. See the bar graph on Page 4.
[Data provided by the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research]



Number of Montana sawmills

Mills by annual lumber production, selected years.

	Annual lumber production MMBF			
	Less than 10[a]	10 to 50[a]	More than 50[a]	Total sawmills
2022	18	6	b	24
2018	17	4	4	25
2014	23	3	6	32
2009	30	6	5	41
2004	43	3	11	57
1998	54	8	11	73
1993	60	14	12	86
1988	58	16	13	87
1981	114	23	5	142

[a] MMBF = million board feet, lumber tally
[b] Mills with production over 50 MMBF are included in the 10 to 50 MMBF category

Sources: Keegan et al. 1983, 1990, 2001; Spoelma et al. 2008; McIver et al. 2013; Hayes et al. 2020b, 2021.

Sawtimber Total (MMBF)

Processing capacity and utilization, selected years

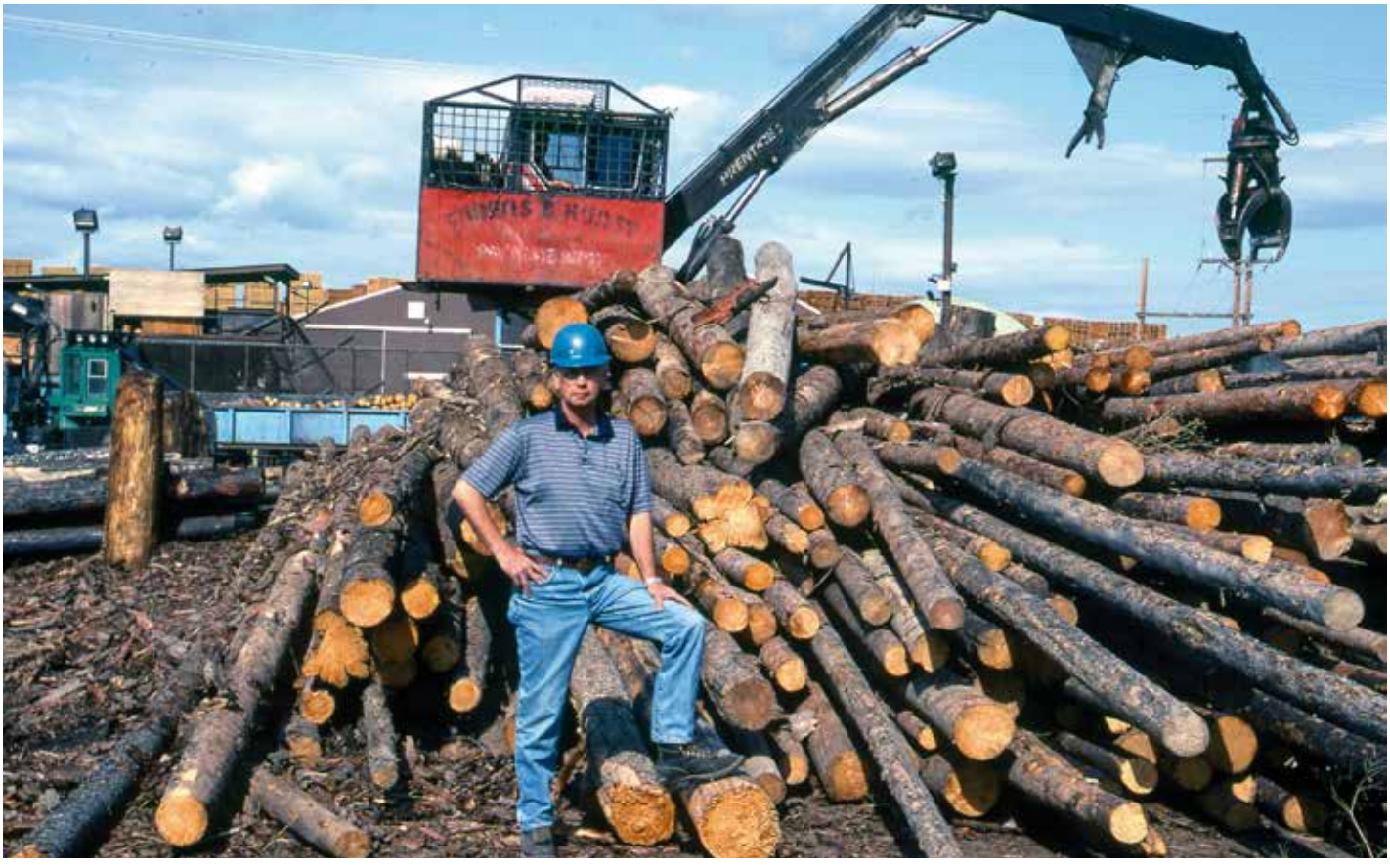
	Processing capacity MMBF[a] Scribner	Volume processed MMBF lumber tally	Percentage of capacity utilized
2022	354	232	66
2018	489	289	59
2014	635	394	62
2009	660	303	48
2004	934	656	70
1998	1091	946	87
1993	1251	1016	81
1988	1561	1226	79

[a] MMBF = million board feet
[b] 2009 numbers revised from McIver and others 2013

Sources: Keegan et al. 1983, 1990, 2001; Spoelma et al. 2008; McIver et al. 2013; Hayes et al. 2020b, 2021.

This bar graph and its tables tell the story of what has happened to Montana's forests and forest products industry since 1988. As harvest levels declined on all forest ownerships mills closed and wood processing capacity declined. By 2022, total harvest had fallen from 1.219 billion board feet to 282 million board feet, a 77 percent decline.

Tree mortality, caused by insects, diseases and wildfire, has overtaken growth on more than 14 million National Forest acres. Growth remains positive on the Kootenai National Forest but it is slowing and now exceeds 363 million board feet annually. To reverse this trend Montanans must embrace the late Steve Arno's research. The thinning and prescribed burning techniques he pioneered in the Bitterroot Valley light the way to brighter and sustainable forest future in the Last Best Place.



These photographs tell very different stories. Kenny Swanstrom has been thinning this family-owned tract near Kalispell, Montana for decades. He does not buy federal timber sales or log from industrial landowners. Jim Hurst, Eureka, Montana was totally dependent on timber harvested from the Kootenai National Forest. He reluctantly auctioned his mill in 2005 after battling for years to keep it running. 90 employees – most of them friends who had worked for him for years – lost their jobs. He blamed serial litigators. Kootenai National Forest Supervisor Bob Castenada readily agreed. From Hurst's office window you could see standing fire-killed timber that was tied up in a lawsuit. *Jim Petersen photos*

"The Montana Forest Action Plan is a Great Roadmap"

Tim Love, member, Montana Forest Action Advisory Committee and Coordinator of the Montana Forest Restoration Committee.

Editor's Note: This report would not be complete without comment from a few of the conservationists who signed the Forest Products Roundtable resolution that appears on Pages 22 and 23.

We picked three that are well known in Montana: Tim Love, currently Montana's representative to the Society of American Foresters; Blake Henning, Chief Conservation Officer with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; and Barb Cestero, Montana State Director, the Wilderness Society.

Tim Love

Tim Love *(pictured above)* is probably Montana's most admired conservationist. He was the Forest Service's District Ranger at Seeley Lake for 20 of his 40 years with the agency. We first interviewed him some 20 years ago. He had partnered with Gordy Sanders in the early stage development of the Clearwater Stewardship Project, a collaboration that eventually attracted the participation and support of several conservation groups. Sanders was then Resource Manager for Pyramid Lumber, Seeley Lake's largest employer.

Clearwater also earned high marks from fashion designer Liz Claiborne and her husband, Art Ortenberg, globally respected conservationists who owned a ranch near Seeley Lake. Pyramid's loggers had done some thinning work on their ranch and Ortenberg was so impressed that he became a public champion of what Love and Sanders were trying to do.

Montana's Democrat Governor Steve Bullock added his heft in 2014 with his collaborative Montana Forests in Focus program, the result of a New Year's promise he had made to himself.

"We needed to increase the amount of forest restoration on the National Forests in our state, and I wanted to make it happen," Bullock said in a Spring 2016 Evergreen interview. "Our forests and rural timber communities are suffering and although Montanans are working together to address these issues, it wasn't resulting in enough action on the ground."

Bullock subsequently convened a group of 35 conservationists –including five tribal leaders – and sought their advice. To his delight their suggestions were almost identical.

"They all wanted to put logs on trucks, improve forest health and fish and wildlife habitat and reduce fire danger while keeping intact those places that should be left alone," he said. "The result is the Montana Forests in Focus[8] program we have today. And it's working!"

It did, but not fast enough. Six mills have closed since we interviewed Gov. Bullock in his office in Helena in 2016: Weyerhaeuser shut down two big mills in Columbia Falls in 2016, the Idaho Forest Group shuttered its St. Regis mill in 2017, RY shut down at Townsend in 2020, Roseburg Lumber shut down its particle board plant in Missoula in May, 2024 and Pyramid Lumber at Seeley Lake auctioned its equipment in October, ending its 75 year run. Total jobs lost at the six facilities: 640.

"Much has changed since Gordy Sanders and I first partnered," Tim Love said in a recent telephone interview. "Population growth and a corresponding change in Montana's culture, an unfounded suspicion that what's left of our timber industry wants to turn the clock back to the days when harvesting took precedence over all other forest values and several court decisions that are making it difficult for the Forest Service to do much forest restoration work."

"We cannot protect the forest values Montanans treasure unless we manage our National Forests," Love continued. "It won't happen if we don't have skilled loggers, technologically advanced wood processing facilities and markets for their products. Montanans need to unite to help the forest products industry get back on its feet. The collaboratively developed 2020 Montana Forest Action Plan is a great roadmap."

Blake Henning

There is no more haunting sound than an elk bugling on an early fall morning. Here in the Rockies, bulls often weigh more than 1,000 pounds. They have only two natural enemies: wolves and wildfire.

Wildfire in elk habitat will ruin Blake Henning's day faster than anything. He is the Chief Conservation Officer for the 200,000-plus member Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation,[9] the world's leading advocate for elk and elk habitat conservation. He's been with RMEF for 25 years.

"The Fix Our Forests Act"[10] is our top priority at the moment," Henning said in a recent telephone interview. "The loss of millions of acres of wildlife habitat in National Forests is senseless, unnecessary and preventable."

The bipartisan bill [HR 471], introduced by House Natural Resources Committee chair, Bruce Westerman [R-Ark] and Scott Peters [D-Calif], passed the House 279-141 in January. The Senate is working on its bi-partisan version. Among its supports are Montana Senators Steve Daines and Tim Sheehy.

"The Act paves the way for big improvements in federal forest management," Henning explained in a recent telephone interview. "It speeds environmental reviews for forestry projects that reduce wildfire risks. I don't see how anyone can oppose this, but some do."

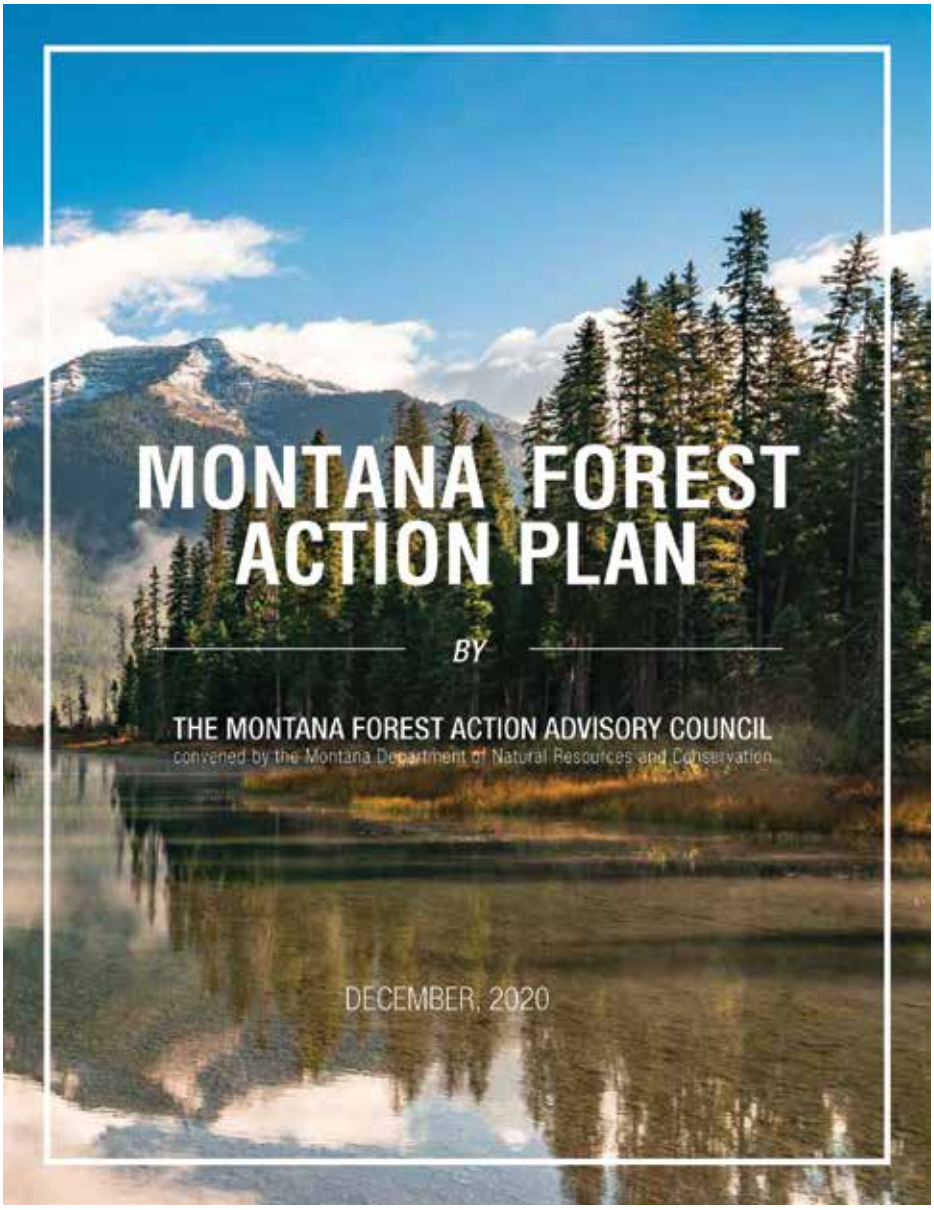
Henning also has his sights set on the 2015 Cottonwood Decision,[11] a 2015 Ninth Circuit Court decision that requires the Forest Service to re-initiate consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service whenever new information concerning critical wildlife habitat is forthcoming.

"It creates an endless analysis loop for the Forest Service," Henning explained. "None of the work needed to protect fish and wildlife habitat and rural communities ever gets done because the Forest Service is always in start over mode."

Henning helped assemble an impressive list of conservation partners that includes the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 36 wildlife, hunting and fishing groups and, perhaps most notably, the Federation of American Scientists, a 75-year-old organization that has its roots in a smaller group that came together following the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Closer to home, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has its roots in Libby, where it was founded in 1984 by Charlie Decker, Dan Bull and Bob and Bill Munson.

Over the last 41 years, it has protected about nine million acres of wildlife habitat. Henning and RMEF's staff are currently managing 475 projects including 130 habitat stewardship projects in 22 states and 43 wildlife management projects in 19 states.



Barb Cestero

Some Montanans will be surprised to find Barb Cestero's signature alongside of that of Gordy Sanders, on the resolution passed last December by the Forest Products Retention Roundtable.

Sanders was Resource Manager for the Pyramid Lumber Company for many years before it auctioned its milling equipment last fall. Cestero is the Montana State Director for the Wilderness Society.[12] Her office is in Bozeman. Sanders and Cestero are friends. It was he who recommended that we talk with her about Wilderness Society support for breathing new life into Montana's struggling forest products industry. Historically, the organization and the industry have been at odds were public forest land management is concerned.

8 Forests in Focus

9 Rocky Mtn Elk

10 Fix Our Forests

The collaborative energy that drove the 2022 Montana Forest Action Plan drew the Society and Montana's family-owned mills closer to one another.

"We haven't found the silver bullet yet and there may not be one," Cestero said in a recent telephone interview. "Montana is losing wood processing infrastructure it needs and, like many others, I believe restoring forests requires new investments in technologies and skill sets that are disappearing. I think Gordy will be the first to tell you we are currently going backward on several important fronts."

I readily agree.

"What's the path forward?" I ask.

"We need to invest in public lands and public natural resource agencies that provide multiple resource benefits for generations to come," Cestero replied. "Timber becomes a byproduct of restoration forestry that, again, won't get done if we don't have wood processing infrastructure and the skill sets needed to do the on-the-ground work."

"And what does restoration forestry mean to the Wilderness Society?" I ask.

"It means natural resiliency," she replied. "Forests can't easily restore themselves if they are dying faster than they are growing. That's where the on-the-ground work comes into play. Most of us want the same basic things – clean air and water, lots of wildlife and special outdoor places, including Wilderness. But none of these things happens by accident. This is why partnerships and a zone of conservation collaboration are so important."

"And what's the most important element?" I ask.

"Mutual trust," she replies. "Without it, nothing good can happen."

Chief Mountain stands silently at the northeast corner of Glacier National Park. It is only accessible with permission via a road that crosses Blackfeet National land. Tribes – specifically the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes - were heavily involved in the collaboratively developed Montana Forest Action Plan. Indians have lived in western Montana for 12,000 years, a fact memorialized by former Montana Governor, Steve Bullock and Presidents Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama.
Photographer unknown.

11
Cottonwood Decision

12
Barb Cestero

The Sustainable Path to Timber Industry Recovery

To reach a sustainable path to recovery for Montana's timber industry we have assembled a list of Montana based recommendations we hope Montanans will consider and support. We believe these will [1] help reduce the risk of insect and disease infestations and inevitable wildfire and [2] better protect the air we breathe and the water we drink [3] help protect fish and wildlife habitat [4] increase protection of our year-round outdoor recreation opportunity [5] improve public land management performance and efficiency and [6] attract new investment capital and wood fiber manufacturing capacity. These recommendations are based in part on the collaboratively developed 2020 Montana Forest Action Plan.

Timber Industry Infrastructure

- Considering the transportation disadvantage within Montana and particularly to access larger market areas, focusing major investments in engineered wood products including Cross Laminated Timber [CLT], Mass Panel Plywood [MPP], Edge glued products and finger jointing. These increased values produced will help offset transportation costs to market. This is essential.
- The loss of Roseburg Forest Products fiberboard plant in Missoula left primary breakdown mills without markets for their sawdust, shavings and wood chips. We must attract investment in [1] co-generation [2] wood fiber insulation [3] biochar or [4] wood pellets.
- The loss of Pyramid Mountain Lumber leaves Montana with only one mill that can process and market large volumes of ponderosa pine, a major tree species in Montana. We have a serious forest health/wildfire problem in our ponderosa forests that must be addressed. This necessitates investments in ponderosa pine manufacturing facilities. Short of taxpayer subsidy, which is unlikely, there is no other way to offset ponderosa treatment costs or pay for Accredited Logging Professionals who would do the on-the-ground restoration work.
- Consider the potential for forming cooperatives involving family-owned mills or succession alternatives whether employee-owned, landowner owned or some combination.
- Improved financing alternatives for contract loggers to further expand, upgrade or facilitate succession is essential to retain a fully integrated infrastructure in addition to the existing Revolving Loan Fund which could also be expanded in loan amounts and applicant flexibility.

Forest Management:

- Continue minimizing work from home options.
- Decentralize the U.S. Forest Service, giving District Rangers and Supervisors the authority to make forest management decisions currently made at the Regional or Washington DC level. This was the practice through the early 1990s. Local stakeholder interests were heavily involved in decision making. .
- Revise District Ranger candidate criteria to clearly state that accepting the position means no advancement or transfer for a minimum of 5 years. This provides time for candidates to get to know the communities and forests in their Districts.
- Limit the number of temporary 120-day appointments a District employee can pursue to two years.
- Increase staffing at the District Ranger level by transferring employees from Supervisor's offices, Regional offices or Washington DC.
- Allow cooperating agency agreements and analyses used by one federal land management agency to be used by all agencies. This would include Environmental Impact Statements, Environmental Assessments, Categorical Exclusions, Reciprocal Analyses and Administrative Decision Letters. This would minimize regulatory confusion between agencies with different mission statements while increasing efficiency and reducing government expense.
- Expanding the use of emergency decision making authority will shorten the timeline between project decision and implementation.
- Establish hard deadlines for National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA] decisions. If necessary, sequester Interdisciplinary Teams until their analysis is complete.
- Increase use of 10-year Integrated Resource Timber Stewardship Contracts (IRTC). Its beneficial "goods for services" approach leverages resources.
- Increase use of IRSC 10-year contracts. Grant Procurement Contracting Officers the authority to sell timber under Service Contracts as Timber Contracting Officers do.
- Support reconciliation budgets calling for every National Forest to produce one 20-year stewardship contract annually. Review and implement the A-to-Z stewardship model that was pioneered on the Colville National Forest in northeast Washington.
- Align harvest levels with "Desired Future Conditions" outlined in National Forest Plans.
- To assure contractors and investors of an adequate long term timber supply require all Region One National Forests to complete an extensive 10-year strategy for their timber sale programs. This in addition to their 3-5 year plan of action.

Collaboration in management

- The "Fix Our Forests Act" proposed by Arkansas Congressman Bruce Westerman has been approved by the House of Representatives. It includes all of the proposals for reducing wildfire risk in western National Forests. Now it MUST be approved by the U.S. Senate. Westerman is the only forester in Congress.
- States should evaluate the potential benefit of pursuing a Shared Stewardship Agreement with Federal Agencies to expand their Good Neighbor Authority [GNA] footprint and increase cross boundary forest restoration work.

- Promote Cross Boundary projects involving public land manage agencies and adjacent private landowners.
- Expand GNA use among federal agencies, counties and tribes. Expand utilization of Explore Act authorities.
- Engage in and support the benefits of collaboration and collaborative efforts to find common ground on complex issues.
- Require service contractors to attend the training sessions on Montana's Voluntary Forestry Best Management Practices and Streamside Management Zone law.
- Agencies need to be proactive to better inform the public of good work accomplished they are accomplishing. Public Engagement/communication from the Ranger District levels to the broader public is essential. District Rangers are the Forest Service's face.

Litigation

Much has been written about the Equal Access to Justice Act since it was ratified by Congress in 1980. EAJA's original intent was to provide federal funding to individuals and small businesses that could not afford to hire attorneys in cases involving federal actions they opposed.

The Act soon spawned a slew of additional laws and regulations that prove the often quoted idiom: The road to hell is paved with good intentions. This has certainly been true with misuse of EAJA's intent by environmental groups that oppose active forest management.

Currently, 300 million board feet of National Forest timber in Montana is tied up in "process" litigation. These are cases in which groups alleging environmental harm accuse the Forest Service of not dotting all the i's or crossing all the t's in a proposed project plan.

A favorite and very subjective phrase used by federal judges who rule for the plaintiffs in such cases is that the Forest Service "didn't take a hard look" at this or that factor. Bear in mind that there isn't a federal judge in the nation that holds an advanced forest science degree. They may be legal scholars but they are ruling on process – not science.

To the best of our knowledge, none of these cases has ever involved actual environmental damage in a forest. The Forest Service is too risk adverse to propose a project plan that would do any harm.

Again, it's all process, a delaying tactic designed to discourage the agency from moving forward with a project environmental groups oppose.

Why do some environmental groups litigate while others don't? It's their business model. "Sue and settle" works perfectly because the federal government – taxpayers – pay their legal fees.

Here's an alternate approach we hope Montanans and Congress will consider: Baseball style binding arbitration conducted by a three-judge arbitration panel. You bring your best idea and we'll bring ours and the panel will decide which idea conforms to the most recent Forest Plan. The loser pays the winner's court costs.

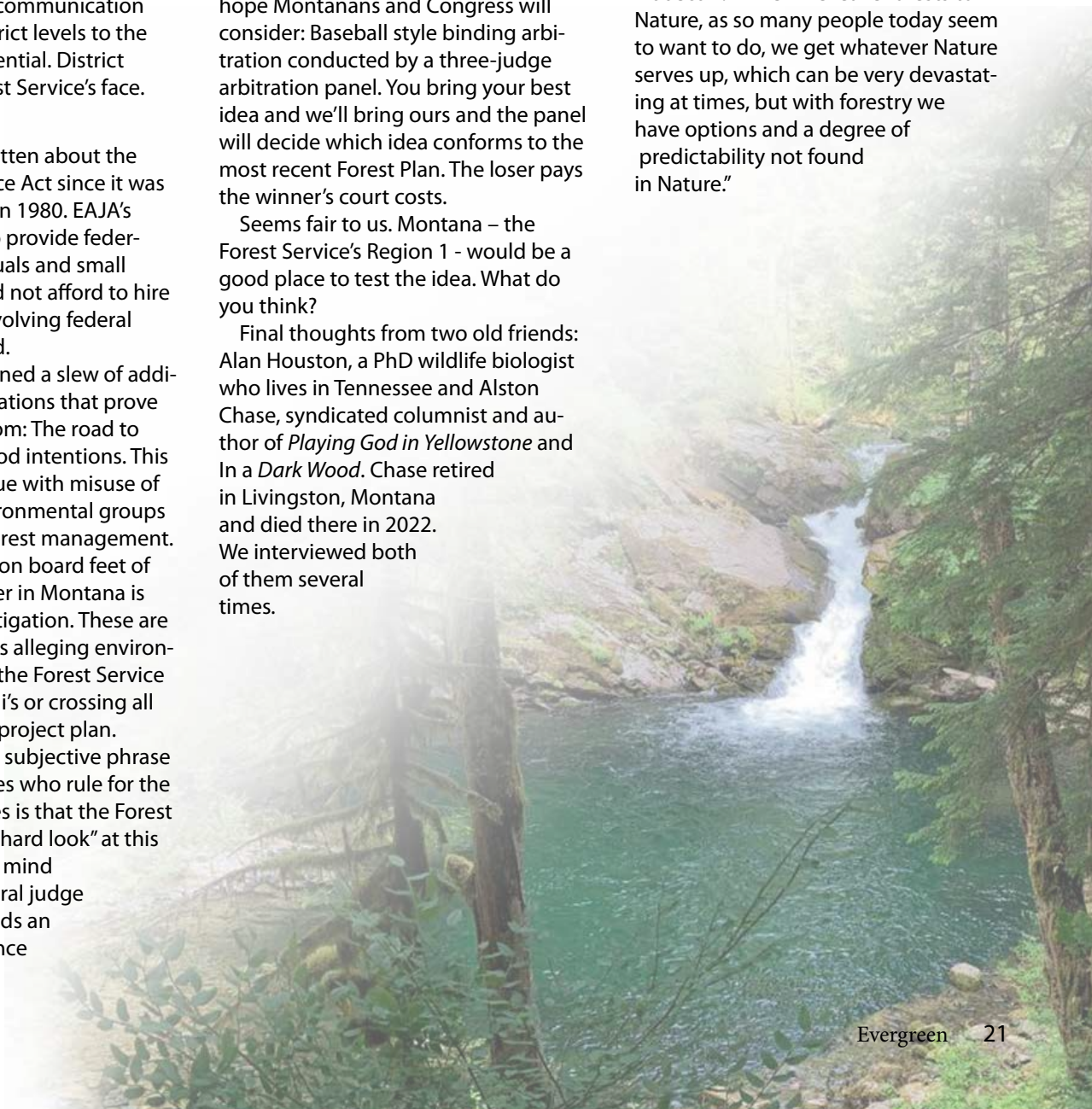
Seems fair to us. Montana – the Forest Service's Region 1 - would be a good place to test the idea. What do you think?

Final thoughts from two old friends: Alan Houston, a PhD wildlife biologist who lives in Tennessee and Alston Chase, syndicated columnist and author of *Playing God in Yellowstone* and In a *Dark Wood*. Chase retired in Livingston, Montana and died there in 2022. We interviewed both of them several times.

Chase: "Environmentalism increasingly reflects urban perspectives. As people move to cities, they become infatuated with fantasies of land untouched by humans. This demographic shift is revealed through ongoing debates about endangered species, grazing, water rights, private property, mining and logging.

It is partly a healthy trend. But this urbanization of environmental values also signals the loss of a rural way of life and the disappearance of hands on experience with nature. So the irony… As popular concern for preservation increases, public understanding about how to achieve it declines."

Houston: "When we leave forests to Nature, as so many people today seem to want to do, we get whatever Nature serves up, which can be very devastating at times, but with forestry we have options and a degree of predictability not found in Nature."



"WE UNDERSTAND THE CRITICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN HEALTHY FORESTS AND A VIBRANT FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY."

Montana Forest Products Retention Roundtable, Gordy Sanders, Co-chairman

Montana Forest Products Retention Roundtable

Resolution on Forest Products and Conservation Values

December 13, 2024

Montana, like other western states, is facing a wildfire and forest health crisis created by a number of current and historic actions which ignored fire dependent ecosystems. Our changing climatic conditions have resulted in longer fire seasons, increased drought and increased stress on trees and plant communities. This stress has promoted an increase in insect and disease occurrence in our forested lands resulting in over 9 million acres at risk as outlined in the 2020 Forest Action Plan.

Montana, unlike many other Rocky Mountain states, still has a fully integrated forest products industry to use trees that need to be removed and to create forests that are more resistant and resilient to wildfires, insect and diseases, while creating the desired mix of habitat and watershed function. The continued loss of wood products manufacturing facilities limits land managers' ability to treat forests to reduce wildfire risk, improve forest health and implement forest restoration treatments to create a more resilient landscape. "A sustainable, vibrant, integrated forest industry infrastructure is critical to implementation of viable restoration projects involving vegetative management by providing necessary equipment, expertise and markets to help offset restoration costs." (MFRC, 2007). The by-products of this forest work provide our society with sustainable building materials and other products. The use of wood products allows for important climate mitigation by storing carbon.

The use of the harvested trees as wood products also allows for important climate mitigation by storing carbon in the built environment within the wood. It substitutes for fossil carbon-intensive products like concrete, steel, aluminum, and brick. The harvests and fuel treatments help the forest be more adapted to drought, fire and insects thus allowing the forest to continue to capture carbon in the remaining healthier trees.

The forest products industry is essential and a critical infrastructure for Montana. Because *wood products manufacturers are valued collaborative partners with many conservation organizations in restoration projects on public and private lands, we offer our support in seeking solutions to the issues that are challenging the forest products industry.*

Last December, the 38 members of the Montana Forest Products Retention Roundtable jointly signed the resolution that appears on these two pages. As signers, they declared "their unified commitment to retaining and bolstering an integrated and diverse forest products manufacturing in Montana."

Among the notable conservationists who signed: Alan Townsend, Dean, Franke College of Forestry at the University of Montana, retired Forest Service Chief, Dale Bosworth, Tim Love, widely considered to be the founder of Montana's stakeholder collaborative movement, Barb Cestero, Montana State Director, the Wilderness Society and Blake Henning, Chief Conservation Office, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Among the other organizations represented: Trout Unlimited, the Nature Conservancy, Montana State Forestry, the Society of American Foresters, the Montana Forest Collaborative Network, the Montana Tree Farm System, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research

We understand the critical connection between healthy forests and a vibrant forest products industry.

Our community of interests will actively work with the wood products industry to ensure the long-term health of our forests and communities.

We the undersigned declare our unified commitment to retaining and bolstering an integrated, geographically diverse wood products manufacturing industry in Montana.

Gordy Sanders-Chair, Forest Products Retention Roundtable

Barb Cestero--The Wilderness Society

Shawn Thomas, Montana State Forester

Mark Aagenes, The Nature Conservancy, Director of External Affairs

Stephen McDonald-Director, CSKT Forestry

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Sonya Germann, State Director MT/Dakotas BLM

Clayton Elliot, MT Trout Unlimited—Director of Conservation and Government Affairs

Alan Townsend, Dean, Franke College of Forestry and Conservation, University of Montana

Jeffrey Michael, Director--Bureau of Business and Economic Research

Craig Rawlings-President, Forest Business Network

MT Chapter of The National Wild Turkey Federation

Christine Tutty-Johnson, Nineville Venture, LLC

David Atkins—President, MT Forest Owners Association

Jay Gingerich, Stillwater Post and Pole, LLC

Stephen Kimball, MT Forest Collaboration Network

Tim Love, MT Society of American Foresters

Tom Watson, MT Natural Resources Conservation Service

Weyerhaeuser

Willis Enterprises

Flathead Ridge Ranch

Montana Wood Products Association

Montana Logging Association

Montana Forest Consultants

Holly McKenzie, Chair—MT Tree Farm System

Chris Ryan, Dept of Commerce, Wood Prod Prog Specialist

Dale Bosworth, Retired Chief—United States Forest Service

Greg Chilson—Coalition of Forest Counties

Clint Weis, President—Intermountain Roundwood Assn

Rocky Inferger, Chair—FireSafe Montana

Steve Dybdal, MSU—MT Manufacturing Extension Center

Chris Chitty, Home Architects and Builders

Todd Morgan, Director—Forest Industry Research

Doug Ferrell, Co-Chair--Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Collaborative

Derek D. Nelson, Montana-Boston Partners

Ryan Chapin, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

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Resource Page

This QR code will take you to Evergreen's "Which Montana?" Resource page.

You will find additional content related to topics within this publication.

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