



**Federal Forest Advisory Panel Meeting  
January 7, 2008  
Salem, Oregon  
Testimony of Tom Partin  
American Forest Resource Council  
Policy Solutions to Address Old Growth**

I want to thank the Committee for taking my testimony today and to let the Committee know that the American Forest Resource Council represents nearly 100 forest products manufacturers in Oregon and eleven other states. Our mission is to promote balanced and sustained management of our federal forests that includes a dependable and consistent flow of raw materials from those forests.

During the early part of my career, I spent 15 years managing federal and private forests for both forest health and the production of wood. I have walked over thousands of acres of timberlands doing a variety of jobs that I believe gives me credibility to speak on a variety of forest topics including "Old Growth" and "Old Growth Forests".

I have also provided to the group a paper that was prepared by Ross Mickey of my staff. Ross has done a very good job of capturing all of the confusing issues that surround trying to identify what is old growth and what society thinks we should do with it. I suggest you take time to read Ross' paper, and I will probably steal a few lines from it in my presentation today.

My first comment to this group is that I don't believe you can have any positive and meaningful outcome by taking up a discussion on "old growth". Everyone has their own definition and ideas about what this is and what we should do with it. "Old Growth" has become nothing more than a land allocation. We begin by setting land aside because we think it has old growth on it, or we put land into a category of LSR (Late Seral Reserves) to grow into old growth, or when old growth stands burn up, blow over, or get killed by insects and disease we designate new land as old growth replacement acres hoping they will take on the same characteristics of lands we wanted to last forever. So now we have existing older forests, forests we hope to grow into older forests, and forests that kind of look like older forests that are taking the place of older forests that we have lost. I personally think this is a poor way to manage our forest resources. With this management mentality, it will only take a few more decades and all of our federal land will be set aside in one form or another for growing and protecting old growth.

I think this Committee needs to rise above the old mentality of setting land aside for single use purposes, and truly take a look at what is good for the entire landscape. To do this you have to realistically look at the conditions we have rather than rely on emotional arguments that have no scientific basis.

Our management agencies have been duped into believing that by setting forests aside we will preserve all of the amenities currently on these landscapes into perpetuity. This could not be farther from the truth. As an example I think it is pertinent to look at what is happening to our National Forests in Eastern Oregon since the artificially imposed East Side Screens took place in 1993 or about 15 years ago. Regional Forester John Lowe imposed the East Side Screens to appease a potential lawsuit by the Natural Resource Defense Council who threatened to sue because they believed that older trees had been overharvested on east side forests. The result was that no green tree over 21" could be harvested, wider riparian buffers were put into place to further protect streams and wildlife connective corridors were established to ensure wildlife had adequate cover.

Review Sheet #1----Growth, Mortality, and Removals of all Eastside forests.

Review Sheet #2---Growth, Mortality, and Removals---Blue Mountain National Forests

These two sheets point out the ticking time bomb that is building up on our National Forests and exploding a little every year as fuels build up. The more we set lands aside to grow old growth or for other single purposes the more we are crafting their destiny to be destroyed by fire or insects and disease.

Review Sheet #3----Fires by Agency

I want to particularly focus on the trend of fires on the USFS for the last 6-8 years. I believe that we are experiencing an extremely high build up in fuels that are poised to destroy the very values that we have been trying protect. We are not losing old growth or other forest amenities to logging; we are losing our forests to fire. I believe that management is the key to forest health and the key to preserving the amenities we all like on our forests. I encourage this Committee to take a holistic look at the current conditions facing our forests and to be bold enough to recommend meaningful management strategies that will keep our forests green and not black.

Thank you.