

EASTERN OREGON FORESTRY by John Rounds (541) 447-1342

Forestry in Eastern Oregon is, in my opinion, in its "death throes". Now by "forestry" I mean the practice of growing and harvesting forest products on private forest lands. The reason for this is simple. The demise of the National Forest timber sale program in Eastern Oregon is the cause of the loss of forest management, per se, in the area. The National Forests, along with some public domain, comprise about 80% of the forested portion of Eastern Oregon. Without some reasonable timber harvest on the federal lands there just is not enough other timber to sustain a forest industry. Oh sure there will be small enclaves that will continue to operate but for the most part the industry is lost. I have seen it said that there are now only about 18 facilities to manufacture raw wood products left on the East side. There used to be almost 50. I only count about 15 left and several of those are living on borrowed time due to a lack of raw material. Virtually all of the Industrial forest land in Eastern Oregon has been sold to other interests. Interests whose objectives are not growing and harvesting timber.

I publish the Northwest Timber Review which monitors public timber sales in the Pacific Northwest. I have been monitoring public timber sales for 20 years. Last year (2006) the seven National Forests in Eastern Oregon sold approximately 140 million board feet of timber. Most of the material sold was low quality and small in size. In fact 21 million board feet was fiber material, not even usable for lumber. The average return was \$67 per thousand board feet or a total of just over \$9 million. As recent as the early 1990's these same National Forests would annually sell about 1.5 billion board feet which would return over \$500 million to the treasury. I emphasize that, even with these higher harvest levels, the tree growth was exceeding harvest levels by a considerable margin.

On the ground the federal forests are growing fiber far in excess of what is removed and subsequently forest health is declining at an alarming rate. Now we are hearing talk of climate change and how our northwest forests are going to see more forest fires and insect and disease infestations. All this will be greatly accelerated by current federal forest management, or more accurately the almost complete lack of it. Prior to settlement the forests used to burn periodically and were regularly "cleaned up" for the most part. Now with the "no management policies" of the federal government there is too much fiber for fire to really work, without burning up private property outside the national forests, so we will continue to see increasingly larger and more catastrophic fires as well as ever expanding disease and insect attacks.

All levels of government seem to ignore the situation. Take Crook County for example. Their Planning Department has a Forest Goal where they state the private forest land is needed to provide material for the four sawmills in Prineville. The fact is the last sawmill in Prineville closed several years ago. Yet the plan remains in force