

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on Forests & Forest Health

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### Statement

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Helen Chenoweth-Hage, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Forest and Forest Health  
U.S. House of Representatives

The G.A.O. and other reports have been addressed in earlier testimony. This committee knows full well that Catastrophic Fire in the West is a reality. This reality has not been addressed even though for many years the science has been available and the communities of America have pleaded for relief. This testimony is not directed at the Forest Service personnel or our courageous Fire Fighters, but those in decision making positions either unwilling to stand for the truth or who are driving an agenda.

We believe in America and a system of checks and balances. In prior years cities and counties have had no need, to a fault, to participate with the Federal government because the government was a benevolent father, mostly staffed by local people steeped in their local custom and culture. Of late, Government comes from afar without a conscience each agencies acting by themselves or in harmony, acting like independent government with a life of their own and with no regard for people or the law itself. I do not believe the Forest Service has met its statutory compliance as directed by Congress under the Organic Act.

This government that I do not recognize does not emulate the government envisioned by our fore fathers. Dictating from afar, subjecting the West to its rod no matter the outcry or results.

Agendas such as;

1. Roadless Areas which will end logging in to Southwest Forest and inhibit the ability to fight these catastrophic fires.
2. Conservation easements, which rob our tax base without out consent or approval of local elected officials.
3. Water Regulation, FMS 2540 and the Clean Water Initiative, illegally restructured so that although the water is a state sovereign issue the distant tentacles can control the States Water.
4. De-coupling of the timber sales so that we become welfare recipients of the government instead, of vigorous local economies with Forest related jobs.
5. The Urban Interface "Band-Aid" that doesn't bring economy or Forest Health but looks good for appearance sake, paid for by taxpayers money and addressing the symptoms instead of the problems. Taken from the taxpayer pockets instead of money generated from Timber Harvest.
6. Inability of the Forest Service to harvest "Scott Able Fire". At this time it is doubtful that there will

be a harvest while the trees are still useful. This was the case on the "Bridge Fire".

7. After the fire, the flood caused additional damage that fell on the citizens lap because of the inability of the government to help remediate issues on private property.

The question needs to be asked when the Federal Government controls or "owns" all the resources in the country. Will they still need the people? Will the people have lost their place in the government and does this break the sacred trust afforded us in the Constitution and more important the Declaration of Independence that guarantees us those rights not from our government but from our Creator. The decision is not hard or questioned in rural communities around the country. We pray a lot these days.

What will happen in my opinion if we continue on the course we are taking? Our county, like many in the West, has significant amounts of State and Federal Lands. If our county and state agricultural industry falls below the threshold that will support that industry, it will not only destroy that industry but all the support businesses and devastate our social and economic fiber. To not use the resource is to defile it. We are now losing the tools to do this.

White Sands Forest Products, our only large local mill, closed this month, along with the 8 million dollar economy that it brought to Alamogordo and the surrounding communities. This comes on the heels of a 14% decline in the cities gross receipts. The first principal of economical development is to take care of existing business. Is the Government doing this?

The spotted owl recovery plan allows "thinning" of trees 9 inches in diameter and below, I ask you, is it a coincidence that the timber mill can't take any timber less than 9 inches? End of mill!!!!!! A Vole mouse prey for the spotted owl, has a similar regulation that has been built in to destroy the cattle industry. Otero County has some 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation ranchers. We now have the Mouse that slew the county.

I submit to you that we are being held hostage to foreign oil. After the destruction, rural America will be held hostage for food or other natural resources?

What are the desired future conditions? The National Environmental Policy Acts purpose is to take care of the biosphere and the health and welfare of mankind. Let me reiterate "The Health and Welfare of Mankind". The duly elected governing bodies would like our place at the table. We would like our rights as promised by the Constitution. We can not survive any more community stability studies, demonstration projects or public participation projects. The catastrophic fires as predicted in the early 90's have not been addressed and are upon us now. Our forest could have been restored for the cost of Fire loss and Suppression this year alone.

We live in an age when under section 11G the Citizens Suit Provision of the Endangered Species Act any individual can be empowered to bring communities and states to their knees. The Endangered Species Act needs to be reformed. It is not a Law, it is a tool. The Clean Water Act is being expanded without Congresses, States or Local Governments approval. The EPA needs reform.

The Forest Service can not exist in the form it is today. We cannot be left in the hands of an agency that has brought us to where we are now. This will destroy not only our environment, our custom and culture but America.

An agency that by its own government reports is mismanaged, unaccountable and has brought us to the

point where we are burning down. I commented at a recent meeting that we are being attack by the Pharaoh's Army and we will only respond to a higher law that cannot be defeated.

God is our Commander  
You are our Leaders  
We are your Silent Soldiers  
Show us the Way  
God Bless America

Respectfully Submitted,  
Michael Nivison  
Village of Administrator

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