

National forest logging is bad business, study says

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March 16, 2000

Web posted at: 11:38 a.m. EST (1638 GMT)

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Logs

Logging on national forest land creates more economic harm than good, according to a recent study by the National Forest Protection Alliance and the Forest Conservation Council.

The commercial timber industry provides jobs and supplies products, but a recent study shows logging on national forest land does more economic harm than good.

The 75-page report, three years in the making, notes there are dramatic economic and social losses when forests are logged under the U.S. Forest Service's timber-sale program.

"Past reports have only looked at the financial costs of logging," said John Talberth, lead author of the report. "They have ignored both the external costs of logging and the economic benefits of standing trees. This report includes both."

The report, "The Economic Case Against Logging National Forests," states that national forest lands are far more valuable to rural communities when trees are left standing, and that the federal logging program creates billions of dollars in unaccounted costs for communities, businesses, and individuals. This expense comes in addition to timber industry subsidies, which cost American taxpayers approximately \$1.2 billion a year.

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Talberth and co-author Karyn Moskowitz examined the economic value of trees to the ecosystem. The benefits of standing trees run the gamut from flood control to water purification to pest control to pollination.

National forests supply more than 530.4 million acre feet of clean water each year to municipalities, businesses and rural residents, the report notes. Environmentalists estimate that the value of this water for consumption alone is more \$3 billion a year.

Lack of trees

The authors note that national forests annually filter more than 53 million metric tons of carbon fiber from the atmosphere, a function worth nearly \$3.4 billion.

Recreation, hunting and fishing in national forests contribute \$111 billion to the gross domestic product, generating 2.9 million jobs a year, the report also notes.

As the principal habitat for thousands of pollinators, national forests may contribute as much as \$4 billion to \$7 billion to U.S. agriculture.

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The report also addresses what economists call "externalities," costs that are passed on to businesses, communities and individuals when

national forests are logged. These include costs incurred by municipal water providers when rivers are polluted by logging as well as jobs and revenue lost by businesses that support recreation and tourism.

"There are consistently more jobs, more income and more public revenues associated with forest protection yet, using economic analysis techniques from the Dark Ages, the Forest Service considers our national forests economically worthless unless they are logged," said Talberth.

An analysis of the report by environmental activist Scott Schroder shows the findings to be particularly true in the Sierra Nevada mountain region of California and Nevada.

According to Schroder, people who live in the area derive great benefits from the intact ecosystems provided by national forests. Those benefits include clean water supplies, recreational opportunities and increased income and