

# Advocacy or Apathy for Forest Management

## A Pivotal Year for your Future

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If you are reading this article, then you must be okay with cutting trees, you are holding a tree or tree product in your hands. For those of us who work in the forest or who manufacture forest products, we must begin to better understand the essential need to publically advocate for sustainable, active forest management on all lands – both public and private.

Over the last forty years, we have experienced the precipitous decline of active management of our public forestlands, as well as the dramatic increase in land use regulations which further restrict forest stewardship of our private lands. These trends appear to be increasing as we enter the second decade of the 21st century.

If you use wood, or your business depends on the use of wood, you need to be concerned and begin to engage the larger public to help them understand your need to access land for raw wood materials.

Government claims to support a future economy based upon “green jobs”. Yet government actions continue to suppress one of the greenest industries on the planet – the wood industry. The wood industry has been using renewable bioenergy long before it became “politically correct” to do so. Our wood products are biodegradable; and in most cases, renewable – yet regulations would have the public believe otherwise. We are yet to see an EPA definition of biofuels that include most of the forestlands in America.

Few people understand that when they go to a fast food restaurant, their drink is handed to them in a forest product, their napkin is a forest product, their burger is placed in a forest product, and then all of these products are placed in a forest product (the

bag). They walk out the door and ironically, most are upset if they learn someone is proposing a timber harvest in their area.

Companies that claim they use only recycled wood simply ignore the fact that wood came from a tree and yet the public somehow thinks tree harvesting is not needed and that we only need to recycle used paper. Paper cannot be recycled over and over – it has its limits.

When it comes to lumber and sawn wood products, few citizens understand that by using wood we are locking up carbon in the wood for centuries; and as technologies evolve, that wood will likely always be recycled or used as a renewable biofuel. Corn, and the resulting ethanol, cannot compete with wood as a



biofuel. So if we want to reduce carbon dioxide in the air, plant and use trees!

By using and sustaining our forests, we in the wood products industry are the greenest of all industries. We do it all, yet are demonized as the exploiters of the forest. Sustainable forest management is the key to a healthy environment and a healthy economy.

Our wood products industry is being regulated to the extent that our imports of wood, or finished wood products, could become reliant on off-shore forests as we have been for decades with regards to oil. Yet America has some of the most productive forestland on the planet. If our anti-forestry attitudes and regulations trends continue, we'll likely see the day we are importing fuel wood pellets from Europe. Oh...I almost forgot...we already are. Here in the populous state of New Jersey, supermarket food chains sell firewood and firewood kindling grown, packaged and shipped from eastern Europe!

Having been in the business of forest management for forty years, it is any belief it is our apathy on the subject of forest management that has allowed extremists in the environmental community to convince the larger public that cutting a tree is bad and will destroy the environment we all depend upon.



The forest industry, and we foresters, simply have not made the investments needed to sustain the truthful, wonderful, successful story of sustainable forestry in America.

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Our forests are the lungs and lifeline of our planet's environment. If we breathe air or drink water, we must realize how critical the management of our forest is. Governments do not have the ability to pay for the needed stewardship of these lands. The needed work can only come from the forests paying their own way, with their own renewable forest products.

All of us involved in forest products whether you own or manage forest land, or manufacture products from private forest land must begin to tell your wonderful story of greenness, and you must explain to people where the wood comes from. All of us must start to come together in a united front to allow the wonderful truth of sustainable forestry to be: *The decline of our wood products industries is as much a political/social problem as a global economic problem. If we allow the half-truths, myths and lies to control the forestry debate, our industry will continue to decline and our forests will become museums that insure their own demise.*

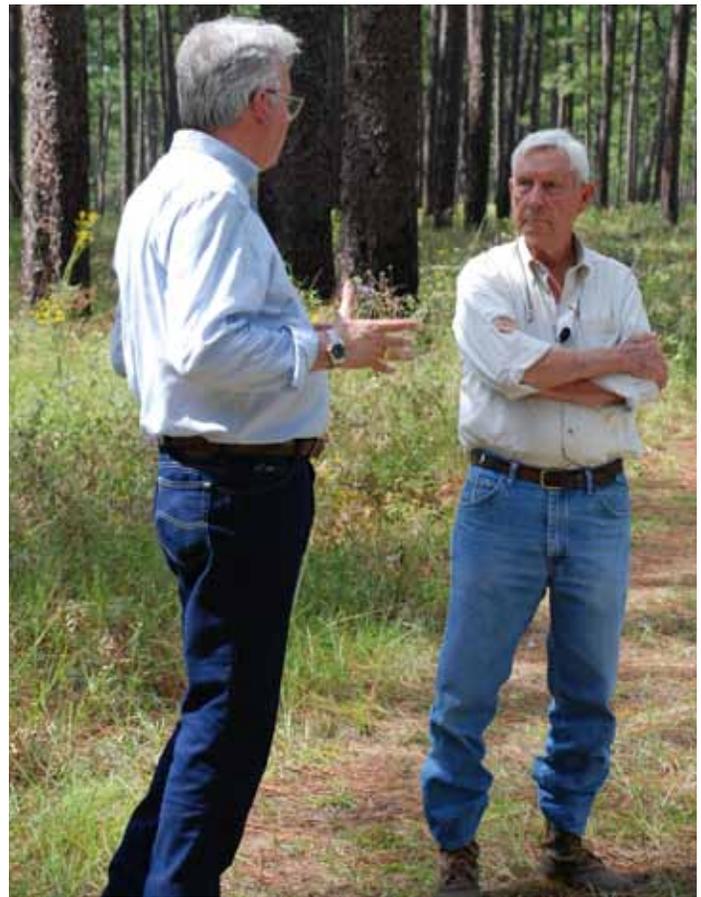
Preservation of forests is not conservation of forests, we are beginning to see the decline in the health of our forests as well as the loss of endangered species by the myth of preservation.

What can you do? Plenty! Get engaged on all levels. If you saw wood or make a wood product be sure you provide your customers with information on the need for active forest management. Look in your state or area and begin to support forestry organizations or on the national level support organizations such as the Forest Landowners Association, Society of American Foresters or Association of Certified Foresters. Our future is actually in our own hands. Get involved with media, TV, magazine, and newspapers. Media is looking for wonderful green stories and wood and forests are as green as it gets!

Our apathy has to change to advocacy and it has to happen now! Our political leadership must hear from us. We now live in an electronic age where loud shrill voices of extremist appear to get the most attention. We have a wonderful green story that hits on all eight cylinders. What other industry provides for the enhancement and conservation of our environment, while at the same time, provides an economic engine?

We need to put Americans back to work and we need to do it in a fashion that protects and sustains our environment while providing long-term economic growth. The Society of American Foresters has a slogan, "Trees Are The Answer", and they are correct.

Forests have fueled the economy of human kind for thousands of years. And yes, even today, most wood being used by humans on this planet is being used in third world countries by folks who need to keep warm with wood and cook their own food with wood. Lumber production is not the primary use of



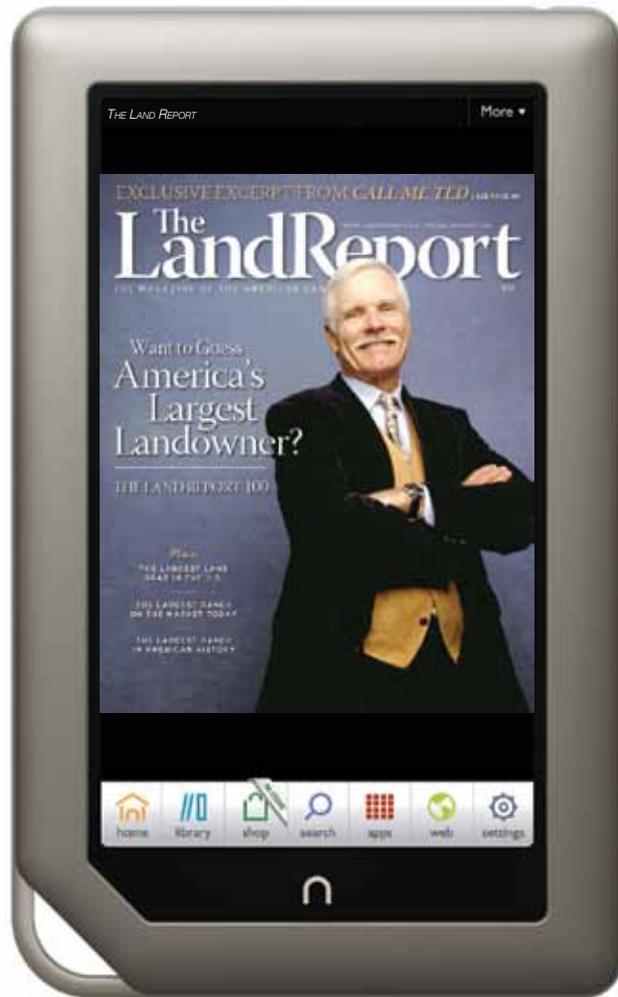
wood on earth. So we all have a stake in the future of our forests and a social obligation to the great society we live in.

Are we in America so wealthy we can lock up all of our forests as museums to simply walk through and look at while most areas of the planet are exploiting their forests for our economic use? No, we should be managing and using our forests to insure their ecological integrity, producing products and economic prosperity while teaching all the peoples of the world how to sustain their forest resources. We have the best forestry schools in the world and our forest science is second to none. The time has come for us to regain our role as leaders and help the entire world population sustain a healthy environment and a vibrant economy. It's what we do as Americans – wake up and begin to advocate!

The pending legislation and regulation that threatens the forest products industry has the potential to severely limit your ability to manage and utilize your land as you see fit. After the elections, political gridlock could be a thing of the past. Let's all come together in this pivotal year to ensure that Congress is well aware of the consequences of onerous and restrictive legislation.

We must find the time and resources to have a really green tree future so...Advocate, advocate, advocate! 🌱

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