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Comments:

The USDA/ USFS has NOT recognized or addressed the paramount problem with managing public forests. That problem is the failed "Protect and Preserve" management theory or style they insist on using. Management by politics has proven as a huge failure.

Forests in overall poor health are the FIRST and PRIMARY problem. Forests are in poor health from MISmanagement practices promoted by WRONG USDA/ USFS policies that are more political than science-based.

UNTIL the USFS comes to the reality that the policies that curtailed logging, promoted fire suppression and allowed historical wildfire fuel build-ups by not promoting intermingled new growth, mid-life-growth, and old growth on our public forests, the forests and all related life will suffer.

Allowing most forestlands to mature all at the same time promotes prime conditions for disease, insect predation, and natural dying of trees. Drought conditions exacerbate all the other negative conditions. Those are largely the current conditions

With no new and mid-life growth, watersheds, wildlife, recreation, real estate, grazing, carbon dioxide/oxygen conversion, endangered species, and local economies all suffer a devastating demise.

"Treatments" of small areas of forests are a ridiculously meager attempt to restore actual health to an entire forest. The current policies are a bankrupt pursuit of forest health. Only a bold and extensive overhaul of the management philosophy and attitude will begin the process of proper forest management. Dumping the political "Protect and Preserve" management is the FIRST step!!

Watershed Health

Watersheds are critical to every living organism. Without good, clean water, most forms of life would cease.

A healthy watershed is one with new plant life, mid-life vegetation, and old growth intermingled throughout.

Roots of all plants grow at various depths into the soil. Their growth causes a fracturing of the ground that allows groundwater to permeate into the earth. The waters feed nutrients from the ground to the roots promoting growth in the plant life.

The percolating water is filtered as it replenishes the subterranean aquifers, streams, and rivers. This is Nature's system and way of promoting life on this planet.

When this system is interrupted in large areas, life is either interrupted or ceases.

The more healthy the watershed, the better the health of the plant life. As plant life excels, insect populations also increase. The increases in insect populations support more insect predators. Those predators, in turn, support more of their predators. This is how a healthy forest operates.

As one of those populations suffer from disease, drought, or over predation, all higher life forms will naturally suffer and eventually lose population until a sustainable number may be supported. This is balance.

When the balance is lost in a watershed, populations of certain life will withdraw or cease. This withdrawal will affect the higher life forms, such as animals. In some cases, animals will necessarily relocate to areas with life-supporting growth. The new "range" may only support a minimum number of a given species. This is one of the reasons there are "threatened and endangered" species.

When land managers micro-manage for an "endangered" species, they lose sight of the bigger picture endeavoring to "correct" conditions for the individual species.

This is the present problem with USDA/ USFS policies. The policies do not properly address the core issue. The first order of business for land managers MUST be maintaining overall forest health.

By following a political agenda (Protect and Preserve), forest health has suffered. Only by returning to the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield way of managing will our forests and other related life survive.

Either fire (before allowing heavy fuel loads to accumulate) or logging are required to allow for new growth. New growth is necessary before you may have mid-life growth. Old growth must be thinned before there is room for the new.

Managing strictly for old growth only is not only unwise; it is detrimental to the health of the watershed, the plant life, the insect populations, and their predators right on up to the top of the food chain cannot survive.

With the wildfire fuel loads as heavy as they currently are, fire is largely a poor source of forest rejuvenation. Uncontrollable fires that incinerate every living thing for miles are not the answer. That leaves properly done logging as the "best practice".

Logging has other benefits as well. Logging will clean up excessive fuel loads as it thins old growth and allows for new growth to flourish.

Logging will enrich the local economies with good paying jobs. Taxes from those businesses and income taxes will replenish local and national coffers. New access roads built to today's standards will provide for forest management, recreation, and firewood gathering.

With those new tax monies, the USFS and other public land management agencies might benefit. Infrastructure suffering from a deficit of long-term maintenance could be addressed and new facilities could be considered.

To entice the logging industry to rebuild its infrastructure will require long-term commitments of timber. Building new mills and all the related machinery will not be considered without that kind of commitment.

A commitment to work with large landowners to reforest former forestlands might also help. Past logging practices were not always done with sustainability in mind.

This could be an opportunity for the USFS to return as a respected forest management force. This may require educating Congress to address laws that are outdated or stand in the way of true progress.

It will mean educating the public as well. Too many "environmental" groups have crippled the best management practices. They must be informed that their interference is unwise and must be curtailed for the health of the forest. The public must be shown that healthy forests support individual issues better than the micro-management they have promoted for years.

"Protecting and Preserving" has proven to be a major failure. That practice is largely responsible for the extreme intensity of current wildfires and dead and dying forests. Managing by politics is NOT good management practice!!

Renewable resources are being wasted and put in jeopardy of potential extinction. Most trained and educated foresters KNOW what must be done. Upper management must have the fortitude to support those better management practices.

