

Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Present congressional hearings on the wildfires devastating the west border on comedy, with the federal bureaucrats and environmentalists playing the part of the clown.

Testimony has pointed out that more board feet of timber has burned in the year 2000 than has ever been logged in our national forests from their beginning in 1891. Yet the federal agents and their green friends are loath to admit that revitalizing the west's once vibrant timber industry could be part of the solution.

Witnesses have pointed out that there is a direct relationship between the decrease of livestock on the range-lands, brought about by "green" policy, and the increase in uncontrollable wildfires. Forage that is left unharvested makes possible the rapid spread of fire to larger species of vegetation, such as trees. Even though the USFS and BLM have been forced by public pressure to reintroduce sheep grazing in some California forests close to heavily populated areas, the broad general policy of these agencies is to regulate ranchers off their grazing allotments and let the fuel load build up to explosive quantities.

The clowns in these hearings claim it is not their fault. They are just protecting the environment. Apparently the spotted owl thrives better in a burned over moonscape than in a forest where the mature trees have been logged. Apparently livestock grazing, which has been primarily responsible for the growth of open meadow conditions along our creeks and streams, is bad while burning all the vegetation in riparian zones is beneficial, the clowns explain. The fires are really a good thing. The fires get rid of the fuel load in the forest and an even better forest may grow back sometime in the future.

Greens in the federal agencies, environmental organizations and the ozone departments of academia have even gone so far as to blame the fires on the past history of logging in our forests. That's a far reach. But, you can't fault them for their desperate effort to absolve themselves of the blame. After all, the voluminous propaganda published by these people over the past 30 years, which directly connects these same people to the problem, is going to require desperate efforts if they are going to escape responsibility for what is happening.

When asked by members of Congress what they were doing about the fires, the typical reply of the bureaucrat was they were working on new plans. When Congressman Helen Chenoweth-Hage suggested that it is time to stop making new plans and time to start implementing some plans, the response was they were ready to engage in an in-depth study of all of the relevant roles and regulations: provided Congress would supply more money.

The current charade being carded out by the green groups, in and out of government, is akin to soaking someone's house with gasoline then claiming it was not their fault when a spark set the home on fire and burned it down. Then, attempting to justify their actions by explaining, the fire was really a good thing because someone may build a better home on that site in the future.

How much is enough. In my 80 plus years, living in the west, I have seen government resource policy go from progressive to regulatory irritation to oppressive. But now it can only be described as insane. Does our current generation and its leaders have the courage to do something about it? God help us all if they don't.

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