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Community Groups Sue U.S. Forest Service over Unprecedented Plumas Forest Logging Plan that Would *Increase* Rural Towns' Wildfire Vulnerability

The Massive \$650 Million Logging Project Targets Mature and Old-Growth Forest, While the Forest Service Admits Prescribed Fire Alone is Effective and Far Cheaper

SACRAMENTO, CA— A coalition of community groups filed suit in federal court over the **failure of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before unleashing industrial logging and herbicide application on 217,721 acres of the Plumas National Forest**, including 133,321 acres of mature and old-growth forest. The U.S. Forest Service plans to sell to timber corporations hundreds of thousands of mature and old-growth trees from remote public forests. This would severely reduce forest carbon storage and increase carbon emissions into the atmosphere, even as the Biden Administration is creating policies that could potentially protect such forests to mitigate the climate crisis.

Deceptively attempting to spin the project as a “community protection” measure, the Forest Service ignored stacks of scientific studies—many from its own scientists—finding that logging under the guise of “thinning” kills more trees than it prevents from being killed and makes fires spread faster, often toward towns. The Forest Service’s approach here—logging vast areas of remote forests and telling the community that the “thinned” forests would act as a “firebreak”—is the same one that led to the destruction of numerous towns in the northern Sierra Nevada recently, including Paradise, Greenville, Grizzly Flats, and many others. John Preschutti, of plaintiff group Plumas Forest Project, lost his family homes in the Camp fire.

The agency’s own scientists concluded that the only effective way to protect homes is to inform homeowners about “home hardening” fireproofing measures and to conduct “defensible space” pruning within a couple of hundred feet or less of homes—not logging remote mature and old-growth forests. The Forest Service refused to consider this vital evidence. The agency admitted that prescribed fire alone—without logging—can help protect communities and is several times less expensive, but the agency went ahead with the unprecedented logging project anyway.

“Climate-driven wildfires require a new approach that puts community hardening, defensible space, and protecting forests first,” said Josh Hart with Portola, CA-based Feather River Action. “We demand an immediate halt to industrial scale forestry on public lands that puts our climate, wildlife, and rural communities at risk”. “The Forest Service knows this backcountry logging approach is a proven failure and is associated with the destruction of many towns,” added Dr. Chad Hanson, a wildfire scientist with the John Muir Project. “We know how to protect communities from wildfires, but the Forest Service has chosen to prioritize destructive logging that will increase threats to towns.”