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Lawsuit Seeks Sustainable Timber Harvest on O&C Lands Companies ask Court to remedy federal agency inaction

PORTLAND, OR—Frustration over the failure of the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to follow the law has led the forest products industry to once again seek a [Court Order](#) directing the agency to sell timber in western Oregon.

The American Forest Resource Council and the Carpenters Industrial Council were joined by the Douglas Timber Operators and six family-owned businesses that manufacture products from the timber grown on the 2.1 million acres of Oregon and California (O&C) Railroad Grant Lands. Under the Resource Management Plans currently in effect, the BLM is required to sell 502 million board feet annually, which is only half of what the forests can sustainably produce. Sustained timber production is the statutory requirement for these lands.

Since the Plans were approved in 2008, the BLM has sold only a small fraction of the yearly timber harvest mandated under the Plans. The Medford District’s fiscal year 2011 planned target calls for harvesting just 19 million board feet of the 97 million board feet called for.

“At a time when our mills need this timber to survive, it is outrageous that the Obama Administration is directing the BLM not to sustainably harvest. Instead, these forests are being allowed to become overcrowded and prone to devastating forest fires that will destroy wildlife habitat and threaten water supplies. The situation our mills find themselves in is like starving to death in a refrigerator full of food,” said Tom Partin, AFRC President.

The six timber company Plaintiffs in the case, which was filed today in D.C. District Court against Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, are family-owned businesses whose employees work and live in Oregon communities hard hit by the current recession. Half of the proceeds from the sale of timber grown on the O&C lands goes to the Oregon counties where the lands are located. As payments under the federal Secure Rural Schools Act diminish and may come to an end, both the timber sale revenues and the tax revenues generated by local businesses are vital to the survival of these rural governments.

“Suing the government is always an uphill battle, but we are being forced to do so by the Interior Department’s blatant apathy towards the law and the plight of rural Oregon counties. Local BLM employees spent nearly five years and millions of dollars to put these plans together. Now, they need to be instructed to move forward to implement them until the agency is brought into compliance with the statutory requirement for sustained timber production,” said Partin.

The American Forest Resource Council represents forest product manufacturers and landowners throughout the west and is based in Portland, Oregon. www.amforest.org