

Reader's Forum

JUSTIN WICKETT | *From the community*

Save the forests and hug a logger

WHOEVER SAID THAT money doesn't grow on trees was dead wrong. For years, my grandfather harvested and sold old-growth Redwood timbers to saw mills scattered throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains. But that was before environmentalism went mainstream and the state introduced some of the world's toughest rules and regulations to govern the logging industry.

Gone are the monstrous bulldozers of my grandfather's years that dragged felled virgin trees over the forest floor, destroying habitats and neglecting streams and rivers in their paths. Today, California's timber harvest operations rely on a system of checks and balances.

Registered foresters, technology-savvy loggers and enforcement personnel work together to ensure minimal environmental impact.

Yet despite the industry's complete overhaul, environmentalists still portray logging as antiquated. We seem to forget that our logging industry is one of the most regulated, sophisticated and experienced in the world.

Instead of promoting healthy, selective and sustainable logging practices within our borders, we choose to restrict them.

And therein lies the problem. Environmentalists have drastically reduced domestic logging without successfully promoting alternatives to wood products.

As a result, Third World countries have seen a sharp rise in illegal and unsustainable logging to fill the void America has created. Basic economics state that as long as the demand for timber exists, logging will ensue. Californians must decide whether to log within our closely monitored borders or outsource the job to the tropical rain forest



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

A MAN WALKS surrounded by the timber at a lumber market in Shenyang in northeast China's Liaoning province. A reader's forum writer claims rigid environmental regulations have forced domestic companies to purchase more lumber abroad.

of Brazil where illegal practices and child labor are all too common.

The Senate's recent decision to pass the Omnibus Public Land Management Act

of 2009 further strains the domestic logging industry.

The act calls for the designation of an additional 2 million acres of wilderness, the largest expansion in the past

15 years.

Notwithstanding the loss of timber stands available for harvest, the act fails to provide additional sources of domestic wood product.

Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer both voted in favor of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act despite California's growing need to generate its own timber supply.

Since 1978, timber harvested in California declined more than 60 percent while its price increased more than 240 percent between 1978 and 2000. To make matters worse, California averaged 5 percent annual growth in residential construction from 1976 to 2004. Where did all this wood product come from?

Sadly, a recent study notes that 10 percent of lumber and 25 percent of plywood imported into the U.S. originates from illegal sources.

Although the increase in imported plywood since 1978 has been negligible, lumber imports from countries other than Mexico and Canada have increased sevenfold.

California's senators must ensure that the environmental impacts associated with timber harvesting are mitigated and not just passed along to poorer countries incapable of monitoring their logging industries. The simplest solution is to promote selective and sustainable timber harvests in California, where the logging industry is subject to some of the world's most stringent regulations. In doing so, future generations will be able to enjoy international wilderness and not just that protected by the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009.

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