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## **Local Scientists Call for the Protection and Restoration of Our National Forests**

**Dr. Bill Willers, Dr. Ken Parejko, and Dr. Tom Rooney are three of 220 scientists to sign  
a letter urging President Bush to protect our National Forests**

Madison, WI – Dr. Bill Willers, Dr. Ken Parejko, and Dr. Tom Rooney of the University of Wisconsin are three of more than 200 conservation-minded scientists from across the nation who signed a letter to President Bush today urging him to end commercial logging of our National Forests and renew the original vision of forest protection.

The letter, released by Sierra Club, National Forest Protection Alliance, and U.S. Public Interest Research Group, addresses the benefits of forest protection to the economy, water quality, wildlife and recreation. Noted scientist signers include Edward O. Wilson, Harvard University professor and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Dr. Anne Ehrlich, Associate Director of Stanford University's Center for Conservation Biology, and National Medal of Science winner Dr. Peter Raven, Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden.

"Dr. Willers, Dr. Parejko, Dr. Rooney and over 200 other scientists recognize the need to protect and restore Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest and other National Forests. We hope the President listens," said Billy Stern of the John Muir Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Dr. Parejko, a professor of aquatic ecologist at UW-Stout, writes, "A thousand trees do not make a forest. If a thousand mature, old-growth trees (there's only about 4% left of America's original heritage) are cut down and a thousand saplings replanted, the forests are about as equal as the words in a telephone book vs. a Shakespearean sonnet. It takes many decades for a mature ecosystem to form; it can take only hours to destroy it."

"Forest Service culture devalues watershed protection and rare species conservation. They lack the institutional incentives and oversight to properly manage these forests. Instead, we pay hundreds of millions in taxes every year to keep this Enron-like logging machine going," said Dr. Rooney, a research associate and conservation biologist at UW-Madison.

"Managing the public's forests as cash cows has dealt nature and the nation a blow, but national forests still represent our best hope for restoring the grandeur of America's forest ecosystems," said Dr. Willers, a Biology Professor retired from UW Oshkosh.

The U.S. Forest Service is currently proposing five extensive timber sales in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. The sales total 47,353 acres or 74 square miles, including approximately 10 square miles of clearcuts. Meanwhile, the current management plan for the Chequamegon-Nicolet, which came into effect in 1986, expired in August of 2001. Without a management plan for the forest that uses current science and recent public input, these sales may well be illegal.

Undersecretary of Agriculture Mark Rey is the former timber lobbyist now charged with overseeing the management of the nation's 192 million-acre National Forest system. Under his leadership, the agency is pursuing numerous avenues for increasing logging on our National Forests, including recent attempts to gut the Northwest Forest Protection Plan and rewrite the Roadless Area Conservation Rule to allow for more logging, mining and drilling.

The timber industry has turned our publicly owned National Forests into a patchwork of clearcuts and logging roads. Commercial logging, subsidized by American taxpayers, drains nutrients from the soil, washes topsoil into streams, destroys wildlife habitat and intensifies the severity of forest fires.

"Scientific research has repeatedly affirmed the tenet that wildlife need an abundant, healthy, and intact environment to survive. Unless the destruction of fragile ecosystems is immediately reversed through scientifically based restoration and recovery, the damage done to terrestrial and aquatic habitat will be irrevocable," the scientists write.

To read a copy of the letter and a complete list of scientists signers, go to:  
<http://www.sierraclub.org/logging/letter>.

Other statements from selected scientists:

"Our National Forests are home to a vast array of plant and animal species, many in a delicate balance of survival. We must protect and restore these species, the fragile forest ecosystems on which they depend, and our natural forest heritage," said Dr. Peter Raven, Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden and 2000 National Medal of Science winner.

"It is critically important to reverse the trend of destruction in our National Forests that has prevailed for decades and focus instead on protection of what remains and scientifically-based restoration wherever possible. Most Americans appreciate the value of our National Forests for the wildlife and diverse other species they harbor and for recreational opportunities. Equally important, though not always appreciated, are the ecological services provided by natural forests, including sources of dependable clean fresh water," said Dr. Anne Ehrlich, Associate Director of Stanford University's Center for Conservation Biology.

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