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House of Representatives

The House met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 23, 2020.

I hereby appoint the Honorable HENRY CUELLAR to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2020, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 10:50 a.m.

NEED FOR ACTIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, last week, President Trump came to California to be briefed on the horrific fires now raging in that State. Instead, he got a lecture from Governor Newsom and his staff on climate change.

Well, if Gavin Newsom actually believes that if we all just ride our bikes to work and set our thermostats to 80

degrees that these wildfires will go away, then he is completely delusional.

Excess timber comes out of the forest in only two ways: It is either carried out or it burns out. For most of the 20th century, we carried it out. It is called logging.

Every year, the U.S. Forest Service foresters would mark off excess timber, and then we auctioned it off to lumber companies that paid us to remove it, funding both local communities and the forest service. We auctioned grazing contracts on our grasslands. The result was healthy forests, fewer fires, and a thriving economy.

But beginning in the 1970s, we began imposing environmental laws that have made the management of our lands all but impossible. Draconian restrictions on logging, grazing, prescriptive burning, and herbicide use on public lands have made modern land management endlessly time consuming and, ultimately, cost prohibitive. A single tree thinning plan typically requires 4 years and more than 800 pages of analysis. The costs of this process exceed the value of timber, turning land maintenance from a revenue-generating activity to a revenue-consuming one.

Since 1980, these laws have produced an 80 percent decline in timber harvested off of the Federal forests and a concomitant increase in acreage destroyed by fire. In California, the number of sawmills has declined from 149 to just 27.

Now, these laws were passed with the promise they would improve the forests. Well, after more than four decades, I think we are entitled to ask: How are the forests doing?

An untended forest is just like an untended garden. It will grow and grow until it chokes itself to death. In a morbidly overcrowded State, stressed trees fall victim to disease, pestilence, drought, and, ultimately, catastrophic wildfire. In many regions of the Sierra, timber density is now four times greater than the land can support.

We have been trying for years to reform these laws, resume active forest management, and restore our forests to health; yet the environmental leftists have blocked us every year. Instead, politicians use the excuse of climate change.

Really? These environmental laws generally apply only to public lands. Today, you can easily tell the boundaries between private and public lands solely on the condition of the forests. How clever of the climate only to decimate the public lands.

The climate has changed much over the centuries, but the problem has not. When Juan Cabrillo dropped anchor in Santa Monica Bay in October of 1542, the height of the Santa Ana fire season, he named it the Bay of Smoke. Before western civilization, paleontologists tell us that we lost between 4 and 12 million acres a year to wildfire in California.

Modern forests and land management brought that destruction down to just a quarter of a million acres during the 20th century. That annual destruction is now back up to 3 million acres a year.

That is not a new normal; that is the old normal reasserting itself. That is not climate change; that is how nature deals with overgrown lands. And once destroyed, it can take centuries for our forests to regrow.

We began active forest management to break that cycle. We decided we wanted every generation to enjoy our forests. So we introduced scientific forest management to do a little gardening and keep our forests healthy by suppressing brush and harvesting excess timber so it couldn't crowd itself to death. And it worked, until the environmental laws abandoned science for ideology.

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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