

reaching the Salmon River after a run of 25 to 30 miles.

Dave Alexander was right. The fires were stopped at the Salmon River and extinguished only when the snows arrived in October. By then, Idaho's fires had cost \$150 million to fight and an estimated 2 billion board feet of timber had burned. And, of course, the habitat for the wildlife of the area was devastated.

By Forest Service estimates, as much as 665 million board feet of the burned timber was salvageable, with a potential revenue of \$325 million. Remember, 25 percent of this revenue would be returned to local counties for schools and roads. In Idaho, Shoshone County officials have watched their budget drop sharply because of the lack of national forest timber sales. They are desperate for some solutions to their situation. They are among many who have pointed out the absurdity of no timber sales being offered while dead forests abound. Equally concerned are the 100 former employees of the Ida-Pine sawmill which closed for lack of timber supply, while watching the nearby forests burn up.

Unfortunately the value of burned trees drops rapidly over time. Time is the primary factor in accomplishing timber salvage and replanting the burn. The consequences of leaving burned forests untreated are both environmental and financial. Not only is it a waste of potential revenue to the U.S. Treasury and the counties, it encourages future wildfire. If left standing, dead trees become conduits for lightning and may cause a re-burn, fueled by the ready supply of fallen trees never removed from the first fire. This scenario is no boon to fish and wildlife habitat, either.

So, it made sense to mount an aggressive timber salvage program on the Boise and Payette National Forests. On the Boise alone, an estimated 2,600 jobs would be created by the salvage operations. These two forests have been moving as quickly as possible under current law. But the laws and regulations, prior to enactment of the fiscal year 1995 rescissions bill with its salvage provisions, simply did not permit the Forest Service to act quickly enough. Rather, they constituted a formula for inaction and delay.

Let me tell you why. First, both forests have been slogging their way through eight separate NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] documents, five of them environmental impact statements.

Consider the fact that the Forest Service even finds it necessary to prepare five environmental impact statements. When NEPA was enacted in 1969, EIS's were to be done only in the case of a major Federal action. Now, driven by the courts, the Forest Service is compelled to conduct an EIS just to sell dead, burned trees. You tell me how this makes sense.

Consider also, that preservation groups have found a new method to

delay and obstruct completion of these NEPA documents. They deliberately use the Freedom of Information Act as a harassment tool. The Boise National Forest has responded to 45 separate FOIA requests at a cost of more than \$50,000. On the Payette, the number of FOIA requests has quadrupled, and a new, full-time position was created at a cost of \$20,000 to handle the responses. One FOIA request was expected to take 670 hours of staff time to respond, thereby diverting staff away from salvage preparations.

It is this type of delay and added expense which causes me and other Senators to argue the need for streamlining the current rules as we have done in the rescissions bill, which is now law. Without the help of the Congress to clear some of the procedural path, timber salvage would be nearly impossible to accomplish.

The continuing story of the 1994 Idaho wildfires is a case in point. As of July 1, not one stick of burnt timber had yet been salvaged from the Boise or Payette National Forests. Not 1 acre of the burned forest has been replanted with trees, because the reforestation would be paid for by salvage receipts. The State forests had been salvaged. The adjoining private ownerships had been salvaged, but not the Federal lands.

Now those decisions are finally being made on the EIS's, those decisions have been appealed and held up by proponents of gridlock. I intend to come to the floor again soon to continue this story. I will follow the story as it unfolds. It will demonstrate why it is imperative that Congress provide relief in some form to free salvage sales from the burden of the unnecessary and costly procedures in place now. Salvage provisions in the rescission law are only temporary. They will expire in December 1996. With that in mind, I will press forward with S. 391, the long-term forest health bill I introduced in February. More on that with the next chapter of this story.

For now, please take note—665 million board feet awaits salvage; as of July 1, no timber salvage had done; no reforestation had been done; and 11 months had passed in preparing NEPA documents. Now those decisions are being appealed.

Soon I will be back to talk about the fires of 1994, the devastation and the destruction, and ways this Congress and this country can move to a better procedure to manage our national forests.

I yield the remainder of my time.

Mr. REID addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time for morning business be extended to the hour of 2:15, and that I have the opportunity to speak until then.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. REID. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. REID pertaining to the introduction of S. 1093 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PASSAGE OF MEDICARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I feel it is important to talk on the 30th anniversary of the passing of Medicare and especially after listening to some of the statements made by my friend, the senior Senator from the State of New Mexico while I was in the Chamber.

It is important that we recognize Medicare is a program that is really working. It is a program that has separated us from other countries, made our senior citizens able to receive the care, medical care in general, that they need. Certainly there needs to be improvements made in the Medicare system, and we should make those. But I think the across-the-board cuts we have in the budget resolution that is now before this body are really out of line.

Mr. President, just so we can understand, these cuts really do affect people. These cuts are not just farfetched, in the imagination of the Senator from Nevada. Republicans are proposing to cut more than \$450 billion from health care between 1996 and 2002, \$270 billion of these dollars from Medicare and \$182 billion from Medicaid. In combination, these cuts are more than four times anything ever enacted. Most of the \$270 billion in Medicare cuts would not be necessary without the Republicans' \$245 billion tax cut.

Over a 7-year period, the combined Medicare and Medicaid cuts of the Republicans would reduce Federal health care dollars to Nevada by \$2 billion—the small State of Nevada by over \$2 billion. Each of Nevada's 182,000 Medicare beneficiaries would pay as much as \$3,000 more in premiums and copayments. Couples would pay at least \$6,000 more. Overall, the State of Nevada would lose \$533 million in Medicare funding in 2002 and \$2 billion over 7 years.

In Medicaid, overall, the State of Nevada would lose \$157 million in Federal Medicaid funding in 2002 and \$516 million over the 7 years, a reduction of 29 percent in the year 2002 alone, and this is according to the Urban Institute. This will have a devastating impact on the State's current almost 100,000 recipients. According to this study, these cuts would mean that Nevada would have to cut off coverage to over 25,000 recipients, likely adding them to the ranks of the uninsured.

Mr. President, we all heard the speeches early on. The distinguished majority leader before the election said: