



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, April 1, 2008

### FOREST GUILD TESTIFIES TODAY TO U.S. SENATE

Washington, D.C.—Howard Gross, executive director of the Forest Guild, testified today before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate. Gross supported the Forest Landscape Restoration Act, S. 2593, a bill to establish a program at the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to carry out collaborative ecological restoration treatments for priority forest landscapes on public land.

“The Forest Guild supports the Forest Landscape Restoration Act’s intent of encouraging ecosystem restoration at the landscape level with a focus on reestablishing natural fire regimes, reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire, stimulating forest restoration businesses in rural communities, and reducing wildfire management costs,” said Gross.



Senators Bingaman and Domenici, as well as other co-sponsors of S. 2593, were recognized by Gross for their leadership on forest restoration issues, for their hard work and thoughtfulness in developing the legislation, and for recognizing the connections between forest restoration, a sustainable small-scale timber-based economy, and the well-being of rural communities.

Additional co-sponsors of the bill are Sen. Dianne Feinstein (CA), Sen Wayne Allard (CO), Sen. Ron Wyden, (OR), Sen Ken Salazar (CO), Sen. Maria Cantwell (WA), Sen. Larry Craig (ID), Sen. Daniel K. Akaka, (HI), Sen. Mike Crapo (ID), and Sen. Parry Murray (WA).

Gross presented to the full Energy and Natural Resources committee: Chairman Jeff Bingaman (NM) , Ranking Member Pete V. Domenici (NM), Daniel K. Akaka (HI), Byron L. Dorgan (ND), Ron Wyden (OR), Tim Johnson (SD), Mary L. Landrieu (LA), Maria Cantwell (WA), Ken Salazar (CO), Robert Menendez (NJ), Blanche Lincoln (AR), Bernard Sanders (VT), Jon Tester (MT), Larry E. Craig (ID), Lisa Murkowski (AK), Richard Burr (NC), Jim DeMint (SC), Bob Corker (TN), John Barrasso (WY), Jeff Sessions (AL), Gordon Smith (OR), Jim Bunning (KY), and Mel Martinez (FL).

The Forest Landscape Restoration Act proposes a comprehensive approach to forest restoration that promotes rural well-being and goes beyond a limited focus on wildland fuels reduction. For example, the Act’s eligibility criteria require that projects funded through it do the following:

- take a collaborative approach,
- commercially use woody biomass and small-diameter trees from restoration efforts to offset treatment costs,
- benefit rural communities by developing small business incubators and providing employment and training opportunities,
- address a wide range of forest values including wildlife habitat, water quality, and invasive and exotic species.

## **The Need for Greater Federal Investment in Forest Restoration**

The conditions of western forests dictate the need for such a program as would be created by S. 2593. The confluence of a number of factors – particularly a century of land use and management practices, including fire suppression, and a warmer climate and drought over recent decades – have helped make our forests prone to fires that are more extreme and far-ranging than historically experienced and that are causing profound changes to forested ecosystems.

More forestland has burned in the last decade than in any ten-year period since record keeping began in 1960. These wildfires are also consuming the U.S. Forest Service budget, as wildland fire management has increased from 13 percent to 45 percent of that budget over the last 18 years.

## **Opportunities to Strengthen S. 2593**

“We commend the Senators sponsoring this legislation for recognizing the need for landscape-level restoration linked with economic and social sustainability,” noted Gross. “We also appreciate the opportunity to provide constructive input to strengthen the legislation.”

Suggestions Gross provided to the Committee included: improving the bill’s collaborative requirements; ensuring the Program is an open and competitive process; more tightly linking the bill’s eligibility and evaluation criteria; improving the bill’s Advisory Panel structure; and clarifying the use of project funding for monitoring.

The Forest Guild is a national organization of more than 600 foresters, allied professionals, and supporters who manage forestlands in the United States and Canada and advocate for ecologically sound forest practices. The mission of the Forest Guild is to practice and promote ecologically, economically, and socially responsible forestry—“excellent forestry”— as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities dependent upon them. The Forest Guild maintains staff in New Mexico, Massachusetts, California, and Tennessee, and has volunteer coordinators in five other states.

The Forest Guild is a partner of the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC). RVCC is a coalition of western rural and local, regional, and national organizations that have joined together to promote balanced conservation-based approaches to the ecological and economic problems facing the West. Other RVCC partner organizations that endorse the Forest Guild’s testimony are Sustainable Northwest, American Forests, Watershed Research and Training Center, Wallowa Resources, and Northwest Connections.

The Forest Guild’s testimony is posted at [www.forestguild.org/media-center.html](http://www.forestguild.org/media-center.html).

**INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

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