



# FORESTS FOREVER

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **California's public forests on the block**

*More than 85,000 acres at risk in proposed national forest sell-off*

A total of 85,465 acres of California's public forests could be sold off to the highest bidder under a proposal released Feb. 10 by the U.S. Forest Service.

The forests are being put up for sale by the agency as part of the Bush administration's latest budget proposal.

A total of 306,628 acres of national forest lands across the country would be affected— nearly a billion dollars' worth of federal lands.

In California, Klamath (33,136 acres up for sale), Plumas (18,658 acres for sale) and Lassen (13,313 acres for sale) national forests would see the largest acreage sold off under the plan.

Also affected would be Angeles, Eldorado, Inyo, Los Padres, San Bernardino, Shasta, Sierra, Six Rivers, Stanislaus, Tahoe, and Trinity national forests.

“California forests would take a big hit under this proposal,” said Paul Hughes, executive director of Forests Forever, an environmental group in San Francisco dedicated to protecting the forests of California.

There seems to be little support for the proposal in Congress. California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, speaking to the *Sacramento Bee* on Feb 10, called it “crazy.”

But some environmentalists believe there is method in the Forest Service's apparent madness.

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“The administration is taking another shot at selling off large tracts of public land,” Hughes said. “First it was Rep. Pombo’s attempt to give away public lands to developers and the mining industry. Now the Forest Service is trying to sell off the national forests.

“But we think that the administration realizes these proposals will never get through Congress,” Hughes said. “Instead, it will use this as an excuse to do what it meant to do anyway— increase timber harvests.”

“The administration has said it needs to bring in money with these land sales because logging restrictions have reduced timber revenue to the federal treasury. In fact, environmental restrictions to curb serious abuses have been minimal, and late in coming.

“And a major reason for reduction in timber revenue is that the best timber stocks have long since been liquidated.”

Forests Forever is urging its membership— and everyone who cares about publicly owned forests— to call their political representatives and ask them to resist this latest attempt to privatize public property.

“The national forests belong to all Americans,” Hughes said. “Selling them off to real estate developers and other industries would squander a public asset.”