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The Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation

Articulating Christianity and Judaism's Responsibility for Forests

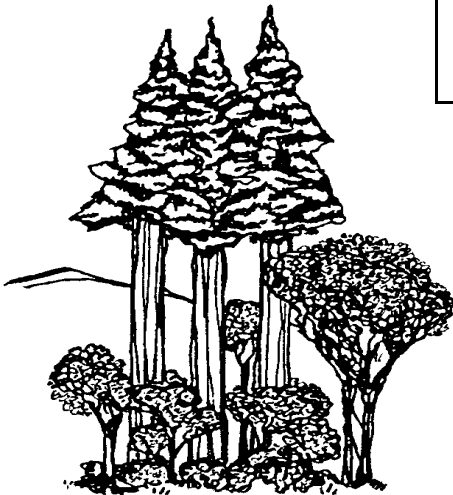
Preserving Our Forest Heritage

A Declaration on Forest Conservation For the 21st Century

Prepared by a coalition of churches, synagogues
and para-religious organizations
concerned about the future of America's forests
and the spiritual health of our nation

Formal Announcement
at the Cradle of Forestry
Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina

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INTRODUCTION: The Rationale for a New Vision of Forestry

Forestry began in America when railroad and shipping tycoon George Vanderbilt opened the Biltmore School of Forestry in 1899. A decade earlier, Vanderbilt had established a great estate near Asheville, North Carolina. His lands stretched for hundreds of square miles and abounded with giant tulip poplars and great twelvefoot-thick chestnuts.

To Vanderbilt, forest land served only one purpose: to make money. In his mercantile view forests were industrial farms for timber that could be harvested through investment in roads, wagons, horse and ox teams, employee housing, railroads, sawmills and lumberyards, plus a sales and distribution systems.

Vanderbilt recruited Gifford Pinchot and then Carl Schenck, a German forester, to manage these largely untouched forests. To educate workers for the lumber industry and to maximize production, Schenck and Vanderbilt established the Biltmore School of Forestry. This school established a direction for forestry in America in which forest lands were for business; lumbering was its primary concern.

The Biltmore School embraced a series of assumptions about forests which emphasized the maximization of timber yields. This commercial fixation set forest management on a utilitarian direction which remains in most university schools of forestry. The cost has been the reduction of forests to timber and a neglect of their many non-commercial values. More recent assessments of forest value show that their “natural services” are of far greater worth than their dollar value as trees for market. And the spiritual values of forests entirely transcend monetary values and other utilitarian measures.

To correct this distortion of value, a coalition of Christian and Jewish leaders assembled in 2000 at the original location of the Biltmore School, now called the “Cradle of Forestry” in the Pisgah National Forest. They chose this location to proclaim their announcement of a new and more encompassing view of forests because here is where America’s utilitarian orientation to forestry began and because they intended to correct the short-sighted and narrow vision which was established in that location a century ago.

To end this utilitarian legacy and promote a new awareness about forests, their value, and especially their need for protection, religious leaders issued the following declaration on behalf of religious concern for forest conservation. This declaration proposes a new vision, ethic and direction for forest policy in the 21st century. In this view the benefits of forests should accrue to the well-being of all citizens and all life and not just self-serving special interests.

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Section 1: A RELIGIOUS VISION OF FORESTS

"The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.." (Psalm 24:1)

1-1. Forests are more than trees

The world’s forests are unique God-given living systems of sunlight and soils,

moisture and air, spirit and matter, animals and plants, plus innumerable fungi and subsurface organisms which combine to produce unique and essential services for life and the health of the planet.

“And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after its kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after its kind: and God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:12)

1-2. Scripture presents trees as the emblem of God's Creation

On the basis of textual prominence alone, the tree is the most important non-human organism in Scripture. While trees are used in a variety of ways, the tree is particularly used to symbolize the blessings that God bestows upon humans through creation. Conversely the destruction of trees in Scripture is a sign of God's wrath and punishment for all transgressions of the order of nature and spirit. Without introduction trees are the first thing which people meet in the Book of Genesis. Throughout Scripture, trees are the biblical emblem of creation.

“And the Lord God made to grow out of the ground every tree that is pleasant and good for food...” (Genesis 2:9)

“...and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (Revelation 22:2)

1-3 Christians and Jews are called to care for creation and the forests

The Scriptures call people of faith to care for the land and all its features and creatures. Most Christians and Jews accept that we are called to dominion and responsible stewardship. This means we should treat the land and its forests as the Lord would treat them: with love, care, respect, humility, and restraint. Neither dominion nor stewardship allow an arbitrary domination or a commodification of Creation. Others prioritize a covenantal relationship, reflecting the promise which God declared to Noah and all Creation, as crucial in shaping our attitude toward the land. This view also requires responsibility to God to care for Creation. Still others emphasize a relationship of mutuality between God, humanity and Creation. Regardless of the spiritual principles which one holds sacred, for all Jewish and Christian people, acknowledgment of God leads to care for Creation and respect for forests.

“And God said... ‘Have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth...’ and the Lord God took them and put them in the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it.” (Genesis 1:28; 2:15)

1-4 Forests represent a spiritual test

In the Creation story as told in Genesis, God commands care of the Earth. In the primordial Garden God places two trees before the first humans. The choice of whether and how to eat from the Tree of Life or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a spiritual test for those first people. The way in which they chose to eat set them at odds, first with God and eventually the Earth. In our day, the way we treat trees and Creation's fruitfulness continues to be a spiritual test. Our interaction with trees still represents the way we choose between obedience to God and disobedience, the health of the whole Earth or personal selfishness, and ultimately between life or death.

"The tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil..., but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." (Genesis 2:9, 17)

1-5. Forests are places of inspiration and beauty

Creation reflects God's handiwork. Just as Beauty is an aspect of the Lord who infuses Creation with magnificence and wonder, so every tree embodies the glory of God and every forest manifests the wisdom of its Maker. We should therefore intuit in forests the Great Architect of life and respect that Superior Wisdom which manifests in its incredible diversity, intricacy, beauty and fruitfulness.

"Sing, O you heavens, for the LORD has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it!" (Isaiah 44:23)

1-6. Forests provide for a healthy world

Intact forests give oxygen and clean air to our planet. They regulate stream flows and provide clean drinking water. They metabolize carbon dioxide and buffer society and the planet against global warming. They cool the air in summer and stabilize local climates throughout the year. They absorb rainfall and moderate floods. They create soils, maintain stable hillsides, and prevent erosion and landslides. They contain medicines, some discovered and many yet-to-be-discovered. Intact forests provide habitat for more than half of the world's animal and plant species. They offer hunting and fishing, camping, hiking and a variety of recreational opportunities for people who enjoy the outdoors. All of these non-monetary biological, ecological and spiritual values soar manyfold above the value of forests as timber or pulpwood.

"O Lord, how many are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the whole earth is full of your riches..." (Psalm 104:24)

1-7. Forests provide inspiration and regeneration

There is a spiritual dimension to forests. Most people can feel the subtle yet discernable

presence which fills an ancient forest. The Trappist monk Thomas Merton writes that “when one’s tongue is quiet, you can rest in the silence of the forest. When your imagination is silent, the forest speaks to you, tells you of its unreality, but the Reality of God. But when your mind is silent, then the forest suddenly blazes transparently with the Reality of God.” People who have access to intact forests also have access to peace, quiet, renewal and the regeneration that native forest land offers. Wild forests have important therapeutic values for the human spirit which are only now becoming understood. Through the forests, people connect to principles of life, death and regeneration that are important for a whole perspective on our own life, death, and the responsibility to provide for future generations.

“For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” (Isaiah 55:12)

1-8 Forests teach us how to wonder

Poets, scientists, people of faith plus the insights of innumerable informed and casual observers alike discern a great infinite depth to every facet of God’s creation. The paintings of Rembrandt and the magnificent art works of inspired human creation pale in comparison to the great natural art which graces intact native forests and fields. The natural heritage of ancient forests which we have inherited out of antiquity by right ought to be preserved for all people and especially all future generations to admire and study. This is a moral responsibility especially for our generation.

*“I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart;
I will tell of all thy wonderful deeds” (Psalms 9:1)*

1-9. Intact forests support healthy rural communities

We are concerned about justice for our neighbors and rural communities. The U.S. Forest Service estimates that there are over thirty times as many jobs when public forests are not cut as when they are. These jobs involve grocery stores, gas stations, motels and restaurants, hunting and fishing outfitters, resorts plus a variety of enterprises which seek open space, recreation and high quality of life for their employees. These jobs provide more income for rural communities than logging or pulping. Wherever industrial forest exploitation occurs, these areas decline in recreational potential. Intact forests provide more to the rural community than logging or chipping.

“Moreover the profit of the earth is for all... He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase...” (Ecclesiastes 5:9-10)

1-10. Forests are more than we perceive

Former Chief of the U.S. Forest Service Jack Ward Thomas writes, "Not only are forest systems more complex than we think; they are more complex than we can think!" A host of witnesses and reasons therefore cause Christians, Jews, forest conservationists plus millions of people of faith and good will to join in declaring that our public forest heritage is an irreplaceable national treasure which should be cherished, protected and preserved.

"Who knows not that the hand of the Lord has made this? In his hand is the soul of every living thing... He discovers deep things out of darkness...". (Job 12:9-10, 23)

Section 2: THE CAUSES OF FOREST DEGRADATION

2-1. Throughout the United States and around the world, forests are under attack

The primary causes are industrial logging, excessive consumer demand, air pollution and ozone, livestock grazing, mining, industrial "recreation," opportunistic diseases and pests, misguided fire suppression policies, and the by-products of a way of life out of balance with Earth's biological systems.

2-2. Commercial activity is unraveling the integrity of forest systems

In every region of America industrial logging is degrading the ability of forests to provide clean water, clean air, habitat for species, storage for carbon dioxide, stability for soils and climate as well as rest, recreation, rejuvenation and spiritual inspiration for local people and visitors. The forests are not merely trees in an integrated ecological system; they are the "lungs of the planet," an essential life-support system for all living things. Yet we have elevated the price of trees as lumber above these non-monetary values of the forests. This is despite the far greater value of these biological and ecological services for the health of our planet. This is wrong. In religious terms, it is sinful.

2-3. A utilitarian vision has shaped our understanding of forests

Schools of forestry have emphasized forests as timber rather than forests as an irreplaceable repository of spiritual, biological, ecological and social values. In the process we have devalued God's gift of forests and turned them into a commodity to buy and sell. This commercialization is a usurpation of a gift which God has bestowed upon the planet for the health of all living beings. The destruction of forests contributes to the coarsening of culture, the deadening of spiritual sensitivity, and the excessive material and financial focus of society. This too is wrong.

2-4. A skewed understanding of Creation has distorted religious doctrine

Since the 17th century Enlightenment, the biblical principle of dominion has been

redefined to mean the right of the individual to use Creation in whatever manner serves one's self-determined interests. The human-centered, utilitarian interpretation of this biblical mandate distorts the benevolence and healing which was originally understood as integral to this religious doctrine. To understand dominion as an unbridled right to domination is wrong. Rightly understood dominion binds the person to God and requires justice, humility, service, stewardship, temperance, and concern for Creation's ultimate end.

2-5. Elected officials too often place commercial interests above public interests

Most Americans want to preserve public forests. Public opinion polls show that over 69% of citizens would halt all logging on the national forests. Yet the logging continues. Industry, through campaign contributions, exerts excessive influence upon the legislative and regulatory processes. This is wrong.

2-6. Consumerism drives forest degradation

Underneath the degradation and despoliation of forests lies an equally pernicious evil. We often, unintentionally, support a world view that reduces the biological systems of the planet to goods, resources and commodities. The consumption of nonessential wood and paper products places excessive demand on forests. Consumption to excess is wrong.

2-7. Forest degradation leads to a degraded quality of human life

As a result of logging, we witness the degradation of water quality, the elimination of habitat for fish and other animals, an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide, the drying of naturally moist forest areas, and an increase in disastrous fires. Across the United States over 97% of all forestlands, including parklands, have already been logged.

2-8. Commercial activity is official priority on public forestland

We are degrading public forestlands and clearing entire areas of trees, often because this is official government policy. A central problem is that the U.S. Forest Service serves primarily as a timber service. Instead of protecting national forests as a "land of many uses," as was once its slogan, it focuses on providing trees for paper pulping and logging, plus grazing for ranchers. All other potential uses suffer.

2-9. Federal funds subsidize industrial logging on the national forests

The federal government spent \$1.2 billion in 1997 to help the timber industry cut the national forests (Congressional Accounting Office data). Yet forest scientists emphasize that logging increases the risk and frequency of high intensity wildfires.

Economists show that there are more rural jobs when the forests are not cut! The subsidy of industry with taxpayer money is fiscally, economically and morally wrong.

2-10. The federal government uses inaccurate and misleading terms

Most people want to save the forests. The Congress has employed a lexicon of euphemisms to camouflage programs which go against the public will. Constructive-sounding terms such as "salvage logging," "forest stewardship," "habitat restoration," and "fire risk reduction" disguise efforts to continue logging of the national forests. Inaccurate terms and official "double-speak" confuse the public about what is happening to the national forests. This is wrong.

2-11. The last great ancient forests are being cut

Ancient forests are not a renewable resource. It takes from two hundred to over a thousand years for an ancient forest to reach its biological "climax" stage. Once forests are cut, for our generation and for many generations to come, those ancient forests are gone. In some places (like Michigan), the great forests never returned after they were cut. Regardless of land ownership deeds, ancient forests are the heritage of all humanity. To cut the small remnants that remain is wrong.

2-12. Private property owners sometimes assume they have an absolute right to use or abuse their land however they desire

Property ownership is always subject to the requirements of the community and the state. The legal notion that one parcel of deeded property is separate from another parcel is an artificial construct of an anthropomorphic property law system. The geological and hydrological unity of rivers, streams, watersheds and air currents — as well as the movement of creatures are all part of a unified spiritual-biological-ecological continuum, yet the integral unity of the land is a lesson that society has not well realized.

2-13. Chip mills are proliferating

A serious problem, especially in the Southeastern and South Central regions of the U.S., is the rise and proliferation of chip mills. These highly mechanized wood processing facilities grind whole logs into wood chips for paper, particle board, and other products. Since 1985, over 110 chip mills have been constructed as large timber companies shift out of the over-cut Pacific Northwest and into the Southeast. A major result is massive industrial-scale clearcutting on both private and public lands. Forests are being severely overcut.

2-14. Chip mills lead to land degradation and rural impoverishment

The Southeastern U.S. is now the largest pulp producing region in the world. Forests in this region are degraded by chip mills. This degradation in turn causes severe reductions in water quality and wildlife habitat. Local economies and the quality of life have declined as chip mills have increased. Because of substantial overcutting in this region plus an inability for this region to continue providing wood chips into the future, chip mills are spreading into neighboring states, especially Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

2-15. Forests are being cut at unsustainable levels

Industry and government studies document that the current level of cutting across America cannot continue. Timber industry analysts and the U.S. Forest Service both admit that the removal of trees exceeds growth throughout many parts of the nation. Restraint is essential or the integrity of forest systems will be further fragmented or even lost.

2-16 Forests are losing biodiversity and connectivity

A healthy forest ecosystem requires a full spectrum of native animal and plant species. It also requires substantial connection to other sections of intact forests to provide for dispersal of plants and animals. Forest systems remain healthy only when the animal and plant populations also remain healthy and intact. Studies show that forests must be left alone for 150 to 200 years before the reappearance of some species after a major disturbance like commercial logging has occurred. Much of the biodiversity found in a forest will never recover when forest land is subjected to a logging cycle of 100 years or less. Because many species reinhabit a disturbed area at such slow rates, it often requires thousands of years for a full spectrum of native species to return.

2-17. Our lifestyle is fostering global warming and climate change

Climate change will impact forests as seriously as industrial logging. Botanists estimate one-third of American forests are at risk. The range for many forest species will shift northward. A less diverse mix of tree species will result. Forest fires will become more frequent and more severe as soils become drier. Pest population changes will increase the stress on forests. The mitigation and moderation of global climate change is essential for long term healthy forests.

2-18. The language of economics is disconnected from nature

The language of the natural environment and the language of human economics are disconnected from one another. Economic indicators (interest rates, inflation levels,

Dow Jones industrial averages, gross domestic product levels, unemployment percentages, etc.) may appear up and rosy, but environmental indicators are mostly down and show degradation, exhaustion and depletion. The failure of economic indicators to reflect the state of the wider world causes a selective and biologically arbitrary economic quantification of the qualities of the forest and the natural world. This in turn causes farmers, foresters, and other rural people – plus entrepreneurs and businesses to view trees and forests primarily from the perspective of their potential for short term profit and to disregard the many biological values of the forest. This is wrong.

2-19. We are ignoring obvious lessons

There is a limit to how many trees can be cut before the integrity of the forest as an integrated ecological system is compromised. When the forest is overcut, the full range of ecological and biological functions which we should expect from the forest degrades and collapses. Scripture is clear that humans may not diminish Creation's fruitfulness. Humans must always restrain and cease from any activity which damages the ability of the Earth or its forests to fulfill their natural function. History shows that poverty and degradation result when Creation is abused. The forests of our nation have already reached a point where they are losing their intricacy, connectivity, and vitality. To disregard the "cloud of witnesses" who urge forest conservation is immoral and wrong.

2-20. We are placing short-term economic gain ahead of long-term environmental quality

We forget that the economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the natural environment. We forget that the health of rural communities is a priority before the health of timber companies. We forget the religious mandates to steward the Earth, even though our money reminds us "*In God We Trust.*" If we really trusted in that slogan, we would treat our forests, soils and streams with far greater care. Instead we have a forest policy which is driven by greed, arrogance and ignorance. We are killing the forests because of a love for money. To people of faith and all people of good will, this is absolutely wrong.

Section 3: PRINCIPLES FOR FOREST CARE

3-1. Obedience to God requires respect for Creation and its forests

At the heart of the problem of forest degradation lies a faulty vision of God and the life in Creation. To restore respect for forests, we must restore a vision of Earth as God's Creation. Acknowledgment of the Creator results in acknowledgment of the sanctity of life and the integrity of Earth's forests.

3-2. Each person is responsible to God for the state of the forest

God gives each person a command to care for Creation. In light of dramatic losses of forest habitat in the U.S. and abroad, each person must realize a divine mandate to care for Creation and to stop further losses of our forest inheritance. A process of restoration must begin.

3-3. Private forestland owners are crucial to healthy private forests

Private owners are the single largest group of forestland owners in the nation with roughly 49% of the forests. This group needs special support and education to protect and sustainably manage their lands. Forest management services should be available to help any owner of forested land. All logging and pulping operations must respect the full spectrum of animal life, plus the streams and the ancient forests. These features of a biodiverse Creation are never owned, but are the heritage of all people.

3-4. Fires are a natural ingredient in a healthy forest system

Fires naturally occur in the forests. If fires are allowed to burn fallen limbs and other woody matter on the forest floor, a healthy cleansing fire occurs at intervals of roughly ten to fifteen years. Low intensity "ground fires" burn the surface and restore minerals and nutrients to the soil. This is natural and healthy. When fires are unnaturally suppressed, a buildup of forest matter accumulates until there is too much fuel. Then a blazing hot, forest consuming fire becomes inevitable. The fire becomes so intense that it ascends from the forest floor into the tree canopy and becomes a destructive "crown fire." Our efforts to suppress forest fires have unintentionally resulted in destruction of the forests, not their preservation. Efforts should be made to teach that fire is a friend of the forest; it is not an enemy.

3-5. Healthy farm communities and healthy forest ecosystems are mutually complementary

Farmers often face economic pressures to sell trees to timber companies and to cultivate marginally arable land. Farmers who live on their lands, who gain their livelihoods from the soil, who uphold a commitment to their local culture and a multigenerational farming tradition do a superior job of conserving fields and forests. As farmers leave the land, knowledge, intimacy, and commitment to integrity often leaves with them. A basic truth of civilized society is that healthy humans take care of what they love. Some pertinent principles:

- ◆ A healthy, community-based rural economy is necessary to ensure a healthy forest ecosystem.
- ◆ Farmers are responsible to care for their lands in ways that are knowledgeable, respectful to their neighbors (human and non-human), and conscious of the need to maintain its fruitfulness for future generations.
- ◆ Citizens are responsible to advocate public policies that enable family farmers to make a decent living in a land-friendly manner.
- ◆ Landowners might consider “tithing” a portion of their property as wild land, including conservation easements and deed provisions that guarantee its maintenance in perpetuity.
- ◆ Government should encourage public policies that give favorable tax status for wild land preservation. Incentives for conservation and forest protection should be provided.
- ◆ People of faith, conservationists, and all others in our nation should become knowledgeable and proactive toward rural communities.

3-6. Healthy forest systems are necessary for healthy ecosystems

A full complement of animals and native plants and fungi are essential for a healthy forest. Each creature adds to the complexity and interaction of the forest system. When one species is removed, the services of that creature are also removed and the integrity of the forest system suffers. Efforts should always be made to ensure all creatures of the forest are acknowledged for their contributions and each considered an important part of the whole forest system.

3-7. Forest conservation is an ingredient in national security

One of history's irrefutable lessons is that a nation's strength depends on the integrity of its land and the values of its people. A Department of Agriculture study found that of fifteen major civilizations, thirteen collapsed because of abuse of the land and destruction of its forests. Of the fifteen, only two fell because of foreign aggression, and these were already weakened from within. As historians document that abuse of land and forests brings moral and social weakening, America should learn the lesson of history and emphasize protection for the environment and its forests as a component of national security. This reflects the religious principle that peace with the land requires peace with God.

3-8. Forest conservation provides jobs

Healthy rural economies are crucial for forest protection. Studies by the U.S. Forest Service and academic institutions show that there are more jobs in rural areas when forests are preserved. These studies show that forest areas which are degraded or stripped of their trees suffer poverty and out-migration of the work force. The entire rural community suffers. When we save public forests, we improve the local economy. This is because forest conservation protects a cornerstone of the natural world and a component of the rural economic base. Because we are concerned with the families and individuals who make up the rural community, we advocate a long term view of forest systems and local communities as a requirement for improving the health of the land and the rural economy.

3-9. Local accountability is integral to effective forest conservation

Individual owners who live close to the land and its forests often feel responsibility for its stewardship. Economic return is only one reason for ownership. In contrast large timber corporation decision-makers often live far from their forest lands. It is difficult for them to feel the same quality of care and responsibility for land which is viewed primarily as a commodity. Corporations, by design, are driven by quarterly profits. In contrast local people who live in forests, and those people who visit forests, are far more likely to appreciate the aesthetic, spiritual and recreational values of a diverse forest. To them, the corporate image of a forest as timber factory is morally wrong. Because forests are complex life-forms in which biodiversity is essential, and because biodiversity does not have economic value for corporate forest owners, ethical and legal guidelines which corporations must follow in order to profit from forests are essential. Upon these guidelines, communities must establish legal standards so that the corporate tendency to disregard community, ecological and spiritual values can be regulated and checked.

3-10. Forest conservation is a patriotic and religious duty

As people concerned with the health of the land and the general welfare of all citizens, we urge each person to realize a common mandate to preserve the Earth's forests and the integrity of the creation which nurtures us.

As people of faith, we are called to replenish the Earth. What other justification or incentive do we need to begin?

Section 4: TEN STEPS TO RESTORE THE FORESTS

In light of religious responsibilities to God for the Earth and the multitude of human and natural problems caused by disregard of the natural order, we call upon all Americans and people of good will to act on behalf of forest restoration. The following measures represent the minimum of what every responsible person must work to accomplish:

4-1. Reduce greed to need

We must reduce consumption of wood products, eliminate waste, and advocate the use of non-wood and recycled alternatives for paper and building materials. People must seek contentment through reduced material expectations and through intentional down-sizing in their use of forest products. Religious institutions and all people of faith should use and advocate the exclusive use of 100% recycled post-consumer waste paper, reduction in packaging, recycling of all paper and wood products, and reduction in the use of wood and other forest products.

4-2 Justice is an essential quality for forest care

God, land owners, elected officials, workers, the creatures and the land are part of an integrated structure. Just as God calls all people to love one another and to care for the community, for the creatures and the land, so every action in our forests must include discernment of God's love and justice. God's call for justice and wholeness should qualify every use of the forest, including not only corporate profits, but also decent, health-giving jobs and the long-term survival of our biodiverse forests.

4-3. Protect all ancient and old-growth forests

The ancient forests are a heritage of humanity. Those ancient forests which remain are irreplaceable. They are non-renewable living treasures that exist as much for those of the future as for those of our generation. All remaining native and old growth forests should be preserved.

4-4. End commercial logging on federal lands

Most citizens want to end commercial logging on our national forests. Regardless, the federal government provides over \$1 billion annually to help industry log the national forests. The money presently expended to aid logging should be redirected into forest restoration and opportunities for the retraining of forest workers. This would protect our forests and still leave hundreds of millions of dollars as savings for taxpayers. To uphold the integrity of creation and the public interest, we advocate an end to the timber sales program on federal lands and the redirection of

taxpayer funds into forest restoration and restoration jobs.

4-5. End timber sale programs on state forests

In certain regions of the U.S., significant tracts of late-successional and old-growth forest still exist on state and county forests, particularly in the Pacific Northwest and the Great Lakes region. These state lands are under the same threat as national forests since they are invariably subject to timber sales programs. We must end commercial logging of these state forests now in order to protect them from further damage.

4-6. Reform forest practice laws on private lands

Across the United States private land practices exert influences that are often harmful to other sections of the ecosystem. Reform of private forest land practices through governmental measures include, at a minimum:

- ◆ end all logging of remaining old-growth forests
- ◆ halt clearcutting
- ◆ eliminate logging in riparian zones
- ◆ stop logging on steep or unstable slopes
- ◆ cease all conversion of natural forests to monoculture plantations.

4-7. Ask federal and state elected representatives to protect the public forests

Forests are the heritage of all people and vital for the survival of life. A large majority of American citizens (69%) want the public forests protected. Government abrogates its public trust when it turns public forests over to industry when a majority of the people wish its preservation. All legislators and all people of faith and good will are encouraged to advocate and act on behalf of the common good and more vigorous forest conservation and protection.

4-8. Support responsible forestry

We need wood products, but not at the expense of the integrity of Creation nor the health of its life support systems. We support responsible sustainable forestry on private lands. Large tracts of forest are already owned by lumber companies, especially in the Western and Southeastern U.S. For perspective across the United States forestland totals 747 million acres. Timber companies own 67 million acres. Non-industrial private landowners own another 363 million acres (49%). This combination accounts for 431 million acres (well over half of the national total). Parks and wilderness areas amount to 47 million acres (6%). National forests total 147 million acres (19%). State and other local public land accounts for 69 million acres (9%) (data from U.S. Forest Service, 1997). The forest products industry should

sustainably cut trees on its own land and leave public forests for the people. Local economies will benefit. Generally, timber companies must operate in ways that do not harm the integrity of the biological systems which support the life of the local region or the planet.

4-9. Slow the pace of global climate change

The lifestyle of the civilized world is on trial. The consequences of our profligate living, especially in America and other industrialized nations, is changing the world's atmospheric chemistry, increasing global temperatures, and causing climate to change. This in turn is causing species extinction, the spread of infectious diseases, changes in food growing patterns, new extremes in storm intensity, altered weather patterns, and stress on forest lands. Forests will lose diversity, shrink or in some cases spread into grasslands. While global warming is a planetary issue, each person has a role to play. Some initial steps include:

- ◆ Drive a fuel efficient vehicle; minimize unnecessary driving.
- ◆ Reduce fossil fuel energy use; use renewable energy sources whenever possible.
- ◆ Teach the impact of global warming on forests and society.
- ◆ Share religious perspectives on forests and climate change with business, government, agriculture, and ecology organizations.
- ◆ Preserve all old growth forests. Wild, ancient forests are far more effective than young trees at metabolizing carbon dioxide.
- ◆ Organize visits with political representatives to solicit their support in addressing the causes of climate change.

4-10. Forest conservation is every person's responsibility

Forests provide clean air and clean water for all people and for all living things. Forests bestow health to the land and "natural wealth" to society. Because every person benefits from their "natural services," forests are also every person's concern, not just conservationists or forestland owners. If we are to reduce the impact of global warming, clean our air, provide healthy drinking water, and allow space and place for God's creatures, each person has a responsibility before God for the health and fate of the forests.

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John Davis, Wild Earth, Burlington, Vermont
Rabbi Fred Dobbs, Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, Washington, DC

Sr. Mary Lou Dolan, csj, St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, St. Mary's, Indiana
Connie Hanson, Christians Caring for Creation, Pasadena, California
Tim Hermach, Native Forest Council, Eugene, Oregon
Tom Herschelman, United Church of Christ, Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin

Angela Kantola, Free Methodist Church, Denver, Colorado
Susan Hanley Lane, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Hendersonville, NC
Marshall Massey, Friends in Unity with Nature, Thornton, Colorado
Beverly Meeker, The National Cathedral, Washington, DC

Rev. Ron Nelson, Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, St. Louis, Missouri
Fr. Jacek Orzechowski, OFM, Roman Catholic Franciscan Order, Durham, NC
Scot Quaranda, The Dogwood Alliance, Asheville, NC
Vincent Rossi, Eastern Orthodox Church, Forestville, California

Da Vid, MD, The S.F. Medical Foundation, Mill Valley, California
Jacob Schwartz, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Christine Shahin-Woods, Natl Council of Churches Eco-Justice Working Group, Newport, NY
Dr. Bernie Zaleha, Idaho Interfaith Coalition, Boise, Idaho

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