

The United States has more than 750,000 acres of Public Trust Lands. These magnificent assets of our Nation are at risk. Every year over 10,000,000 acres are incinerated at 2000 degrees F by the ravages of uncontrolled wildfire. Fires in woody terrains are natural and productive by

reducing water-thirsty invasive plants and small diameter trees in the understory at 400 degrees F. This fire is a natural interruption that restores grassland, encourages new growth and insures light and water for optimum biodiversity and perpetually sustainable forest health conditions.



Monument Wildfire Homecoming - Arizona 2011

But temperatures produced by wildfire are anything but natural. Each year the U.S. incinerates 10 million acres. And more than 11,000 American rural communities with 73 million U.S. Citizens are at risk of wildfire. In the late 1990s, our second largest agriculture export was “forest products,” second only to soybeans. Now our entire forest products industry has been exported.

By the District 1 Member of the
U.S. HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVE PAUL GOSAR, MD
Special to the Prescott Courier

As a doctor, I abide by the Hippocratic Oath that starts with: "First, do no harm." If only our federal government had to live by that principle, the wildfires raging across Arizona may have been preventable and certainly would not have grown into the disasters that our state is currently facing.

I write about the Wallow, Horseshoe II, and Monument wildfires currently raging in Arizona, and our forest management situation with sadness, anger and resolve.

As I'm sure everyone is right now, I am deeply concerned for the many communities in danger and my thoughts and prayers are with everyone who has suffered from these terrible tragedies. I would also like to express my most sincere appreciation to all of the men and women working around the clock to protect the lives and property of our neighbors.

That being said, it is absolutely vital that we learn from these events and identify ways to minimize the damage caused by future wildfires. There were plenty of warning signs that went unnoticed. Bureaucratic red tape that has kept the private sector from participating in the stewardship of our public lands, combined with the extortion tactics of some politically motivated radical environmental groups, has resulted in the loss of Arizona's timber industry and the jobs provided by the responsible management of our natural resources.

According to the Bureau of Land Management "the forests of today consist of dense stands of 75 to 100 year-old trees with heavy fuel loading on the forest floor. Under these conditions, the forests are vulnerable to catastrophic wildfires."

When Arizona's timber industry was thriving, we didn't see such dangerous fuel densities. People are beginning to take notice of this. Plans to reduce forest floor fuel loads like the Four Forest

Restoration Initiative (4FRI), which is a large acreage landscaping project endorsed by private industry and many environmental groups, have been proposed, but the government's lack of support, postponement of

timelines, and lack of consideration for fire thresholds and financial investments are dooming us to repeat history at the expense of our environment and our natural resources.

Now let's look at when the largest fires in Arizona history have occurred:

The six largest Arizona wildfires, including now the Wallow fire, which is the second largest but rapidly gaining on the Rodeo/Chediski fire of 2002, which burned 468,628 acres, have all occurred in the last 10 years. Rodeo in 2002, Horseshoe II in 2011, Cave Creek in 2005, Willow in 2004, Aspen in 2003, and now the Wallow fire which as of the time of this writing was 389,800 acres and projected to consume over 500,000 acres due to the drought, wind gusts to 50 MPH, and absolutely thicket conditions in what used to be forests.

Prior to 1990, the largest fire in Arizona was the Carrizo fire on the White Mountain Apache Nation in 1970 that burned just 57,000 acres.

The frequency and the magnitude of wildfires and the acreage literally incinerated, have increased markedly in the past twenty-years.

There is a definite link between the magnitude of recent wildfires and the lawsuits that essentially shut down our logging industry in Arizona in the 1990s.

Unfortunately, the entire habitat and biodiversity that was supposedly preserved by these lawsuits, and all of the endangered species that were to be protected, are now roasted or completely incinerated.

The failure to allow managed logging and silviculture fuel thinning has led to the extreme accumulation of forest and woodlands combustion fuels directly leading to the incredibly large wildfires we have seen in Arizona and the remainder of the U.S. in recent years.

I will be reviewing our NEPA regulations and other laws to see if we can change them to make the process more streamlined, efficient and fair. I am also reviewing legislation that would cap legal fees paid to "so-called" environmental groups that sue government agencies. Believe it or not, environmental groups sue federal agencies, tie up the forest management and thinning

processes for years, and then submit a bill to the taxpayers who end up paying under the somewhat misnamed Equal Access to Justice Act. Either way, we all pay. We pay with our taxes and we pay with lost jobs, or we pay with the ravages of a wildfire.

I remain saddened by what is happening to our and friends and neighbors who have been adversely affected by these fires. Thousands of people have been evacuated from their homes and many will no doubt return to find that they have no home to return to.

Thousands of firefighters are risking life and limb. We can resolve to keep this from happening again. I, like most of you, embrace my stewardship with nature, but that stewardship should include private sector solutions that use the natural resources of our forests in a way that maintains their beauty and vitality. Only in that manner can we say that the government, through its regulations, with and through its people, will "do no harm."



Apache Carbontech, Inc. offers a unique solution to the dangerous build-up of ladder fuels in the White Mountain Apache Forests, Woodlands, Grasslands, and Watershed. Managed Silviculture and CT Fuel process provides perpetually sustainable and value-added manufacturing that insures family-wage jobs.