

vision, forest management must take into account the full range of human concerns for our forests. These include environmental considerations such as biodiversity and our forests' role in the exchange of gases that makes life possible on the Earth. It includes a commitment to protect forest soils, waterways and life forms that depend on them. It includes economic factors such as employment creation, the generation of wealth and export earnings; it also includes social concerns, such as the health and safety of forest workers and the preservation of viable communities based on forestry."

The USW believes in the principles of sustainable forestry, but what exactly is "sustainable forestry"?

Properly managed, forests represent a renewable resource that can provide a wide range of opportunities, both for people today and for future generations. Steelworkers and our precursor unions have long fought for sustainable forest practices in spite of opposition from industry and governments.

That struggle has never been more important than today. In many parts of the world, forests are under pressure. As we have already noted, in the Amazon Basin — home to the world's largest rainforest — millions of poor subsistence farmers are pushed by poverty to large-scale land clearances, for instance. There is also widespread illegal logging and, in some instances, extremely poor forest practices by companies bent on short-term exploitation and profits rather than long-term stewardship of people or the forests.

Similarly in Russia and Southeast Asia, illegal logging is on the rise, with the result that illegally-obtained timber appears to be abundantly feeding

China's low-wage, dangerous mills and manufacturing plants.

In the Southern U.S., meanwhile, forests are increasingly crowded by urban expansion. The resulting rising prices for timber helps make unviable many Southern pulp mills, paper mills and sawmills, creating pressure that helps, for example, perpetuate the unhelpful and damaging lumber dispute between the U.S. and Canada. Too often, as well, vibrant natural forests are replaced by sterile plantations that ecologists call "biodiversity deserts" — row on row of look-alike trees spaced so that they can be serviced by tractor-drawn sprayers dispensing herbicides and fertilizers.

Over-capacity in worldwide paper production, meanwhile, not only puts downward pressure on pulp prices and thus threatens jobs and wages. It also puts unneeded pressure on forests to supply an increasing amount of fibre in a shorter time. We must find a way to stop this downward spiral.

In the Interior of British Columbia, meanwhile, forests are currently being devastated by mountain pine beetles. Some scientists believe that the infestation is a symptom of global warming — mountain pine beetles historically were killed off by three weeks of subzero weather. Today companies are ramping up production and expanding output, harvesting the beetle-infected timber. In less than a decade, however, those same mills will be idled as the beetle wood is exhausted and becomes unusable. Without firm commitments to dramatic remedial action by companies and governments, Steelworkers and their communities will be abandoned when the current boom runs out.

In spite of these and similar problems, forests nonetheless remain an important source of opportunities and hope for humanity. Forests provide a wide range of values — beautiful wood products that provide shelter, utility and warmth; paper products that equally satisfy important human



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needs; botanical forest products and other non-timber resources; habitat for a wide range of plant, animal and fungal species; refuge and a variety of recreational opportunities.

Forest-sector workers from USW precursors, PACE and IWA Canada, play an important role in ensuring sustainable forest stewardship. Our members, after all, know that in a very real way, the forest represents their future and their children’s future. We have a built-in, immediate interest in ensuring that forests are managed not only for short-term gain but also for long-term sustainability. We want to continue producing wood and paper products under conditions that allow us safe, secure jobs in stable communities where workers produce useful products for people worldwide. Forest communities also offer a unique, satisfying way of life, often in locations far from urban centres where alternate employment is rare.

That’s why, for instance, members of IWA Canada participated in a succession of land-use planning processes and forest round tables in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Ontario and supported worker-friendly government’s efforts to improve forest environment standards. Forest-sector workers sincerely want to achieve the kind of balance that maintains some forests in their natural state — as a result of planning processes in British Columbia, for example, more than 13 percent of the land base is now permanently set aside as parks, off limit to timber harvesting and other economic pursuits — while setting science-based and reasonable conditions for timber production on other parts of the land base.

Achieving a sustainable balance has never been easy, of course. Some forest companies have always resisted best forest practices in favor of getting the wood out and making a profit. There is, in fact, increasing pressure on companies operating in a global economy to turn a quick profit. That stance is incompatible with the needs of a natural resource which requires decades of care to produce a profitable stand of timber. Such a short-sighted perspective can also be detrimental to the health and well being of forest workers and their communities. The pressure to produce and increased contracting out lower workers’ pay and

benefits and threaten safety and environmental standards that protect the forests.

Companies everywhere have also resorted to extensive mechanization of logging and wood manufacturing processes, resulting in the loss of jobs. Forest-sector workers have therefore worked hard to convince governments and corporations to diversify their product lines and increase their efforts in silviculture, regeneration and forest renewal work. We have also advocated more research into new markets and new products. We believe that more attention to sustainable forestry and improved forest practices can contribute to increasing long term employment in resource-based communities.

In addition, by raising the value-added to each unit of timber harvested, we can ensure that each unit produces not only a higher return on investment, but also add more jobs. Thus, less timber would be harvested to ensure a consistent standard of living. This is a crucial part of a sustainable management strategy that must be pursued by the USW, governments and industry alike.

As a result of the consolidation and globalization of the forest products and paper industries, there are many possible avenues for cooperation between forest workers and environmentalists. Our members are deeply concerned about many of the recent trends in forest management, for instance. USW-represented companies are increasingly bent on short term economic strategies regardless of their potential harm to forest health and viability. There is an increase in the incidence of firms harvesting only the most readily accessible and most valuable timber while leaving the rest to rot in the forest because it cannot be processed in a sufficiently profitable way. Such practices impact both our members’ employment prospects and long term forest health. It also undermines the public’s faith that we are doing our best to steward and safeguard the resource base.

Another concern to the USW and some environmentalists is the increase in contracting out of work done by company crews. Subcontracting not only leads to poor safety standards but often forces small companies with few financial resources to take unnecessary risks while failing to take appropriate care of the land base. Small contractors often cannot hire or consult specialists in forest management or planning and therefore neglect important aspects of the ecosystems in which they operate.

The USW and environmentalists also share concern on toxic exposures. In some workplaces, workers are forced to use and apply herbicides, fertilizers and other chemicals to standing timber or to manufactured products. There are many



instances of severe damage to workers', community or forest health as a result of improper handling of hazardous chemicals.

In Canada, the USW is committed to the principles of sustainable forestry and to a process of change designed to realize the goal of more sustainable production of wood and paper products.

In the U.S., our union advocates dialogue with responsible environmental organizations over how the principles of sustainable forestry should be applied on both private and public lands. We know we won't always agree on every issue or on every timber sale, but we believe that the previous conflict over forest management issues has been exploited by right-wing corporate interests to the detriment of our union.

Additionally, in the U.S., our union continues its long support for the Endangered Species Act (ESA), its opposition to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and its opposition to logging in the Tongass National Forest. The ESA has been the legislative cornerstone for maintaining biodiversity in the U.S. since its passage in 1973. Managing a complex ecosystem is essential to our own survival. Just as miners once carried canaries into their mines to warn them of bad air, so loss of our planet's unique species is a warning of possible mismanagement of the earth's resources.

In both the U.S. and Canada, we oppose the renegotiation of the Softwood Lumber Agreement in a way that encourages the export of Canadian timber, resulting in the loss of value added jobs in Canada and the destruction of logging jobs in the U.S. In general, the globalization of the world's forest products' industries has led to the displacement of North American workers and destabilized their communities. Companies like International Paper and Georgia Pacific (now Koch Industries) have focused on developing foreign sources of fiber in Chile, Russia, Brazil and Indonesia instead of concentrating on long term sustainable forest practices in North America. These trends toward globalization, in turn, put pressure on domestic logging companies to adopt destructive environmental practices and to cut safety programs. British Columbia, in particular, has seen a tragic rise in forest fatalities in the logging industry.

Public policies that affect land management and logging are fundamentally different in the U.S. and Canada. In the U.S. public lands make up only about 5 percent of the available timber resource. In British Columbia, virtually the opposite is true; public lands make up over 90 percent of the land available for logging. In Canada, our union advocates public policy collaborations between reasonable stakeholders to advance sustainable forestry.

In the U.S., where regulatory frameworks frequently affect private landowners, collaboration

is more difficult. The U.S. National Forest Service policy has encouraged more litigation than is necessary. The USW advocates collaboration with environmental organizations to jointly lobby for resolution of national forest management plans earlier in the process. For instance, a joint labor/environmental initiative to build consensus in the Western states on federal forest management issues would help win support for sustainable forestry and reduce the boom and bust cycle so common in forest communities.

In spite of the challenges and obstacles the forest sector faces today, wood remains an important part of a worldwide strategy for economic sustainability. Timber, after all, is a renewable resource. Through the product life cycle from planting to recycling, wood uses less water, energy and raw materials than many other building materials. Wood and paper products contribute in a myriad of ways to human health and well-being. That's why it is crucial that we establish the right balance between our environmental, social and economic needs in the forest sector. And it's why Steelworkers are committed to sustainable forest management and the sustainable production and use of wood and paper products.

Ozone Depletion

Fifteen years ago, we warned that carbon dioxide was not the only trace gas threatening the planet. Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are a group of chemicals including Freon and Halon. They were widely used as refrigerants, solvents, fire suppression agents, aerosol propellants, and in the manufacture of plastic foams.

CFCs, and certain chlorinated solvents, can float to the upper levels of the atmosphere, where they react with naturally occurring ozone gas. Ozone is a poison at ground level, but 30 miles up it shields the Earth from damaging ultraviolet radiation. If we lose the ozone layer, the result will be widespread skin cancer, crop failure and the extinction of many species of animals and plants.

CFCs are extremely stable. They can last for 75 years or more in the upper atmosphere. One molecule of Freon can destroy a hundred thousand molecules of ozone. By 1990, holes in the ozone layer had already begun to appear around the north and south poles, where frigid temperatures accelerated the process. CFCs also contributed to the greenhouse effect and global warming, through an entirely different mechanism.

The regulation and phase out of CFCs has been an environmental success story. In 1990 new international treaties were ratified leading to the replacement of CFCs and other ozone damaging chemicals. At the Buffalo Research Lab of Allied Signal, whose 70 workers were represented by USW Local Union 8823, research on HCFCs



(hydrochlorofluorocarbons), helped discover a substitute that will not damage the atmosphere at all. As a result, the destruction of the earth's ozone layer has ceased, and its restoration is slowly underway.

Originally, scientists expected the ozone layer to be restored over the next 25 years. However, it was recently discovered that the recovery is slower and the damage more persistent than first estimated. Now, scientists expect the repair of the ozone layer to take at least 40 years.

The example of the ozone depletion problem is an important one from which to learn. In 1990, refrigeration manufacturers complained that banning CFCs would result in massive job loss in their industries. They claimed that the public health risks from banning their refrigeration products were more serious than the long term effects of destroying the ozone layer. They also claimed that the regulations would be unenforceable since foreign manufacturers would take advantage of loose regulatory processes in their own countries and continue to use CFCs. While regulation is always an issue, these claims all turned out to be false. The companies were simply trying to protect their short term profit margins at the expense of the public's long term health interests.

The company arguments against environmental regulation are not new. These are the same

arguments we hear everyday in our life as a union when we try to improve the wages, benefits and working conditions of our members. Regulations of the environmental practices of corporations, when they are uniform and consistently enforced, do not cost jobs. They improve the quality of our environment both inside and outside of the workplace.

The Oceans

Throughout the history of civilization, the ocean has been one of the chief food sources for human beings. Until recently, the ocean's ability to regenerate most species was considered inexhaustible. However, the expansion of industrial fishing fleets has proven that not only are large oceanic mammals like whales at risk — so are most fish species.

From the famous cod fisheries of the North Atlantic to the orange roughy of New Zealand, contemporary fisheries can now be exhausted in a few short years. As coastal waters have become exhausted, new species are subject to commercial fishing in ever deeper waters. In its 1998 report, Year of the Ocean—Ensuring the Sustainability of Ocean Living Resources, the U.S. government acknowledged, “Both U.S. and world fisheries, with a few exceptions, exhibit flat or declining trends in harvests and the majority are thought to be fully or over-utilized.”



Consider the Chilean sea bass, unknown as a commercial fish until the 1990's. Today, the Chilean sea bass, for a few short years a favorite in restaurants around the world, is an endangered species. This particular fish lives in the deep, cold waters off the southern coasts of South America, taking ten years to reach reproductive maturity. Modern refrigeration and transportation systems turned the Chilean sea bass into a global commodity and quickly led to its near extinction.

The same is true of species ranging from Caspian sturgeon to swordfish to certain kinds of tuna. Huge industrial "floating fish factories" roam the world over with nets that are several miles long, catching and processing fish at an ever-escalating rate. We must note the role that globalization has played in forever altering the relationship between humankind and the oceans. Where once the ocean provided local food stuffs and a transportation medium between local economies, today the ocean is mined as a natural resource for commodities as far ranging as oil, natural gas and halibut steaks. Unless the ocean is treated and regulated as the exhaustible resource it is, the impact on its ability to sustain human life will be profoundly altered.

In this regard, we must mention one of the primary tenants of the The United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, "In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence." In Asia alone over 1 billion people depend on the ocean as their primary source of protein. Managing the ocean in a sustainable fashion is one of our great challenges.

The ocean is also at risk from pollution. On March 24, 1989, the oil tanker Exxon Valdez spilled 11 million gallons of oil into Alaskan waters. The accident could have been much worse; the spilled oil represented only 6 percent of the ship's cargo. Even so, despite billions of dollars of "clean-up", a 2001 study showed that 58 percent of 91 tested shoreline spots still suffered from oil pollution. The ultimate damage to the environment is still not completely known.

Oil spills are not the only threat to the oceans. About one quarter of North American waste water is dumped directly into the sea, including millions of pounds of toxic chemicals. Some solid waste also is dumped at sea, out of sight of the shore. The hypodermic needles and other medical waste washing up on our beaches are only the most visible signs.

Much of the life of the sea is nurtured by natural bays and marshes along the coastline. But many of these natural areas have been destroyed by unrestrained development. Everyone recognizes today that the severity of the damage of the 2005 hurricane season in the U.S. was greatly aggravated by destruction of the natural coast line on the Gulf Coast.

The pollution of the seas already threatens shellfish in many areas. In the future, it could ser-



iously diminish the supply of fish needed to feed the world's population. Plankton — microscopic marine plants — help remove carbon dioxide from the air, and provide the ultimate food source for most creatures in the ocean's food chain. If they are lost by oceanic pollution, the result will be global catastrophe.

Population, Poverty and the Environment

In 1800, at the start of the industrial revolution, the earth's population stood at about 500 million. Today, it is a thirteen times greater — 6.5 billion and 1.3 billion more than when our original report was written. At current rates it will double in less than 40 years. Most of this growth will take place in developing countries. As societies become wealthier, population rates have tended to fall. In the U.S. childbirth rates are 14 per 1000 women and in Canada they are 10. By comparison in Mexico childbirth rates are 23 per 1000 women. Economists have noted that none of the world's wealthy societies have raised their standards of living without first stabilizing their population growth rates at 1 percent for at least a century and having an economic growth rate that substantially exceeded their population growth rate. The population growth rate in Canada is 0.3 percent, in the U.S. 0.6 percent, while in Central America it is 2.0 percent.

Some environmentalists believe that overpopulation is a fundamental cause of environmental