

**From:** [Karen Lackner](#)  
**To:** [HWREC Exhibits](#); [Rep Clem](#)  
**Subject:** Wildfire Recovery Committee Testimony  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 23, 2021 12:52:09 PM

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To the Committee:

My name is Jerry Lackner. My wife and I live on the north side of Highway 22 behind the ODF property at Mehama, about a half mile from the North Fork of the Santiam River. We have 250 acres that I purchased in 1992 which was what I would refer to as a run down cattle ranch with a little low quality timber standing. It was originally clearcut, I'm assuming, in the 40's and never replanted or had any kind of timber management.

My primary reason for purchasing it was to grow timber, for a retirement investment and to help clean up the atmosphere of the smog I had seen in L.A. when I got out of the service in 1971. The secondary reason for purchasing it was because I like venison and I like to hunt and so much of forested hunting areas were being locked up or it was "pay to hunt."

When the Beachie Creek fire came through I had around 200 acres cleaned up and growing timber of various ages. The only thing that did not burn on this property was our home, which we built in 2000. We thank God for sparing our house, but all but 20 acres on the ground burned and I now have only around 50 acres of timber left that didn't crown out and burn, because it had been thinned. Three large outbuildings burned, along with most of our machinery, cattle sheds, fences, hay, wood processing equipment, decked logs and firewood that had just been cut, and my logging contractor's fire truck and half million dollar tree harvester he was using to thin the trees I had planted from 1993 to 1996. ALL ARE GONE!

One of my best friends who I met in the service had fought fire for Cal Fire the summer before he enlisted and continued that career with the USFS for another 10 years or so, until the politics got unbearable and their "let it burn" policy the USFS was putting in place was more than he could take, so he moved on.

I've heard many stories the past 50 years from him about his fire fighting experiences so on September 7th, in the afternoon when the east wind was blowing hard and the smoke was darkening the sky, I decided to hook up our 5th wheel trailer and load a few things into it. Our house is a half mile through pasture and timber to the county road and it's the only exit we have. We would never have seen the fire coming through the smoke and timber had we stayed to try to fight it.

WE NEVER GOT ANY EMERGENCY ALERTS FROM ANY ONE!! We had gone to bed as usual that evening and about 12:30 am my brother-in-law called to say all kinds of sirens were going off down town in Lyons and he was going to investigate. We went back to sleep. Another hour later he called and said they were at the Lyons fire station and the road was bumper to bumper cars, trucks and RV's going west. Sheriff, State Police, Fire trucks and rescue vehicles were going east. We got up and saw all kinds of lights downtown so decided it was time to leave. The smoke was thick

and ash and charcoal were flying through the air. We loaded up what we could and pulled out around 2:30am. Had to cut a 5 inch limb off a tree that was in the middle of the driveway that the wind had blown down. When we got to Hwy 22 it was a solid line of vehicles coming out of Lyons and heading west.

We didn't know where we were going once we got to Salem but after trying several parking lots we found one and parked for the night. The next morning we met up with family, had breakfast and decided to go to Albany to find an RV park. We got a space for 2-3 nights to start with since we had no idea how long we'd be there. We tried to find out whether our house burned but nobody could get up our road to check. Finally two days later we found out that our house was still standing but that everything else burned. We were relieved, but devastated at the same time. A couple days later we were told they were letting some people in if they lived there, so we went to Lyons to see what happened. On our way up the driveway we could see trees and stumps still burning and smoking and it looked like a war zone. All the fences were burned and down and we couldn't see our cows anywhere. When we got to the house there was still fire burning and smoldering all around the house in the flower beds. We got the generator running and found enough hose pieces to use to get the majority of those fires out or our house could have still burned down. Other relatives came with a water tank and put out the biggest trees and stumps burning close by that could have flared up.

Reality set in and we could see through the smoke enough to see that our shops, barn and other hay storage were all a pile of wrinkled metal. The next day a family member spotted the cattle down the road at a neighbors place that had not completely burned. We got them secured there and tried to find some hay to feed them. It was a challenge to keep them in because fence posts were still burning and we had to try to find hay since all ours burned.

The second day we came back to check on everything and had no water at all. We have a spring and found out that trees above had burned and dropped on top of our water pipes and melted everything. So we had to scrounge up the parts and pieces to fix it before we could pump water again. Every day we would drive from Albany to our place to water and feed the cows, and run our generator to keep the freezers going so we wouldn't lose all our food. We had just butchered a cow in August and we sure didn't want to lose all that meat. Every day, trying to go home was the biggest challenge of all! They had Hwy 22 closed and our road was right after the closure. Nobody wanted us to go up there and were really nasty about it. Our house was only less than a mile up there, but the National Guard troops were by the book! We got turned in to the Sheriff one day and he actually took the time to come to our house to give us a nasty lecture. I'm sorry, but it's our property and our cows were likely running around and we sure didn't want them to get out on the highway and they needed water! Don't these people understand some of these things?

Two weeks later they lifted the evac level and we went back home. Still didn't have power for at least a week and no internet for probably 3 weeks, but we were glad we didn't have to fight the road blocks any more and could try to start cleaning up. It took awhile to get around to our whole property to see the devastation and it just made us physically ill! At least we still had a house but this fire didn't have to happen!

This fire could have been controlled and put out when it was a mere 2 acres back in August. But the Hot Shot firefighters refused to fight it and then there is the "Let it Burn" policy, and the governor ordering our firefighters to stand down!

FOR WHAT? It was all about the money and we know it. I don't know if our legislators were in on her decision but you are also a big part of the problem. The first flames on this fire were lit 40+ years ago. None of you care about global warming, climate change or the "let it burn" policy. If you do, now is the time to stand up! Our DC politicians need to keep the environmentalist groups who stop all the logging happy or their donations will dry up.

In Oregon the first protests against the timber industry started in the Five Rivers area of Benton County in the late 70's and early 80's. Then it was about spraying. Lawyers got involved and stopped the USFS from spraying the reforested units in the Siuslaw National Forest. There is a lot more to this story but I'm not going there.

Next, it was the spotted owl, then the snowy plover, then the salmon. And constant lawsuits shutting down every forest timber sale, road building project, pre commercial thinning project and no more tree planting or putting out fires. "LET IT BURN!"

All the while, the state legislature sat on its hands and just let the kickback money from the timber sales and the O & C money from timber sale and now the Elliott forest timber sales go away. And Kate Brown ordered the firefighters to Stand Down! We thought our "government was here to help." 57% of FEMA applications have been rejected! How is that help??!! Where's the money?? Has the reality set in yet that there isn't any money because all our DC politicians don't care about Oregon, Oregon timber, or any National Forests?

They are liars about climate change. They don't care about it either, only the part that lines their pockets with cash. Solar energy, wind energy - how did that work out in Texas last week? They don't care. It will be forgotten and go away soon, but climate change isn't going away. Solar and wind energy don't remove any carbon from the atmosphere - only healthy live trees and plants sequester carbon. Our politicians and environmentalists just killed another one million acres, just in Oregon, to add to the over 100 million acres of dead trees that keep burning and reburning in our western National forests. Dead trees don't sequester carbon, only forest maintenance, thinning and pre commercial thinning and logging keep our forests healthy and sequestering carbon. Where's the Money??!! You let it burn and now you want more timber tax to make up the shortfall. One of your new proposed bills designates a percent of it to go to the general fund so you can siphon it off for your other pet projects. And then shut down OFRI, who educates your kids about the benefits of timber and forestry!! Makes no sense!!

Carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change. (I'm tired of hearing about climate change!) Clean water, clean air...yes the air has cleared for now - all that carbon that was pumped into the atmosphere when you "Let It Burn" is out of sight and out of mind till next summer when the next fire starts. Do you think that fire helped clean the waters of the North Santiam River? We've spend hundreds of billions of

dollars trying to save the salmon. There aren't any dams obstructing the salmon migration from Elkhorn to the ocean, so I guess it is all the logging that has devastated the salmon runs. I'm sure the environmentalist's "science" says so. We'll see what the salmon run count is in two or three years after all the ash gets into the river.

FIRE - IT'S NATURAL WHEN YOU LET IT BURN!

Whose house is next to burn? I could go on and on but none of you have probably read this far anyhow.

Jody from Detroit had the only real solution to the current problems - Its Our Land. We the People.

The USFS isn't going to salvage any of the burned timber. Litigation will hold it up until the timber rots!

Shut down all the USFS buildings in our burned forests, cut the trees and sell them to pay for wildfire recovery. Someone last night mentioned Vail, Colorado.....how long till Oregon looks like Vail?

All the experts say fire is part of our future. The USFS Forest Chief is an ex hot shot fire fighter who wants to do controlled burns. OSU wants to do controlled burns. There is no such thing as a controlled burn in forests that haven't had any maintenance.

And you want me to replant??!! For what??!! To watch it burn again?? I paid to plant it once and did all the maintenance to get it free to grow. I have thinned and maintained these trees through lots of hard work and lots of money for the last 25 + years. The ODF Forester gave me a quote of \$530,000 estimate to clean it up, spray, replant and get it free to grow again. I don't have \$530,000 to spend and the little money I will get from salvage won't even begin to reforest this property. That and the other acreage I was thinning the first time, and the other 100 acres that was only 10 years away from having merchantable sawlogs, were my retirement. I'm 73 now and there won't be any more income after replanting for 30-35 years! So, why should I spend another nickle on it, as much as I don't want to look at any more black trees! The Feds and the State should be paying me to have this property reforested since it is their fault it burned in the first place!

I applied for a cost share grant at the FSA, but the cost share is still \$112,000, which I don't have either! The grants will probably never come through anyway since there is too much money being poured into the Stimulus bill to worry about poor Oregon's woes. So we are just left to try to figure out all of this on our own. FEMA wouldn't approve anything for us because we never lost a home. That is the only criteria they go by? What a ridiculous thing that is.

Can't seem to get an SBA loan either, because the IRS can't find our 2019 tax returns, which are probably sitting in the pile of 4 million somewhere on the east coast that the news media has been telling us about. If we can't produce them by May, we can't get an SBA loan either....not that \$15,000 would do us much good. So, if you think I'm going into debt at 73 to replace the structures our insurance didn't cover, or to replant 200 acres of trees, you are nuts! Yes, WE ARE MAD!!

So, I guess we are retired for now, until I can start salvaging the burnt logs, if I can find a logging contractor, and if I can find a market for the trees. All up in the air. The logging contractors are all working for the big guys like Weyerhaeuser, Freres Lumber, etc. who had thousands of acres burned. So they aren't going to be free for us little guys until all that is done and by then the trees may not be viable.

I know this has gotten long, but my last word is this: This fire in September was the fourth major fire from Hoodoo to Lyons on Highway 22 in my lifetime and every one of them could have been prevented if our state would have been able to fight them!! Is this going to continue!?!? I hope someone wises up.

We all need your help up here in the canyon!

Thank you for listening,

Jerry and Karen Lackner

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