



Same playbook, different business

People often ask why it is that the timber industry and environmentalists cannot seem to agree on anything. I would respond by saying that there is one thing that we do see eye-to-eye on: Our forests, and the way that they are managed, is of the utmost importance to our state. Yet while the environmental community engages with the best available scientific literature around climate change, wildfires and forest ecology to inform our work, Big Timber has a financial incentive to obfuscate that very same science. The Wall Street-based corporations that control much of the industry only stand to gain by pillaging the region's ecosystems, polluting our drinking water with toxic pesticides and putting massive amounts of carbon in the atmosphere, no matter what scientists say about the impacts on communities.

Sound familiar? That's because they are using the same playbook as the tobacco and fossil fuel industries before them. Just as Big Tobacco cast doubt on evidence of the harmful health impacts of smoking, Big Timber has worked to do the same around the impacts that its industry has on human health and the environment. Just as the fossil fuel industry has understood its contributions to the warming climate and yet continued to deny that the problem even exists, the timber industry continues to lie about the emissions of its operations and has even engaged in outright climate denialism — notably inviting infamous climate denialist Patrick Moore to provide the keynote address to the Oregon Logging Convention in Eugene earlier this year.

As the Oregonian reports, the industry went so far as to recruit a little-known public agency, the Oregon Forest Resources Institute, to help it challenge a groundbreaking scientific report on the significant carbon emissions resulting from industrial timber harvest in the state.

And this kind of industry rhetoric and agitation cloaked as science can be found in The Register-Guard. Take for example former American Forest Resource Council employee Amanda Astor's most recent column in which she turns the science on its head to advocate for post-fire clear-cutting as a climate solution. These claims fly directly in the face of the best available science and those who have lost everything in these fires. Current science shows that not only does most of the carbon removed in post-fire logging end up in the atmosphere, but also that these logging operations put communities at greater risk of more severe wildfires.

In the face of a climate crisis that is getting more extreme every day, it is imperative that we do everything we can to protect the carbon sequestration potential of our region's forests and ensure that the best available science is being used in decision-making. In the face of climate-driven wildfires, and the devastation that they wreak on communities, it is essential that we do everything in our power to protect lives and homes — not put them in further danger.

While environmentalists and Big Timber agree that the way that we treat our forests is of utmost importance to our state, we couldn't disagree more on what that should look like.

The good news is that science is on our side.

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