

Fire is a Four Letter Word

Editorial by Mike Lee

Uncommonly, the last few summers have been choked with smoke not coming from torching agricultural fields. Wildfires have scorched millions of acres including thousands within miles of Bayview threatening town and disfiguring our priceless scenic vistas.

Never fear, the Federal Government has declared a "WAR on FIRE!" And like the wars on drugs, crime, terrorism and poverty it is probably destined to become an ass-backwards affair that just makes matters worse.

But that won't stop them from doling out over \$50 BILLION dollars to the timber industry for an assault on federal, state and private lands. We all know you must log the forest to save the forest. They are here to help protect communities that are surrounded by trees by literally chopping those forests into submission.

The fact is, trees are not the enemy. The only proven way of saving communities from catastrophic fires is to fireproof individual buildings and the areas directly around them. Unfortunately, none of that \$50 BILLION is being given back to tax paying communities to help do what works.

No amount of thinning stops a wind driven catastrophic fire. In fact, over-thinning dries out the forest, more than doubles the speed of a fire's spread and makes the fire season longer. As evidenced throughout Farragut State Park, thinning can create a far worse fire risk as new growth rapidly replaces the trees that are removed.

A healthy, maturing forest resists fire, creating tree farms and destroying wildlife habitat does not make a forest healthy. Yet sadly this is the future for the forests of Farragut State Park and across the West.

Protecting Bayview from Fire

It seems we are on our own. So how can we save Bayview from the threat of catastrophic fire?

1. Work together with Timberlake Fire, Bayview Water & Sewer, business owners and residents to develop a fire prevention and if necessary evacuation plan.
2. Improve, irrigate and maintain existing firebreaks and create new ones by mowing the Blackwell Circle Road above the Hudson Bay forest & other roadways.
3. Encourage fire prevention through fireproofing buildings and the land adjacent to structures.
4. Design new ways to use the lake to fight fire in town.
5. During fire season graze or mow more of the tall grass in the park and move the boulders that line all the park roadways so they don't block fire trucks.
6. In the event of fire make sure the park immediately turns on their sewer sprinklers and opens their gates.



Why Save the Hudson Bay Forest?

One of the few remaining examples of a somewhat natural forest in Farragut State Park is above Hudson Bay Road bordering Bayview. This beautiful forest and its amazing trail may soon be on the Park's cut list as fear of fire is being used as an excuse for logging in this sensitive recreation and wildlife habitat.

Remember, nothing stops a catastrophic wildfire that blows hot embers for miles and across any firebreak. Here is why logging above Hudson Bay Road is a bad idea.

- The forest above Hudson Bay Road is naturally fire resistant. The forest itself is a wind & fire break as it stands. It will resist a fire burning towards town and slow it down enough to fight or allow us time to escape.
- This is a moist, mossy North slope.
- The trees are maturing with an open understory.
- It is a down slope, fires burn slower down hill.
- The forest currently serves as a wind break. Wind is the killer, a thinned open canopy allows wind to blow through the forest creating a fast, unstoppable fire.
- It is a beautiful forest with one of the few remaining natural looking trail systems in Farragut that has not been made into a logging road.
- This forest provides essential shelter, habitat and security for the animals in the park that are already highly impacted by logging and increased recreation.
- When you open up the forest you let in the sun, drying it out, lengthening the fire season, and encouraging new growth and tall grass which increases the chance of an uncontrollable fire. This is evident throughout Farragut.
- Blackwell Circle roadway is one of the most popular walking areas for Bayview residents. It is absolutely beautiful.
- What's happening in Farragut is not conservation forestry, it is highly mechanized industrial tree farming.
- The forest practices in Farragut are at the expense of a priceless natural recreational resource that belongs to us all and serves Bayview's economic interests.
- The forest management guidelines in Idaho State Park's own documents calls for extreme caution when taking even individual trees. The current policy employs industrial machinery and the removal of thousands of trees leaving stumps and scorched earth throughout the Park lands.
- Making the park forest management pay for itself by logging is contrary to every tenet of park values that are the guiding principles of parks nationwide.