SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES
EXHIBIT NO. 6
DATE Jan. 19, 2009
BILL NO. SB 113

Comments on S.B. 113

A Pilot Program for mechanized equipment fuels reduction on state lands/wildland-urban interface.

Gloria Flora, Sustainable Obtainable Solutions

Good afternoon, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this very important discussion. I have a great deal of expertise in this field. During my lengthy career in the U.S. Forest Service, I spent quite a few years as a landscape architect. My primary role was to assist timber sale planners, fuels specialists and engineers in designing projects in visually sensitive areas. I have received a number of awards in recognition of my work in visual resource management as related to timber harvest and thinning, including in areas devastated by the mountain pine beetle and areas of high visual concern. After leaving the Forest Service in 2000, I started my own organization, Sustainable Obtainable Solutions with a mission to ensure the sustainability of public lands and the sustainability of the plant, animal and human communities that depend on them.

I also own 160 acres of forested land northwest of Helena and in addition to building a home there, I have engaged in landscape restoration projects, including slash removal and thinning for reduction of fire risk. This spring, I brought in professional help because of the speed of insect infestation and tree death precluded continued thinning by hand. Although apprehensive about significantly thinning a 25 acre unit completely surrounding my home, I wanted to create a demonstration project to allay the fears of other landowners whose property needed treatment but feared the outcome. I found an operator who specialized in fire hazard reduction. He understood my needs and the desire for minimizing soil disturbance and residual slash. He had the equipment and the knowledge to conduct the project with the primary objectives of residual stand health, fire hazard reduction and wildlife habitat improvement. AND VISUAL QUALITY.

The project was a great success.

One issue that remains for all forest management, especially in the urban interface is what to do with the material removed, much of which is considered pulp or waste. To date, it's either been piled and burned on site or shipped to a pulp mill. The nearest one is Smurfitt-Stone in Missoula. That increased transportation costs increases the energy consumption and eliminates any profit for the land owner.

In SOS, I work in a number of other areas, including climate change. As we know, catastrophic forest fires are now rampant, exacerbated by drought, insect and disease, unusual weather patterns and years of fire suppression. These causative factors are all interrelated however the real question remains, what are we going to do about it. Treating lands in the wildland urban interface will not stop forest fires but it will slow them and minimize property damage and the high level of risk that fire-fighters incur while trying to protect infrastructure in forested areas.

An exciting new project that SOS is working on is biochar. SOS is partnering with foresters, scientists and practioners here in Montana and around the world to bring this exciting carbon-negative way of

reducing biomass to a valuable soil amendment that can be sold on the carbon markets and sequesters carbon for thousands of years. Please see the attached brochure.

Forest restoration projects in Montana, especially demonstration projects need to look at alternative, innovative methods of designing and implementing visually pleasing thinning projects that address multiple needs and effectively eliminate waste of biomass.

Please feel free to contact me for more information.

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