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### Forest Management

Forests are beautiful places that can be enjoyed in numerous ways. Although beneficial for commercial reasons, forests are also one of the best places to enjoy nature. Personally, I have enjoyed hiking, running, and camping in forests. I remember as a small child going into my grandfather's forest to select a Christmas tree. Searching for an aesthetic tree wasn't always easy, but the sense of adventure was nevertheless exhilarating. My family owns about 5 acres of forest in McCall, ID. We have to concern ourselves with building fences around our land, understanding land taxes, and keeping the forest healthy. Therefore, I have a personal connection to the larger challenge of proper forest maintenance in the 20.5 million acres of Idaho forest. Forest health is defined by an University of Idaho study as "a condition of forest ecosystems that sustains their complexity while providing for human needs." I believe that two major elements necessary to manage our overgrown forests and improve their health are controlled logging and allowing fires to burn.

Recently, logging has received a very negative image in the public's eye. People view logging as selfishly taking advantage of the land. But in fact, logging is necessary for the health of a forest. Without logging, forests become too full and are in serious danger of combusting. However, logging must be executed with extreme care. The number and type of trees to be cut

down must be carefully considered. The two main types of forests in Idaho are wet/cool forests in Northern Idaho and dry/warm forests in Southern Idaho. The balance of trees species in Northern Idaho forests has been negatively impacted by human activities. Types of trees more vulnerable to insects and sickness have become more prevalent than more hardy trees. In Southern forests, trees more resistant to fires have been replaced by weaker trees. Therefore, forest rangers and ecologists should closely study trees' attributes and then use their knowledge to direct what trees should be removed and what trees should be planted. Also, certain species' requirements for water and nourishing substances should be taken into consideration to alleviate competition between various tree types. Obviously, when large amounts of trees are cut down for commercial reasons instead of ecological reasons, trees must be replanted so that trees will be there for future generations.

Historically, fire suppression has had negative effects. When small forest fires are immediately put out, forests never have a chance to clear themselves out naturally. Then fires become progressively harder to manage as more and more wood is available to burn. Small fires should be allowed to burn under supervision so that forests can become less crowded.

In conclusion, managed logging and permitting small fires to burn will help to remove the overabundance of vegetation in forests. Careful research should be conducted to determine which trees need to be removed and which should be added to replace trees used commercially.

## References

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