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**Press briefing on post-fire logging legislation –
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As a forest ecologist, I have 20 plus years in studying natural recovery processes following disturbance events like wildfires (I was on site during the Yellowstone 1988 fires and I have studied extensively the Biscuit fire in Southwest Oregon in 2002 and many fires in between). My intent in this briefing is to provide a contextual background for the other scientists that will follow by outlining four key points regarding the scientific literature on post-disturbance recovery and post-disturbance logging as it relates to Congressman Walden's legislation. My comments will summarize key findings in our recently released report: <http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildplaces/kla/pubs.cfm>:

- First – it is abundantly clear that from over two decades of disturbance ecology research from the Mt. St. Helens 1980 eruption and the 1988 Yellowstone fires to the recent fires in southern California and Oregon - nature is far more resilient than we can imagine and logging after natural disturbances sets back recovery for decades, if not longer.
- Second – there is a large body of science that draws the same conclusions about this practice. Logging after natural disturbances harms, not helps forests recover. Of the more than 30 scientific papers and government reports on post-fire logging published to date, not a single scientific study supports post-fire logging as “restoration.” In general, these studies conclude that post-fire logging damages natural regeneration when it compacts soils, removes “biological legacies” (e.g., large dead standing and downed trees), introduces or spreads invasive species, causes soil erosion when logs are dragged across steep slopes, and delivers sediment to streams from logging roads. The **Bottom line here is** – while the Donato study published in *Science* stated that they had “kicked the door open on post-fire logging,” the door was already wide open when viewed from the sum total of research reports and scientific studies that preceded their work.

- We've seen politics lag behind science before. The debate over logging after disturbances is parallel to the debate about old growth forests two decades ago. The timber industry argued that old-growth forests were "decadent" and should be cut down. Today no one questions the value of these forests.

- But there is currently intense debate (mainly from industry) on the value of post-disturbance landscapes and what to do with them. According to the latest scientific research, however, unlogged and naturally regenerating landscapes are some of the most biologically diverse and rare ecosystems in the nation. Science has already demonstrated this repeatedly, Walden's legislation needs a remedial course in basic ecology.

- Third - I want to point out that the federal government's own reports on post-fire logging conclude that post-fire logging can be damaging to ecosystems recovering from disturbance.

- According to the, Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Project (ICBEMP a multi-agency initiative) – "our findings suggest that this type of harvesting is not compatible with contemporary ecosystem-based management. Ecosystem-based management would emphasize removing smaller green trees with greater attention to prevention of mortality rather than removal of large dead trees."

- According to FEMAT, the Forest Ecosystem Management Team (FEMAT) findings, which advised the development of the Northwest Forest Plan, "salvage of dead trees has significant effects on the development of future stands and the suitability as habitat for a number of organisms. Snag removal results in long-term impacts on the forest community because large snags are not produced by the new stand until trees become large and begin to die from natural mortality (often a period of 50-100 years)..... Removal of snags following disturbance can significantly reduce the carrying capacity of these species (wildlife) for many years."

- Finally – academic freedom is crucial to scientific inquiry into public policy and the management of public lands. The regretful handling of the Donato study, initially by the College of Forestry at OSU, and then by the Bush administration sent a shock wave throughout the scientific community. It has become clear that the motivation behind this bill is about logging and not about restoring forests or conducting research.
- As an example, according to Forest Service data cited in our report, 40% of the total timber sale program came from logging after natural disturbances and 50 percent in the Pacific Northwest. In other words, there are plenty of places to study post-fire logging without creating more damaged landscapes. **Bottom line** – Congressman Walden is encouraging a "log so we can look" approach to post-disturbance recovery and by the time the logging dust settles, it will be too late for science to demonstrate how completely misguided and uninformed this legislation really is.

I will now introduce Dr. Richard Hutto and Dr. James Karr who will describe some of the work they have been doing in disturbance ecology and post-disturbance management.