

# Rim Fire losses must be salvaged quickly, coalition warns

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SAN ANDREAS - Salvage logging is a good thing and needs to be done quickly in the 257,000-acre area charred by last summer's Rim Fire, says a coalition that includes environmentalists, mining and timber interests, and representatives of recreation groups such as the American Motorcyclist Association.

In a letter sent Friday to Randy Moore, the regional forester for the U.S. Forest Service, the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions coalition called for "prompt" action on salvage logging plans and warned that delays could "jeopardize the multiple economic and environmental benefits" of the proposed post-fire logging and restoration projects.

Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions formed in 2010 to seek better cooperation among various public and private groups with a stake in the management of forests in Stanislaus National Forest and Yosemite National Park.

The group includes everyone from timber industry giant Sierra Pacific Industries to the local chapter of the Sierra Club and the Tuolumne County Farm Bureau. Twenty-one members of Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions signed the letter to Moore.

The letter notes that without prompt action, trees killed in the fire will degrade and no longer be usable for lumber production.

That would mean that instead of having commercial timber firms able to pay for the value of the lumber, taxpayers would later be on the hook to remove trees that pose safety and fire risks.

The letter specifically notes that both litigation and "inadequate resources" could delay the restoration plans and salvage logging.

That represents a signal to Congress, which controls funding for forest restoration work, and to national environmental groups, which have, at times, delayed salvage logging by filing lawsuits.

That's what happened after the 2004 Power Fire in the Eldorado National Forest in Amador County. A decade later, many dead snags still stand in that burned area, creating safety problems and providing ready fuel when new fires ignite, national forest managers say.

John Buckley is executive director of Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center and vice chairman of Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions.

"It is far more logical to have the industry remove dead trees with a return for taxpayers than to let the wood deteriorate so it loses saw-log value," Buckley said. "In that case, taxpayers would end up having to pay huge amounts of money to remove the dead wood to reduce unsafe fuel levels. Delay makes no sense."

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