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February 7, 2006

Earl E. Devaney
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Inspector General
1849 C Street, N.W.
Mail Stop 5341
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Inspector General Devaney:

Today, the *Associated Press* reported that the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has suspended funding for the final year of a study led by an Oregon State University graduate student on the impact of logging in national forests burned by wildfires.

The study, published in the magazine *Science* last month, found that areas logged after the 2002 Biscuit Fire in Oregon had more fuel for future blazes than areas that regenerated naturally. It concluded that "logging can be counterproductive to the goals of forest regeneration and fuel reduction."

These findings have been cited by opponents of the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act, H.R. 4200, a bill pending in the House that would expedite salvage logging on national forests after wildfires and other disasters. The legislation is supported by the administration. In fact, Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth endorsed the proposal during a hearing last November on the bill.

I'm concerned that in this case funding may have been frozen to punish researchers for reporting findings that are unpopular with the administration. Please immediately investigate whether Daniel Donato and his research team lost funding without cause or were treated more harshly than other federal research grant recipients. After all, there's no such thing as a democracy that silences academic research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Inslee".

JAY INSLEE
Member of Congress

Associated Press

BLM suspends funds for study that gives fuel to logging foes

By Jeff Barnard

February 7, 2006

GRANTS PASS, Ore. - A federal agency has suspended funding for the final year of a study out of Oregon State University that raised questions about whether logging is the best way to restore national forests burned by wildfires, further inflaming a debate over how to treat the millions of acres of national forest that burn each year.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management acknowledged Monday it asked OSU whether the three-year study led by graduate student Daniel Donato and published last month in the journal *Science* violated provisions of a \$300,000 federal fire research grant that prohibits using any of the funds to lobby Congress and requires that a BLM scientist be consulted before the research is published.

"We are not questioning the data or the science," but rather whether researchers strictly followed provisions of the grant, said BLM Oregon spokesman Chris Strebig.

The study, which found salvage logging killed naturally regenerated seedlings and increased, in the short term, the amount of fuel on the ground to feed future fires, was embraced by environmentalists fighting a House bill to speed salvage logging on national forests after wildfires and other disasters.

After the study came out, OSU Dean of Forestry Hal Salwasser expressed regret when it was revealed that some professors had tried to get *Science* to delay publication while they produced arguments against it. Among them was John Sessions, lead author of a report which pressed the U.S. Forest Service to expand salvage logging to speed regeneration after the 2002 Biscuit fire in southwest Oregon.

Because the College of Forestry receives some of its funding from the timber industry and a tax on logging, questions were raised about the professors' motives.

Andy Stahl, executive director of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, characterized BLM's actions as censorship, initiated because the study, "threatens one of the long-held myths of forestry, and that is that only man can create a forest, not nature.

Science magazine editor in chief Donald Kennedy, a former president of Stanford University, said it was the journal's fault that legislation was mentioned in a summary of the study. That summary only appeared in supplemental material posted online, not the article itself. The researchers had asked them to take it out, but the editors failed to do it.

"BLM has no case against the authors for that reference," he said.

A Feb. 1 letter signed by BLM Oregon assistance representative Velvette L. Clayton notes that a summary of the study posted on the ScienceExpress web site last month purports to "help inform the dialogue" over a bill in Congress to speed up salvage logging decisions.