

**Wally
Herger**
Congressman

2nd District - California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 17, 2006

A black rectangular box containing the word "NEWS" in a white, bold, serif font.

CONTACT: DARIN THACKER
(202) 225-3076

Herger Lauds Passage of Forest Recovery Bill

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - Congressman Herger today voted for H.R. 4200, the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act, which the House passed by a vote of 243 to 182. The measure, which Herger cosponsored, would expedite forest restoration work following catastrophic natural disasters, such as fire, severe windstorms, or insect infestations. In doing so, the measure seeks to prevent forest fires fueled in large part by dead or dying timber. Herger's reaction to House passage of H.R. 4200 follows:

"The Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act will help prevent forest fires in the future," Herger stated. "This measure would expedite damage assessment and allow for emergency reforestation and restoration of areas damaged by natural disasters. Swiftly recovering vulnerable forests decimated by natural disaster will improve forest health and make them less susceptible to catastrophic fire. I urge the Senate to consider and pass this common sense measure.

"Northern California has seen the devastating consequences of forest fire catastrophes fueled largely by neglected fallen timber," continued Herger. "In 1995, a massive storm leveled 30,000 acres of forestland in Trinity County, and the Forest Service promptly warned that the fallen timber would trigger a catastrophic fire down the road. Regrettably, attempts at heeding this warning were needlessly stifled by stringent paperwork requirements and frivolous lawsuits, and, as forewarned, the devastating 'Megram Fire' swept through a few years later. This measure will help prevent similar incidences."

The following is the text of Congressman Herger's floor speech in support of the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act. Video and audio of it can be accessed at:
<http://www.house.gov/herger/images/CWHForestRecovery-5-17-6.rm>

For more information, log on to <http://www.house.gov/herger> on the Internet!

Congressman Herger Floor Speech on H.R. 4200

"Mr. Speaker, here's a real world example of why this legislation is so important.

In 1995, a storm leveled 30,000 acres of forestland in the Northern CA district I represent. This blow-down increased the fuel load in the forest by as much as 500 percent. Immediate action was needed to protect the landscape and nearby communities from catastrophic fire.

Forest Service experts said, 'It is not a matter of IF a fire will occur, but how extensive the damage will be,' unless restoration proceeds immediately.

But timely restoration work was mired in paperwork, appeals, and frivolous litigation.

Four years later, the 'Megram' fire swept through the area, fueled by the timber that was left to die on the forest floor. Thousands of acres that could have been protected were destroyed and will take a lifetime to recover.

These two photos demonstrate the consequences of delay and inaction.

This first photo, taken in 2004, shows the results of prompt reforestation efforts following the Volcano Fire of 1960. In 1960, federal managers were able to act quickly and reforestation was successful.

Today, foresters cannot act quickly because of red tape and the destroyed landscape that you see on the left is the result.

This other photo, taken in the Tahoe National Forest, shows just how deadly catastrophic fire can be to the forest and surrounding environment.

Mr. Speaker, delay is a recipe for disaster.

Swift action is needed to protect our forests and communities from future tragedies like that which occurred in my district.

I urge support for the rule and HR 4200."

For more information, log on to <http://www.house.gov/herger> on the Internet!