



WASHINGTON FOREST LAW CENTER

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**Forest Conservation Organizations Sue U.S. Government
for Steering \$350 Million to Timber Industry-Dominated
Forest Foundations**

Suit Asks for Declaration of Illegal Action and Future Oversight Remedies

Seattle, WA -- A coalition of conservation organizations committed to promoting sustainable forestry in the United States filed a lawsuit today against the Bush Administration. The organizations are the Forest Stewardship Council-US, Conservation Northwest, and the Center for Biological Diversity. The suit alleges that the Administration violated federal appropriations law when, in September of 2006, without any public process or Congressional approval, the Administration steered \$350 million from Canadian lawsuit settlement funds to Bush-selected timber industry-dominated forestry foundations. The suit asks the Court to declare that the Bush Administration violated the law and asks the court to take reasonable and fair steps to ensure that the money is safeguarded until the Administration follows the law.

“Once again the Bush Administration has made up its own rules. Here, the Administration illegally gave away hundreds of millions of public dollars to organizations whose programs are not clearly established to advance the public interest,” said Joe Scott, International Programs Director of Washington-based Conservation Northwest.

One of the co-plaintiffs in the lawsuit is the Forest Stewardship Council – United States (FSC-US), which represents the most respected forest certification system in the United States. Corey Brinkema, FSC-US’s President, explained why they joined the suit. “FSC-US and our partners work tirelessly to develop and promote the highest standards for forest management as well as provide the public the opportunity to reward responsible forestry through choosing FSC-labeled products. The Administration’s action is a huge setback that if left unchecked, could significantly lower the bar for what is represented as sustainable forestry.”

The suit says that money the Bush Administration earmarked to the two timber industry dominated organizations, the U.S. Endowment for Forest and Communities and the American Forest Foundation, should instead have gone into the US Treasury. "How this money is spent should have been up to Congress, not timber industry executives in a backroom deal with the Administration," said Bill Snape, Senior Attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity.

The Washington Forest Law Center, a Seattle-based public interest law firm, is filing the suit on behalf of the plaintiffs in federal court in Seattle. The defendants are the U.S. Trade Representative, the Department of Commerce and the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection.

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