

Hearing On Forest Management, Forest Products, and Carbon
Thursday, May 20, 2021

Chairman Manchin's Opening Statement

- The committee will come to order.
- I want to thank everyone for being here this morning for our first-ever hearing to examine how forests and wood products absorb and store carbon emissions, and the role that forest management can play in addressing climate change.
- For years now, I've advocated for Congress to focus on climate solutions –particularly solutions that bring people together, rather than drive us apart.
- We need solutions that both parties can rally behind, and I believe this morning's topic is unique because the solutions that we will be discussing, not only enable all of us to do that, but they can also make a tremendous impact in our Nation's carbon efforts.
- Today I look forward to breaking through the rhetoric to hear what the science is telling us.
- For example, each of us saw the wildfires last year that burned over 4 million acres in California.
- Aside from the catastrophic loss of life and property, those fires alone generated 25% more carbon emissions than all of California's man-made carbon emissions combined.
- It's critical that we include forests and wildfires in our conversations about carbon emissions.

- Our Committee has talked at length about how many of our country's forests are unhealthy and in need of restoration.
- But when you look at this problem through a "carbon" lens, things really come into focus.
- For example, beginning just in the last couple years, the forests of many Western states now emit more carbon—because of insect outbreaks and wildfires—than they absorb.
- Let me say this another way: according to the latest Forest Service data, the forests of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Texas, and Wyoming used to be carbon "sinks" but are now carbon "sources".
- However, scientists are telling us that if we pro-actively manage our forests, we can not only prevent emissions from wildfires, but we can also increase the amount of carbon we are sequestering and storing now.
- Tree planting is a classic example of a type of activity that can result in more carbon being sequestered and stored than if land was simply left alone.
- In West Virginia, we do not do much tree planting because most forest managers are able to regenerate their forests naturally.
- But, there are currently 81 million acres of productive forestland across the US that lack adequate trees and are in need of reforestation.
- I also want to briefly touch on the new technologies that we now have at hand with regards to forest products.

- We are now able to use wood products in a manner today that is different than ever before, and with technologies like CrossLaminated Timber, we can now store orders of magnitude more carbon in the construction materials used to frame our buildings.
- Additionally, I'm told that aside from storing more carbon, total global emissions could be cut by 15% to 20%, if these technologies were used in construction.
- I'm proud to say that my home state of West Virginia is a national leader in the use of Cross-Laminated Timber.
- Franklin Elementary School in Pendleton County, West Virginia was the first school in the country to be entirely built using Cross-Laminated Timber.
- Town leaders set out to build a school that would last and be economical, and ended up building a state-of-the-art school with tremendous carbon benefits.
- While our witnesses will undoubtedly speak to the possibility of constructing projects like this nationwide, I also want to stress the opportunities that this technology can bring to rural areas in the way of local manufacturing.
- This morning, we are looking to discuss common-sense solutions—based on science—that both sides of the aisle can get behind.
- We would like to establish a consensus of facts that we can use to guide our Committee's work this Congress— as we review and take up bills related to forests and to climate change.

- We have a great panel assembled this morning. Each of these experts are known for being innovative, solution-oriented leaders in their field.
- With that, I'll turn it over to Ranking Member Barrasso for his opening statement.