

Ridiculous

This is ridiculous. I mean, California is spending billions to reduce carbon emissions. It has an ambitious initiative to have 30% of the reduction in emissions by 2030 come from capturing more carbon in forests and other natural landscapes.

Why then is a state agency, the California Department of Forestry, selling and cutting trees containing tens of thousands of tons of carbon for a fraction of their value? Isn't this ridiculous?

Is the Forestry Department completely unaware of the state's programs to reduce atmospheric carbon? Doesn't it know that cutting trees releases a large fraction of the carbon in the trees to the atmosphere in the form of CO₂?

The cutting of these trees is occurring in Jackson State Forest, a 50,000-acre redwood forest in Mendocino County. Many will be surprised that the Department of Forestry manages this valuable public asset primarily as an industrial logging operation.

Here's the rub: one-third of the trees in Jackson Forest are Doug Fir. The local mills that formerly milled Doug Fir have gone out of business. As a consequence, fir trees have almost no sale value. Therefore, when the Department of Forestry sets the price for firs at 4 cents per board foot, \$40 per 1000 board feet, practically giving it away.

The expense of operating Jackson Forest is largely related to preparing timber harvest plans. This expense averages about \$300 per thousand board feet of timber harvested. So, the Department of Forestry is selling Doug Fir at a loss of about \$260 per thousand board feet – \$40 dollars of revenue minus \$300 of expenses. This is so ridiculous I can only scratch my head.

Jackson Forest annually logs 6 million board feet of Doug Fir, directly losing taxpayers \$1.5 million. But, this is not the worst. When the trees are logged, they emit into the air 53 thousand tons of CO₂, equivalent to 120 million miles of driving in average cars.

Lets get this right: The state is losing taxpayers \$1.5 million to emit CO2 equal to 120 million miles of driving. Doubly ridiculous.

The state recently sold allowances to cap and trade participants to emit one ton of carbon dioxide in the future for \$31. This is the price major emitters must pay for their CO2 emissions. If big companies must pay to pollute, shouldn't the state pay for CO2 emissions from Jackson logging operations at the same rate?

At the market price for CO2 pollution, the price tag is \$1.6 million for the CO2 from the Department of Forestry's Doug Fir harvest in Jackson Forest. Adding the direct losses to the CO2 costs, the Doug Fir harvest in Jackson is costing taxpayers \$3.1 million a year.

This is ridiculous because the solution to the problem is childishly simple: stop selling Doug Fir logs. That's all the state has to do to eliminate annual \$1.5 million of operating losses and 53 thousand tons of CO2 emissions. It's worth noting that stopping the logging also will reduce stream sedimentation, improve habitat for endangered salmon, lessen destruction of Native American sacred sites, and improve recreation opportunities.

Hello, Department of Forestry. Anyone home?

[Documentation at www.jacksonforest.com/dougfir.htm]