

# In timber case, court rules for balance on CO2

## Redding Record Searchlight, 2-25-11

The legal and scientific issues underlying the Center for Biological Diversity's lawsuit challenging a number of Sierra Pacific Industries' logging plans on the basis of their greenhouse-gas emissions might be complex, but El Dorado County Judge Patrick J. Riley's ruling concludes with a commonsense aside that cuts to the heart of a vital question: Will environmentalists make the perfect the enemy of the very good?

Riley ruled against the Arizona-based environmental group and for Anderson-based Sierra Pacific for technical reasons, but then added a brief comment that highlights the challenge of curbing greenhouse gases.

Following the Center for Biological Diversity's demands for "technical and unobtainable information" on greenhouse-gas emissions from specific timber projects, the judge wrote, would build regulatory hurdles so high that they could easily stop logging in the state altogether. (And that might be the point, the judge suggested.)

"Such is a rather unique approach to GHG reduction," Riley wrote, noting that California — one of the few states to seriously address carbon dioxide — already imports 80 percent of its wood despite its abundant forests. Closing in-state industry and importing the remaining 20 percent from states or countries that don't give a rip about global warming would not only bypass California's greenhouse-gas limits, but add emissions from shipping for good measure.

In brief, we'd be trading a system that makes a good-faith (and already complex and costly) attempt to harvest lumber while curbing CO2 emissions for just taking whatever arrives on the ships from Asia.

It wouldn't be the first time California outsourced its pollution to places with lower standards, but here we wouldn't even enjoy the clean air and water in exchange for lost businesses and jobs. Global warming is a global problem, and carbon dioxide produced in Oregon or Russia will trap warmth in the atmosphere no less than the gas from California.

Striking a workable balance under the Global Warming Solutions Act, which California's voters reaffirmed in November, will be tough for many industries in the best of circumstances.

But if environmental litigation and extreme regulations simply shut businesses down and send them elsewhere, it will manage the dubious feat of ruining California while doing nothing for the planet.