

**Washington, D.C. – Congressman Wally Herger (R-CA) issued the following statement in response to the announcement that Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) will close its biomass power plant in Loyalton, CA:**

“I was deeply saddened to learn that SPI will be forced to suspend operations of its biomass power plant in Loyalton. It is outrageous that SPI and other forest products companies are being continually forced to make decisions like these in large part because federal policies and litigation by radical environmental groups are virtually shutting down access to our national forests. I thank and applaud SPI for its continued investment in our communities and for pursuing other opportunities to operate its power plant.

“This was another facility constructed with the hope that sufficient forest material would have been made available from our dense and overgrown forests after passage of the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act. Despite being a monumental, collaborative and bipartisan effort to get past the timber wars and restore commonsense forest management to our federal lands, the HFQLG pilot project has become the victim of extreme activist groups that abuse the regulatory and judicial processes to needlessly stall and derail implementation of this law and other forest management projects designed to protect rural communities from wildfires. Our rural areas continue to suffer as a result of this no-holds-barred assault from the radical environmental community.

“Absurdly enough, their efforts in this case have caused us to lose yet another source of clean, renewable power that serves multiple purposes: generating electricity while thinning our overstocked forests and reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfire. Renewable biomass power is widely-considered to be a win-win, yet it continues to be opposed by a hypocritical minority of ideologues who do not want to see trees cut from our California forests, despite the obvious benefits for our communities and the environment.

“This tragic news serves as further testament of the dire need to make our environmental laws work for us and not against us. While this fight has been going on for a long time, it is far from over. I will continue working for the needed reforms that will prevent continued abuses of the law and allow for balanced forest management that will create jobs and protect public health and safety by reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfire.”