

September 26, 2020

Letter to a nuclear energy professional in New England: Autumn, Forests, Government

John Shanahan

Denver, Colorado, USA

Dear friend,

I am glad that you are having a beautiful autumn in New England.



Across the drier American West (Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington State, and Wyoming), we are dealing with natural wildfires complicated by decades of catastrophic extreme environmentalist interference to fight natural fires, prohibit controlled burning and let dead biomass accumulate for decades. People have built towns and homes close to or in forests. On top of that, pine and spruce trees naturally grow too close together. See photo below of trees in Yellowstone National Park as it recovers from wildfires. Extreme environmentalists in Australia are doing the same. See Viv Forbes' articles, [click here](#). Why is this happening?



Natural, too-dense, new-growth forest after wildfire in Yellowstone National Park, USA

Without thinning these trees, tremendous wildfires happen that are impossible to control. Europe in general, Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, in particular thin their forests and clear the debris on the ground. See photo of German forest below. Europe's forest management and appreciation of trees and nature is highly respected worldwide.



Managed forest in Germany

Very dense, wild grown forests are more vulnerable to fungus blight and beetle population explosions every few hundred years or sooner. Beetle explosions happened across the American West in the last twenty years killing hundreds of millions of pine and spruce trees. This adds enormously to the fuel burden in wildfires. See photo below of beetle-killed Colorado forest. There is plenty of fuel for catastrophic infernos.



Rust colored mountain ranges of dead trees from beetle-kill in the American West.

Native people in North America and Australia several thousand years ago knew how to manage forests with controlled burning at the right time of year. College-educated extreme-environmentalists prohibit controlled burning and thinning. This leads to phenomenal conflagrations. The same people demand stopping use of fossil fuels and nuclear power and impose wind and solar energy on people who do not want them.

This is not democracy. It is government and crowd tyranny. We never should have had such bad energy policies, bad forest management policies, mass riots, homelessness, and extreme poverty. A great America saved the world from tyranny and dictators in WWII. Our energy sources needed to repeat what we had to do in the 1940s are being shut down and manufacturing for many things in sensitive industries is sent to potential enemies to do with very cheap labor and profit of a few American oligarchs.

America is in a terrible situation and the West is feeling it badly. The two major political parties have not kept America great and staying up with improvements in other parts of the world. The [2020 Democratic Party Platform](#) reads like some 5th grade essay that was given a failing note. The platform is a fake government solution for many things with no specifics of how it will work. Hallelujah! [The Republicans didn't bother with a 2020 platform. They repackaged the one from 2016.](#)

[The Presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party](#) has more education, meaningful experience, and integrity than the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates.

Best wishes for freedom, free enterprise, peaceful cities in deteriorating America!

John A. Shanahan

Comments:

Helga Meng: Early WWII refugee from Germany. Has wonderful family in America. Husband was a successful chemical engineer, USA

This is a very interesting letter. Yes, I know that in Germany they thinned the forest. We were the beneficiaries of the wood. And I agree 100 % with the rest of your letter
Thanks for sharing.

Gary Young: retired engineering manager for global technology company, USA

Good letter and on target.

The Yellowstone picture is how Colorado forests looked twice in my lifetime. It would be a shame to repeat it a third time.

Saw an article by a person who returned to their childhood home in Latvia. She was appalled that so many trees had been cut down to make wood pellets used for everything from home heating to generating electricity. The thought of course is that it is renewable just cycling carbon. Her concern was that the trees were being cut much faster than they can grow back and then where will we be.

A couple of years ago we went to New England for “leaf peeping.” It was too dry in Vermont but upstate New York was absolutely spectacular. Ruined us for Colorado Aspen fall colors.

Peter Maloney: retired civil engineering consultant, USA

Thanks for the letter. I continue to respect the time, efforts, and resources you put into these critical situations.

Frank DeMartino: retired CEO of global engineering company, USA

Great letter. Hope you sent it to our environmental classmates.

Joseph Kerwin: entrepreneur in information management, USA

Unfortunately, all eyes are on Trump and Biden. Neither of whom is fit to lead our country. America will continue to stumble along while China, India, and Russia beef up for the goal of world dominance.

While your efforts and mine may now be small in comparison to the power of big business and big governments, small voices can be a catalyst for significant and positive change. This has been proven true in history. We will see.

Gerald Belian: retired civil engineering executive, USA

Keep up the fine work on behalf of all the USA and the World!

José Maldifassi: professor of nuclear engineering, Chile

In a faraway country, Chile, I tell my students that nuclear energy is a political option, not an economic or technical one. Just recently your Democratic Party changed their antinuclear energy policy, which they have supported for 48 years. As well, during the Cold War the Soviet Union must have made significant efforts to stop the US nuclear energy program while they pushed very hard on theirs. Not to mention the oil lobby that has opposed the electrification of transportation in in your country for decades.

While the US has a weak central government, that has two factions in constant struggle, France has a very strong one; this has allowed them to make really long term political decisions, among which their nuclear program, as you described it, has been an enormous success for France and Europe. Even antinuclear Germans buy cheap French nuclear electricity.

I hope that a new energy policy will allow your country to return to the forefront in nuclear constructions, research in advanced reactors, and reprocessing, allowing your citizens to enjoy cheap, constant, and dependable electricity without destroying native forest and desert habitats by installing wind turbines and solar panels.

I recently came across the excellent documentary Planet of the Humans, directed by Jeff Gibbs that shows the severe impact that the so called Zero Emission policy has meant for the environment in your countr. You can find the documentary here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zk11vI-7czE&feature=youtu.be>

José Maldifassi
Assistant Professor, School of Engineering
Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Chile

Patrick Moore: World famous ecologist, Canada

Why do you criticize Trump on this issue? He is saying the right things about the wildfires.

Patrick Moore, Co-Founder of Greenpeace, www.ecosense.me

Reply to Patrick Moore by John Shanahan: civil engineer, USA

I never mention either major party's candidate by name. I criticize the parties, not any one person. Trump comes awfully close to being his own Party.

There is only one sentence that criticizes the Republican Party:

The two major political parties have not come close to keeping America great and staying up with improvements in other parts of the world.

The history of the last sixty years in many specialty fields makes it clear that the USA has been in steady decline. While Trump's **policies** have corrected some of this, he personally insults or alienates almost everyone he meets including those who work with or for him. That may result in him losing the White House and the Republican Party possibly losing the Senate in 2020. Democrats would bring more extreme change.

Yes, Trump is saying the right things about forest management and doing the right things on other subjects (extreme environmental regulation, illegal immigration control) in my opinion. But for his whole time in office and before that some of his personal and business behavior have polarized many Americans and alienated others around the world. George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses Grant, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush for example worked to keep America united. One atmospheric scientist said "Hold your nose if you must but vote Republican" to keep the country from going over to socialism-totalitarianism. I have heard, "Hold your nose" once, but it says a lot.

A leading nuclear engineer in France is highly critical of both Trump and Biden. An Iranian American professor says that choosing between Trump and Biden is like choosing between Coke and Pepsi.

The United States and the world need great leaders who are also good at working with many others. Otherwise many bad things can happen. Watch the United States in 2020 and 2021.

Ken Kok: a top nuclear engineering consultant, USA

Great letter. There is an opinion piece in today's Tri-City Herald. It is authored by a past Pacific Northwest National Laboratory senior manager and to me it shows that many miss the opportunity to develop and implement meaningful responses to projections of the future. If real forest management techniques had been implemented 20 years ago the fires of the summer would have been beneficial rather than destructive. Even today it may be impossible to go in and remove much of the partially burned timber that can still be turned into good and useful lumber and wood products. I suspect you have seen the number of trees that were laid over when Mount St. Helens erupted. Those trees have never been removed and today are rotting on the

forest floor in an area that could sustain a major fire. The timber should have been removed and the area replanted.

The author concludes his article by blaming the fires on climate change caused by greenhouse gases. How can a lifelong professional come to such a conclusion?

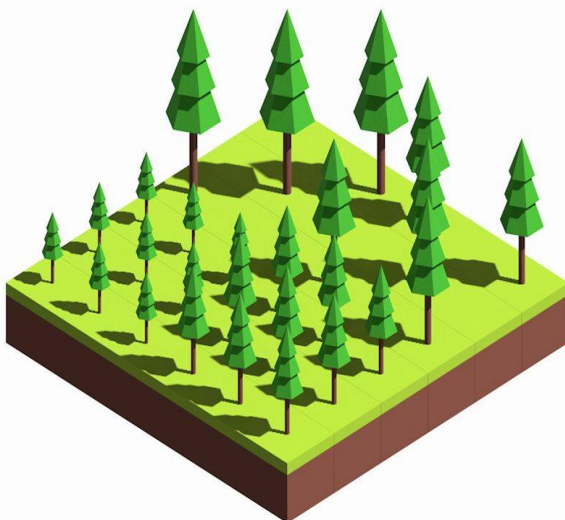
More photos of sustainable forestry in Germany



In German forests for example, trees are not crowded together, the forest floor is clear of fallen trees and there are not a lot of low branches. All this reduces probability of forest fire conflagrations like in the Western United States. With the poor management in the USA caused by extreme environmentalists, American politicians stand in front of cameras and blame large wildfires of “man-made climate change.” America has fallen a long way due to extreme alarmists working in the media, non-profits, education and government itself.



The Black Forest in Germany. Buildings are separated from the forest and the forest floor is kept clean. The fields between the forest and the buildings are for cattle, sheep, deer, fox, and small animals that feed birds of prey. And wild pigs live in the forests. Ask any German forest manager or hunter. It is harmony between man and nature.



What is a working forest? The business behind keeping a forest healthy.

In 1713, Hans Carl von Carlowitz published 'Silvicultura Oeconomica'. It advocated the conservation and management of German forests so they could provide for industries in the long term. Although he drew on existing knowledge from around Europe, it was the first time an important term was used: "Nachhaltigkeit," the German word for [sustainability](#).

The same concepts need to be applied to energy management. Forget very dilute, variable, land-consuming wind and solar. Use fossil fuels and nuclear power from thorium and uranium. Electrify as much as is economically justifiable. Look to France for very good energy management examples.