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**For immediate release:**

**Timber Industry Sidesteps Request to Investigate U.S. Company's Human Rights Violations**

WEED, CALIFORNIA - The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the industry body that certifies “responsible timber,” has declined to investigate a complaint filed by Water for Citizens of Weed, California (WCWC) against Oregon-based Roseburg Forest Products. The complaint arose due to Roseburg’s use of abusive tactics in its bid to force the community of Weed off its most important source of drinking water.

*Jim Taylor, President of Water for Citizens of Weed, CA (WCWC),* said, “Roseburg has long used its FSC certification to demonstrate that it is a responsible company. But today, we see past the facade of this greenwashing label. ‘FSC-certified’ clearly does not mean ethical or responsible. As we have said before, sustainability needs to be based on partnership with local communities, not on bullying.”

WCWC filed its complaint with the FSC on February 27th. The complaint alleged that Roseburg, which operates a lumber mill in Weed, has violated the human rights of local residents by trying to take control of the city’s primary source of drinking water, a spring on nearby Mt. Shasta, so that it can force the City off the water and then sell it to the international water bottling industry. The company has sought to intimidate the community into silence, suing nine community leaders who objected to the company’s actions. The right to raise such concerns is protected under the First

Amendment of the U.S. Constitution as well as being integral to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights.

In its March 25th response to the complaint, the FSC claimed that the human rights violations alleged by WCWC are “outside forestry operations.” WCWC had argued that the complaint was directly linked to Roseburg’s forestry operations, due to the fact that Roseburg also uses water from the same spring for its mill operations as well as that the whole dispute arises out of the community’s former status as a lumber mill-owned company town.

Six well-known national and regional human rights and environmental organizations, including Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network, Civil Liberties Defense Center and EarthRights International, as well as a number of individuals, had written letters supporting WCWC’s complaint to the FSC,

The FSC is an international body that is charged with certifying the sustainability of timber companies’ operations around the globe. Roseburg Forest Products has touted its FSC certification as proof of its “green” credentials. However, an important part of FSC certification is supposed to include human rights and how companies treat the communities in which they operate.

The FSC’s refusal to investigate one of its favored US clients comes at a time when Roseburg is under federal investigation over its alleged involvement in the trade of illegal black-market timber from areas of high conservation importance in Africa.

*Bruce Shoemaker of WCWC* said, “Rather than investigating our complaint on its merits, the FSC is using a very narrow definition of “forestry operations” to avoid responsibility for its association with a company that continues to violate the rights of our community. We hope that customers of Roseburg’s products are not just assuming that the FSC label is proof that this company cares about human rights.”

*Chris Lang of FSC Watch* said, "As FSC-Watch has documented since 2006, FSC has an appalling record of protecting companies at the expense of local communities. FSC claims to be promoting "responsible management of the world's forests", but whenever problems with FSC-certified companies are exposed, FSC goes into cover-up mode, acting on behalf of the timber industry. FSC's failure to investigate the complaint against Roseburg is just one more example of FSC's bias in favour of corporations - at the expense of the human rights of the local community."

Weed residents demand that Roseburg take the following actions: drop its SLAPP lawsuit against Weed citizens, and honor the intention of its predecessor company – International Paper – to officially recognize the town’s rights to the spring water.