

**Ryan Torgerson, President  
Torgerson Timber Incorporated**

Interviewer-John Howe

Ryan, let's start out by just telling me your name, and your affiliation with this mill.

Ryan Torgerson

I'm Ryan Torgerson. I'm the President of Torgerson Timber Incorporated.

Interviewer-John Howe

Tell me about the history of this mill. We were talking earlier about it being family owned, going back generations. Tell me how that works.

Ryan Torgerson

Right now it's owned by myself, and I have two older brothers. It's been in our family for, like you said, three to four generations. That's about it, I guess.

Interviewer-John Howe

Tell me, what does this mill mean to your family?

Ryan Torgerson

Well, this mill to me is my heritage. It's been a big part of my life for lots of years, and I was raised in the timber business, and spent a lot of time here, and it means a lot to me.

Interviewer-John Howe

Tell me about the economic times for the timber business right now.

Ryan Torgerson

Things are pretty tough for the timber business right now. Economic-wise, the supply of timber is limited. It used to be a lot easier to get timber and it's pretty tough right now.

Interviewer-John Howe

What are the reasons behind that? Why are things tough right now for the timber industry, and specifically, in towns like Big Mountain?

Ryan Torgerson

One of the big reasons is access to the timber. It's hard to get timber these days. There's a lot of environmental pressure and the Forest Service will set up timber sales and they get tied up in litigation and it's hard to get them out of litigation and there's just not much timber moving.

Interviewer-John Howe

How do you work with the environmental community and how have they been to work with in terms of getting product and timber?

Ryan Torgerson

Well it's pretty tough to work with the environmental community. They don't support logging.

They file the bills against Forest Service timber sales and tie it up in litigation making it so you can't log the timber, and it's pretty tough.

Interviewer-John Howe

What do you think should be done there? Where is there any common ground, or what do you think should happen in terms of the dialogue there?

Ryan Torgerson

I think there could be some common ground. I would say that I'm not against having wilderness. I'm not against setting aside land that's more sensitive than other places that should be protected, but I think that, along with that there should be land set aside for timber production to support the timber industry.

Interviewer-John Howe

What does this mill mean to the town in terms of jobs and the economy?

Ryan Torgerson

Well, right now we don't really run the mill. In the past it was a big part of the community. There used to be six, seven saw mills in this area that ran full-time, year round, and right now there's only one left that's, that operates year round so, economically, the timber industry used to be a big part of this country and this area, and now it's pretty well non-existent.

Interviewer-John Howe

What happens when wilderness designation comes into play? How does that affect you and your business, and specifically, rural communities like this?

Ryan Torgerson

Well, wilderness ties up the resource. That's a big part of the timber industry, is being able to access the resources that are there, and with wilderness, if it's designated wilderness, you have no access to the timber and it pretty much kills the industry.

Interviewer-John Howe

What would you say to the environmental community in terms of how you'd like to see them work with you in the future?

Ryan Torgerson

Well, it's like I said earlier; I'm not against wilderness. I want to say that again that I support the wilderness that's there, but I don't support any more wilderness and I definitely don't want to have it all wilderness. There needs to be a balance there. We need to have access to our resources.

Interviewer-John Howe

What do you see for the future of this mill?

Ryan Torgerson

Right now, the future's pretty iffy. You know we haven't run it for the last three or four years on

any regular basis. It's pretty sporadic and the future depends on how the wilderness--it's a big issue and there's some things that need to be worked out there, but until there's a compromise of some kind where we can access our resources, the future's pretty grim.

Interviewer-John Howe

What happens to logging towns, not just this one, but many around the country when the resources are tied up the way you mentioned. What's the effect on the town and the people in it?

Ryan Torgerson

Well, here specifically, a lot of people have had to find other jobs. People have moved away. Logging and the timber industry used to be a very big part of this community and people have moved away, had to find other jobs, went back to school.