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Yesterday, the House passed the Farm Bill, and as my blog indicated yesterday, I voted against this bill for a variety of reasons, but there is one piece I am sure that Democrats will be sure to exclude from their talking points. An earmark inserted by Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) for a “Qualified Forestry Bonds Program”, which would provide federally funded-tax credit bonds for purchases that meet the following standards:

- The forest must be adjacent to U.S. Forest Service Land;
- Half of the parcel must be turned over to the U.S. Forest Service;
- It must include at least 40,000 total acres; and
- It must be subject to a “native fish habitat conservation plan approved by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.”

You might have guessed it, but there is only one piece of land that meets these qualifications, a 1.6 million acre piece of land, owned by the Plum Creek Timber Company.

The Plum Creek Timber Company is attempting to sell the qualifying land to the Nature Conservancy, which has been touted by the Washington Post as the “world’s richest environmental group, with \$3 billion in assets.”

This earmark will allow the Nature Conservancy to claim a \$250 million ‘Tax Refund’ which would basically provide additional motivation for the group to purchase the land. Keep in mind, that this tax refund would go to a conservancy group that has 501(c)3 organization, so it doesn’t pay taxes in the first place, according to the earmark the tax refund would be provided anyway.

If that wasn't enough, according to the FEC, employees of plum Creek Timber have donated nearly \$17,000 to Senator Baucus' campaign fund.

The endowment of \$250 million of taxpayer funds to encourage a rich environmental group to purchase land from a Senator's wealthy campaign donors...I wish I could say the audacity of some Members of Congress surprises me, but I can't.