Some people scornfully call us “Greens,” activists intent on “Wilderness Creep” (more wilderness) and more protection for the “flokies.” Others refer to us as extremest, rabid, radical zealots and of course overly litigious preservationists wanting to “lock up our public lands.” Actually we will take vigorous action when agencies and politicians try to remove environmental protections from our public lands. But, calling us names meant as a put-down because we are exercising our rights to be active public participants in federal agency actions will only strengthen our resolve and attract more organized support.

Who are these environmental activists and do they deserve to be demonized for their work helping to protect our public lands and planet? Although some people decry what we do, we are your neighbors supporting community well-being (local jobs in the woods and on the farms) and sustainable land management practices that don’t degrade the environment. We are people of goodwill and volunteers who won’t give up without a fight to protect public lands when they are being seriously damaged. We are diligent people trying to change agency manager’s and politician’s minds when they propose projects that fail to safeguard our natural resources or forest health.

Some of us are trained scientists, lawyers and professionals who believe these public lands belong to everybody and must be protected from exploitation. Although you hear many comments are substantive, well written and supported by relevant data or law, they are routinely dismissed by the agency as having no merit. A recent example of this kind of agency behavior can be seen in the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM’s) Western Oregon Plan Revision decision in Dec. 2008.

The BLM’s Western Oregon Plan Revision received approximately 30,000 comments statewide. Most of the comments BLM received were from individuals and groups who cited many flaws or problems throughout the document. Yet, the BLM quickly proceeded to make a decision and approved the Plan Revision with only a few insignificant changes.

The environmental work we try to do and for our collective Southern Oregon backyard (mostly for free or little money) is difficult and time consuming. You have to learn to read, study and understand complex government processes and documents. You have to write, speak and attend endless meetings. You spend long hours at your desk, computer or in the field, totally focused on a particular issue or proposed project that has potential negative impacts. At those times, you will need an infinite supply of energy.

But the real frustration comes after you have submitted comments on a questionable federal agency project. Although you hear your comments are substantive, well written and supported by relevant data or law, they are routinely dismissed by the agency as having no merit. A recent example of this kind of agency behavior can be seen in the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM’s) Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR) decision in Dec. 2008.

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One of your concern is the number of comments BLM received for the concerned public regarding this timber sale: 30,000. Some of us are trained scientists, lawyers and professionals who believe these public lands belong to everybody and must be protected from exploitation. Although you hear many comments are substantive, well written and supported by relevant data or law, they are routinely dismissed by the agency as having no merit. A recent example of this kind of agency behavior can be seen in the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM’s) Western Oregon Plan Revision decision in Dec. 2008.

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