

# Controversy over Nedsbar Timber Sale spurs community alternative

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

The Nedsbar Timber Sale has stirred up considerable controversy in the valley. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposed this large timber management project in the Little and Upper Applegate Valleys in response to a timber industry lawsuit currently under appeal. The lawsuit, brought by Swanson-Superior Lumber, Rough & Ready Lumber, and others, contends that the Oregon and California Act of 1937 requires the Medford and Roseburg Districts of the BLM to double the volume of public timber offered to private industry.

For many years the agency has justified its commercial timber sales in the Applegate as efforts to reduce fire hazards, logging only smaller diameter trees, and although I personally saw different results on the ground, at least the rhetoric was going in the right direction. We do need to reduce fuels in the Applegate, and if we can do so while protecting ecological values and still get a commercial product out, then I support that. Unfortunately for the Applegate Valley, the purpose

of the Nedsbar Timber Sale is solely to increase timber harvested on federal lands, not to address ecological, social, or fuel-reduction needs. The result is one of the most controversial timber sales in recent history with strong community opposition.

The roughly 3,000-acre project sprawls out across forest and woodland that is known for its dry, difficult growing conditions, extreme biodiversity, roadless landscapes, recreational opportunities and habitat variability. It also sprawls across the viewshed of many homesteads in the valley because of its location within the Wildland Urban Interface of the Little and Upper Applegate Valleys. The Nedsbar Timber Sale would also impact numerous low-elevation roadless areas, including the Dakubetede, Buncom, and Boaz Roadless Areas. The Nedsbar Timber Sale is as variable as the landscape it targets for timber production. Some units contain small trees in dense, young stands that create dangerous fuel hazards while others contain

stands of spacious, old trees that have maintained resilience to fire and provide high-quality habitat for species such as the northern spotted owl, Siskiyou Mountains salamander and Pacific fisher.

Having hiked all 93 units in the Nedsbar Timber Sale, I can tell you with confidence that this will have a profound impact on our valley. You will see Nedsbar Timber Sale units from the lower end of the Upper Applegate Valley and throughout the Little Applegate Valley, from the confluence with the Applegate River up to the headwaters near Bald Mountain.

In a few units the BLM will do what they call “structural retention/regeneration harvest,” where they will leave only 16 to 25 large trees per acre and 30 to 40 percent canopy closure. Canopy closure is determined by the amount of light able to penetrate through the forest canopy to the forest floor. These “prescriptions” are targeting complex old stands supporting large, old trees. Sixty-three percent of the timber sale units will reduce canopy closure to as low as 40 percent. The proposed logging prescriptions and drastic canopy reduction will increase fuel hazards by increasing solar radiation and encouraging the development of dense understory fuels. Many units support healthy, fire-resilient stands with old-growth or late-seral characteristics.

Logging these forests would increase fire hazards and impact water quality and habitat for species dependent on older forests. As many residents have chosen to live in the Applegate because of the beauty and recreational opportunities on neighboring public land, resistance to this sale is growing.

A group of very committed and determined local folks has stepped up to draft a Community Alternative that the BLM has agreed to analyze as one of the four alternatives (i.e., options to either accept or deny) in their Environmental Analysis (EA) due out May 15. The Community Alternative would address social, ecological, economic, and legal needs while allowing for a sustainable level of timber harvest. I encourage folks to support this alternative.

The Nedsbar Community Monitoring Program has helped inform the Community Alternative by hiking every unit in the sale, getting an on-the-ground look at what is actually proposed for logging, taking measurements of trees and canopy closure.

You can view unit descriptions and see photos and video of the Nedsbar Timber Sale at [www.thesiskiyoucrest.blogspot.com](http://www.thesiskiyoucrest.blogspot.com). Please sign on to the Community Alternative and come out for public hikes of the units to see what is at stake.

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