

THE SISKIYOU MOUNTAIN ADVOCATE

Trump, timber, the BLM, and the Applegate Valley

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

Recently, Trump Administration policies surrounding federal land management have begun trickling into our region, influencing not only what is proposed, but also the level of transparency, accountability, and public involvement in the planning and approval process. Unfortunately, this push for unfettered resource extraction, the dismantling of environmental regulations, and the elimination of the public involvement process has thoroughly saturated our local Bureau of Land Management (BLM), leading to the introduction of numerous controversial logging projects in the Applegate watershed and throughout SW Oregon.

Controversial projects include the Bear Grub Timber Sale, which would log along the East Applegate Ridge Trail, in the Wellington Wildlands, and throughout the mountains between the communities of Ruch and Talent. The timber sale proposes “group selection” logging, which includes removing whole groves of mature forest up to 4 acres in size and across up to 30 percent of a given timber sale unit. My monitoring has documented trees up to 44 inches in diameter and more than 150 years old marked for removal.

The Bear Grub Timber Sale would degrade important recreation areas, impact the scenic qualities of our valley, and increase fire hazards by removing large, old, fire-resistant trees and significant levels of mature forest canopy. By replacing the most fire resistant portions of the landscape with highly flammable young trees and shrubs, fire hazards would undoubtedly increase. To make matters worse, numerous logging units are located directly adjacent to rural homes or

residential areas in the Applegate Valley. When local residents and organizations requested meetings to discuss the project, BLM repeatedly refused. Yet, despite



A Late Mungers Timber Sale unit on Murphy Creek. Photo: Luke Ruediger.

having never talked with the affected communities, BLM will soon be deciding the fate of the forests that surround them.

The BLM has also proposed the innocuous sounding Integrated Vegetation Management for Resilient Lands Project (IVM Project). Although this project sounds benign, terms like “integrated vegetation management” and, in this case, “resilience” are euphemisms for commercial logging and serve only to mask the impacts and objectives of timber management with misleading language.

The proposal would authorize and encourage commercial logging in vast areas outside the existing “harvest land base.” Under the “Adapted Rogue Basin

Strategy Alternative,” the BLM has proposed to allow up to 4,000 acres of commercial logging and 10 miles of new road construction per year without

site-specific environmental review or public comment. The IVM Project would authorize up to 25,000 acres of commercial logging and 90 miles of new road construction over a 10-year period and is proposed to have “no sunset date,” meaning these provisions could be used to build hundreds of miles of new road and log many tens of thousands of acres across southwest Oregon.

Unfortunately, this project focuses on logging conservation-based land use allocations, such as Late Successional Reserves, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Research Natural Areas, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. This places the wildest, most

intact landscapes remaining on BLM land on the chopping block and would provide the public with little to no opportunity to influence, or be involved in, the planning or approval process. Residents would simply be notified when a timber sale is approved, rather than the BLM soliciting input throughout the project development process.

Disappointingly, before even achieving approval, the BLM has begun planning projects “tiered” to the provisions of the IVM Project. According to the BLM, the first timber sale proposed for implementation would likely be the Late Mungers Timber Sale. Located in the watersheds around Mungers Butte and in the mountains between Williams, Murphy, and Selma, this project would log within a large Late Successional Reserve designated to protect old forest habitat for the Northern spotted owl and the BLM’s Mungers Butte Recreation Area. Logging is currently proposed on Mungers Creek, China Creek, Powell Creek, and Murphy Creek. This

project will log large, fire-resistant trees, degrade habitat for the Northern spotted owl, remove old forest canopy, emit abundant stored carbon, increase fire hazards for surrounding communities, and eliminate opportunities for public input.

While society faces the challenges of a changing climate and a loss of global biodiversity, our public officials—from the White House to those in power at the Medford District BLM—are making our communities less safe, less resilient, less livable, and less democratic.

For more information: protectmungers.org.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Water for wine

BY SANDY OLKEN

It’s difficult to imagine that the abundance of rain that colors the green of the Northwest could dwindle to an inadequate amount for our agricultural needs.

GlobalChange.gov indicates that

changes in seasonal stream flows related to snow melt have been observed and will continue, reducing the supply of water for many competing demands, which, in the Applegate Valley, especially relate to vineyards.

Agriculture provides the economic and cultural foundation of the Applegate Valley. The beautiful farms and vineyards sprinkled throughout the valley are all dependent on

water from the mountains.

This is why so many of us are so passionate about protecting the forests that shelter our water.

Erosion of soil, increased sedimentation, evaporation, and reduced filtration are just a few of the many ways clearcutting threatens water.

The Williams Community Forest Project is working on obtaining funds

for the purchase of the Pipe Fork Area to save it from being clearcut. We are trying to protect Pipe Fork Creek, a tributary of Williams Creek, which is a tributary of the Applegate River, the main source of water for most of the vineyards in the valley.

We need water for wine!
Sandy Olken
Williams

Letters to the Editor wanted! We know you have something to say, and we want to hear about it! Submit 200 words or less to bert@applegater.org. Provide your name, address, and contact info (only your name and location will be published). Deadline for the winter issue is November 1. (See more information on page 19.)

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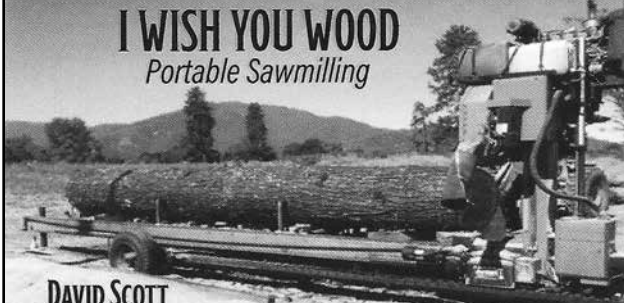


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