

**THE SISKIYOU MOUNTAIN ADVOCATE**

# BLM timber sale updates: Deceptive proposals and canceled old-growth logging in the Applegate Valley

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

**Boaz Salvage Timber Sale**

In recent months, the Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been spinning false narratives about their proposed “salvage” logging projects in the Applegate Valley. They claim to be targeting “dead and dying” trees and stands within their Boaz Salvage Timber Sale, yet the actual tree-removal mark tells a different story. The BLM’s classification of living, green trees and stands as “dead and dying” does not change the reality on the ground—these trees survived recent beetle outbreaks and have demonstrated either genetic or microsite-related resilience.

Using a wildly dishonest and Orwellian narrative that they must clear-cut these living stands—leaving, on average, 3.3 trees per acre—and kill these trees to save them from mortality, the BLM is proposing to log 250 acres on Cinnabar Ridge, the steep, rugged ridge system dividing the Little Applegate Valley from the Upper Applegate Valley. Claiming they are logging “dead and dying trees,” the BLM has proposed extensive live-tree removal and regeneration logging throughout the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale, including in stands that did not sustain significant beetle mortality. In stands that did sustain significant mortality, the BLM proposes to log many of the surviving trees.

Many of the living, green trees in the Boaz Timber Sale either maintain genetic resilience or are in a microclimate that helped them survive. To foster these resilient traits and support increased adaptation of the trees to drought and beetle-mortality events, the BLM should retain these resilient trees into the future. Unfortunately, the BLM is planning to do the opposite—to remove these proven survivors and replace them with artificially planted conifer stands of up to at least 150 small, highly flammable trees per acre.

The vegetative response to the proposed clear-cuts in the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale will lead to a dramatic increase in fire risks associated with plantation development and the natural regeneration of young, even-aged, highly flammable trees, shrubs, and fine fuels. To make matters worse, the BLM has proposed to “lop and

scatter,” instead of burning, all logging slash in this project, leaving a dense mat of dry, small-diameter fuels on the forest floor that will dramatically increase fire risk. In comparison, the current flush of standing, beetle-killed snags, which will fall to the forest floor slowly, over many years, does not increase fire risks. Numerous scientific papers, and the Upper Applegate Fire this summer, show that beetle-killed forests can actually dampen fire behavior.

These snags and downed wood also provide important wildlife habitat and support forest complexity in regenerating stands. Many of the living forest stands proposed for logging are currently important habitats for species like the northern spotted owl and the Pacific fisher.

The BLM has approved the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale using a categorical exclusion, which shields the agency from scientific review, public scrutiny, and public accountability by eliminating public comment periods, environmental analysis, and multiple processes for public involvement and information. We believe the BLM is using a categorical exclusion to rush the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale into action because their claims about this sale would never stand up to rigorous analysis, meaningful public comment, or scientific review. The forests of the Applegate and the public deserve an honest, open approach to land management. The BLM should start by canceling the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale.

**Cedar Flat Timber Sale**

In the last issue of the *Applegater*, I wrote about the BLM’s newest old-growth logging plans on Grayback Mountain, in the upper Williams Creek watershed, and in the Cedar Flat Timber Sale. This project would have logged up to 3,222 acres, including 2,493 acres in late-successional reserve forests set aside to protect old-forest habitat for the northern spotted owl. After monitoring this entire timber sale and finding many mature and old-growth forests proposed for logging, we are happy to announce that the BLM has canceled the Cedar Flat Timber Sale.

Apparently, the agency is working to redesign portions of this project, and we



The red outline shows Unit 35-3 of the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale, demonstrating that the stand is largely a living forest. The timber sale would log this stand to approximately 3.3 trees per acre, removing nearly the entire stand. Photo: Luke Ruediger.



Unit 35-5 of the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale is a living green stand of Douglas fir forest located in significant drought and beetle refugia. Only one tree in this photo (marked with orange paint) would be retained. All other trees are considered “dead and dying” and would be removed. Does this look like a “dead and dying” forest? Photo: Luke Ruediger.

encourage them to stay out of the last mature and old-growth forests remaining in the upper Williams Creek watershed and along the popular Grayback Mountain Trail. These last old forests are worth more

left standing and should be excluded from any future timber sales proposed in the Williams Creek watershed.

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