

THE SISKIYOU MOUNTAIN ADVOCATE

The return of clear-cut logging on BLM lands in the Applegate Valley

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

For the first time in many years, the Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has begun implementing large-scale clear-cut logging operations on public lands in the Applegate Valley. Claiming to be logging only “dead and dying” trees, the agency is mowing down whole stands of mature, living forest above Eastside Road in the Upper Applegate Valley and above Buncom in the Little Applegate Valley, and, unfortunately, this may only be the beginning.

As I write this article, stands of mature or late successional forest are being logged to only 3.3 trees per acre, leaving slopes largely devoid of vegetation and choked with logging slash that, in many cases, will not be removed. Do not be fooled—this is not a “salvage” logging project, and the BLM is not targeting trees that died in recent flatheaded fir borer outbreaks—they are clear-cut logging in the green, living stands that survived the outbreaks. Additionally, in stands that did sustain significant beetle mortality, many of the living trees will be logged.

Recently, Certified Professional Forester Kenneth Baldwin, a forester with 52 years of experience in dry mixed-conifer forest habitats, conducted a review of the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale. He reported: “From my field survey of the 13 units in the Boaz Mortality Salvage Sale, I conclude that *most* of the live Douglas firs are not ‘severely damaged’ nor ‘likely to die within a few years,’ and therefore do not meet the definition of dying trees. These trees are incorrectly designated for cutting in the units.” He also found that 11 of the 13 units proposed for logging are located on northwest- to east-facing aspects, and some were located in seasonal drainages or draws, where resilience to both beetles and climate change is expected to be significantly higher.

The BLM approved the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale with no public involvement, virtually no scientific review, and almost no meaningful analysis, claiming that removing these supposedly “dead and dying” trees would have no significant impact. Yet, in all honesty, the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale is the most damaging

timber sale I have seen either implemented or proposed on BLM lands in the past 20-plus years, and the project represents a return to clear-cut logging on federal lands in the Applegate Valley.

With only four of the 13 units logged as of January, our monitoring of the timber sale found hundreds of trees over 30 inches in diameter already removed, including trees over 200 years old. We also found extensive soil damage due to ground-based yarding operations and rutting over three feet deep in some locations. In total, approximately 130 trees were logged along Ned’s Gulch, including trees within three feet of the seasonal stream channel, and trees were dragged across the stream in yarding operations. We also found over 600 feet of a small, seasonal stream completely filled in with soil and debris. This stream and riparian reserve were converted into a skid trail and log landing, completely altering the hydrology and creating excessive sedimentation during heavy rain events.

The BLM has also proposed the SOS Project, a massive so-called “salvage” logging proposal that would allow BLM to log up to 15,000 acres and build up to 20 miles of new road every five years under very similar prescriptions as the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale. The agency has also proposed the first timber sale under the larger SOS Project, and it proposes 3,000 acres of logging throughout the Applegate Valley, including Thompson Creek, China Gulch, above Cantrall Buckley Park, on Woodrat Mountain, in Wellington Wildlands, on Sterling Creek, and along the East Applegate Ridge Trail.

If implemented, the BLM’s SOS project would clear-cut whole stands of living, green forests, targeting stands with as little as 10 percent mortality and leaving only a handful of trees per acre. The results would be to riddle our valley in clear-cuts, dramatically increase fire risks, reduce climate and beetle resilience, degrade wildlands, impact water quality, and damage both the viewshed and recreational experience on our beloved East Applegate Ridge Trail, at the paragliding sites at Woodrat Mountain, in the Wellington



This was a seasonal stream, but BLM logging operations completely filled in the stream channel and converted this small seasonal stream into a skid trail. The clear-cut slope above is unit 27-3. Photo: Luke Ruediger.



A view across the clear-cut known as unit 27-4 in the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale. Just days before this photo was taken, this was a mature, living forest rising above Eastside Road and Upper Applegate. Photo: Luke Ruediger.

Wildlands, and from our homes and communities.

Some say the “Timber Wars” are over, but when you look up at Cinnabar Ridge

at the Boaz Salvage Timber Sale, I wonder if they have just begun.

Luke Ruediger
siskiyoucrest@gmail.com

Please support our advertisers! Shop local; keep our dollars local.

BOB THOMAS AUTOMOTIVE, INC.
FOREIGN / DOMESTIC SERVICE AND REPAIR
“We care about your repair.”
Mail Tribune Readers’ Choice
Brian Thomas, Owner
535 Rossanley Drive
Medford, OR 97501
541-734-3743
Fax 541-245-3784
www.BobThomasAutomotive.com

LOCALLY GROWN PROFESSIONAL
Serving the Valley I Love!
Evelyn Winningham Licensed Principal Broker
evelyn@ramsayrealty.com
541-951-7055
Lic#200805101
Ramsay Realty
The Applegate Jacksonville Experts
www.ramsayrealty.com

CCB# 177466
NV 42066
CA 809835
Paul Crean
541-415-1081
ACTION ELECTRIC
Quality is doing the job right the first time.
Commercial • Residential • Design Build
paul.actionelectric@yahoo.com
P.O. Box 537, Jacksonville, OR 97530

Grants Pass Water Lab
Accredited in accordance with NELAP
ORLAP # OR100033
ISO 17025:2005
Eric Schaafsma
Technical Director
eric@gpwaterlab.com
541-476-0733
Fax 541-476-8132
964 SE “M” Street
Grants Pass, OR 97526

THE LINDSAY LODGE, BAR, VENUE
Applegate Valley
541-846-6690
thelindsaylodge.com
Riverfront Dining
Thursday - Sunday
4pm to 9pm

Local Handmade Food and Gifts
Peach Rock Market
Your Local Goods Collective
143 South Redwood Highway
Cave Junction, OR 97523
458-592-0000
peachrockmarket.com