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Dear BLM,

The WOPR is a timber harvest plan - not a timber management plan, and when we lose the benefits of easy access to solitude and recreation, we lose our property values along with the qualities that grow an active rural business community... a double loss for southern Oregon!!!

Opposition to the BLM's Western Oregon Planning Revision (WOPR) process for 2.5 million acres of public forestland statewide has galvanized a huge and diverse alliance, and you'd do well to not underestimate this reality. At countless meetings, when we ask how many people live adjacent to or near BLM lands, all the hands in the room go up! There are many new faces: vineyard owners, farmers, hunters, fisherman, OHV users, river and back-country outfitters, horse enthusiasts, restaurant owners, teachers, scientists and retirees, just to name a few. Many folks have joined forces with us "environmentalists" in opposition to the WOPR.

This WOPR process has served to make it all quite clear: almost ALL the people are on one side of this conflict - with the agencies, logging interests, corporations and doomed right wing legislators on the other side...and everyone sees this!!! The Bush BLM looks very bad indeed.

When will the BLM learn to listen to and utilize the vast amount of expertise to be found among the ranks of citizen volunteers? If the BLM would take citizen input seriously, many lawsuits could be avoided and we'd be implementing policies that create jobs and protect forests and send some timber to the mills.

Additionally, the BLM is just plain wrong to interpret the O&C Act as placing timber production above all other land uses including: watershed protection, regulation of stream flows, recreation and the protection of designated "Areas of Critical Environmental Concern" - and that, in some of America's most biologically diverse forests. To use the fear over county funding in rural Oregon counties is indeed shortsighted and manipulative.

By illegally ignoring Northwest Forest Plan protections, the WOPR more than triples logging levels and dramatically increases old growth logging and clearcutting. By prioritizing timber sales and OHV use at the expense of virtually all other life-sustaining community values, significant increases in fire danger and destruction to wildlife habitat, rivers and hiking/horseback trails would occur.

Concern about wildfire is a big concern for residents of the area, and many believe the BLM should focus on rehabilitating previously logged lands filled with old logging slash located close to homes and leave areas blessed with more fire resistant old-growth stands alone. The BLM's preferred alternative offers Oregon the worst fire future because it accomplishes almost all its logging by clearcutting, creating even aged plantations without standing large trees... This plan fails the fire test. If it is adopted, we all get burned.

Numerous scientific studies confirm this truth. Get with the program. Global warming is real, and the BLM must adapt to 21st century reality, or it'll never get out of the courtroom. Sad, that so much resource is devoted to lawsuits instead of developing common sense strategies for our public lands.

Local residents have an enormous stake in how these lands are managed and don't want more shortsighted logging proposals that would kill the long-term economic health of their communities. People want the BLM to focus instead on creating scientifically defensible management plans for previously logged public lands that offer meaningful community fire protections, improve forest health, create sustainable jobs and protect our remaining ancient forests for future generations.

Roger Brandt has done extensive research on rural economics and quotes numerous studies that demonstrate how forested areas increase property values while clear-cuts and special activity parks (like OHV sites) drive home values down. Favoritism to commercial interests over residents' quality of life, community development and tourism could devalue property values to the tune of 5% to 15% for all homes near BLM lands. Connect with Brandt (541-592-4316).

The inclusion of more than 100,000 acres of noisy "Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Emphasis Areas" is a particularly contentious component of the WOPR in SW Oregon. The BLM has had 12 years to manage the proposed Johns Peak OHV emphasis area currently in use outside of Jacksonville, but has done nothing to make that situation livable for the residents there, so how can they possibly expect to manage additionally proposed OHV areas? The BLM would be better off to utilize some old logging roads for OHV's - in places far enough away from riparian areas, sensitive plant populations and private property!

While the BLM acknowledges the incompatibility of OHV use with other forms of recreation, it has been slow to acknowledge the incompatibility of OHV use with private property. OHV activity is among the most environmentally destructive forms of recreation and causes far more damage to soils, creeks, plants and wildlife habitat - far far more than any hiker, equestrian or mountain biker.

Robert Johnson acquired ownership of John's Peak (north of Jacksonville) in the mid 1980's and built his home there. Since the 1995 announcement of the "John's Peak OHV Area", the general public thinks that John's Peak and the surrounding area is public land. "No Trespassing Signs" were posted but were repeatedly torn down. Private locked gates were erected and also ripped down. Mr. Johnson has been spat upon, cursed at and even had a handgun pointed at him after he informed the "riders" that they were on private property. Johnson's land has been used for target practice, illegal dumping of garbage and abandoned automobiles, teen-age beer parties and illegal campfires. Here's a page out of Johnson's journal:

"Today is October 14, 2007. I drove down my driveway and observed a load of tree cuttings dumped in the middle of my road. Then I was nearly run off this private road by a quad. I spent much of the afternoon listening to the constant sounds of motorcycles and quads driving over the trails that surround my home. Most of these riders are on private property but probably don't know it. This is one typical day out of 8,395 days that I have lived on John's Peak: a constant nightmare, mostly caused by the BLM, who refuses to address my issues."

Several regional horse enthusiast organizations are also very concerned about OHV's because many horse back riders have experienced hair raising and dangerous encounters with OHV riders on BLM lands. Many of these clubs contribute valuable resources and labor to the maintenance of equestrian trails. I used to lead trail rides on horseback for the public in the Siskiyou's. I feared running into OHV's far more than cougars, and have had a few terrifying experiences where children on horseback were injured because of OHV's. And again, by far, OHV use is the most destructive use of our public lands and is prohibitive to almost all other recreational uses of our public lands!

Listen! Wake Up! Pay attention to what the public and the scientists and the economists are saying! When the day is done, someday you folks will have to deal with your conscience. How do you want to be remembered? When the supply is gone, the demand becomes irrelevant. Besides, there is little economic justification for the WOPR, so why are you doing this?

Sincerely and passionately, Annette McGee Rasch
P.O. BOX 2132, Cave Junction, Oregon, 97523



F. Y. I.

Top Ten Reasons the WOPR is a Bad Idea

The Bush Administration proposes the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR) to undo protections for Bureau of Land Management-administered public forests. Here are the top ten reasons why gutting protections for some of our last, best old growth forest is a real bad idea:

10. **Quality of life.** The WOPR proposes widespread clearcutting of public forest, which could reduce property values and the quality of life of thousands of Oregonians living near BLM lands. Over 1,000 miles of new logging road and 140,000 acres of clearcuts in the first decade alone would scar Oregon's spectacular landscape.
9. **Peace and quiet.** Clearcutting of old growth forest and proposed "Off Highway Vehicle Emphasis Areas" threaten peace and quiet for rural residents and visitors. Over 100,000 acres would be promoted as destinations for OHVs, most adjacent to Oregonian's private residences.
8. **Clean water and salmon.** By logging near streams the WOPR reduces important protections for clean water and Pacific salmon. High quality drinking water originates on BLM lands for the citizens of Salem, Corvallis, Eugene, and 70 other Oregon communities. Salmon need cool, clean water, but the WOPR would remove stream buffers that shade streams and keep sediment from the water.
7. **Ancient forests.** BLM lands in western Oregon contain about 1-million acres of our remaining older forests. The WOPR would increase logging of forests over 200 years sevenfold, and threatens some of Oregon's best remaining ancient forests. Two thousand square miles of forest (an area the size of Delaware) would be put in "Timber Management Areas," where clearcutting is emphasized.
6. **Wildlife and plant habitat.** Wildlife rely on BLM forests such as elk and black bear and threatened species like the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet. The WOPR would reduce protections for wildlife populations and diminish habitat for countless plant and wildlife species. An increase in noxious, invasive weeds and wildlife species is predicted under the WOPR.
5. **Sustainable economies.** Healthy, protected forests are one of Oregon's most important natural assets. While rampant old growth clearcutting promises short-term economic boom to a few well-connected mill owners, an economic bust is easily foreseeable under the Bush plan as fish, wildlife and the old growth forests that they rely on dwindle.
4. **Northwest Forest Plan.** The Northwest Forest Plan is a landmark agreement that private, state and federal landowners rely on to protect threatened old growth species while producing timber in compliance with environmental law. Removing BLM forests would unravel the whole fabric of the Plan and produce uncertainty for other landowners.
3. **It is illegal.** The BLM cannot eliminate protection for old-growth forests, without undermining the Northwest Forest Plan and protections for threatened and endangered species and clean water. To do so, the BLM needs to violate the Endangered Species and Clean Water Acts and other laws.
2. **Global warming and fire.** While the Bush administration ignores climate change in the WOPR, by converting moist old growth forests into dry flammable tree plantations, the WOPR will increase the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and places communities at enhanced risk of uncharacteristic fire.
1. **There is a better way.** We should protect what is left of Oregon's old growth heritage forests, and restore those forests that have been degraded. Half of BLM forests were clearcut in the past century and converted to overstocked tree plantations. Thinning small trees could offer more than 2 billion board feet of commercially valuable timber if actively thinned while preserving our last, best public lands for generations to come.