

2568

RECEIVED
JAN 11 2008

January 9, 2008

Mr. Ed Shepard, State Director
Western OR Plan Revisions
Bureau of Land Management
PO Box 2965
Portland, OR 97208

Dear Mr. Shepard:

I appreciate the opportunity to participate with public input for the Western Oregon Plan Revision. I have been a resident of Western Oregon for more than fifty years and have over thirty years experience working as a contractor on BLM forestlands. In addition, our family owns a tree farm in Douglas County neighboring on three sides with the BLM.

As a member of Douglas Timber Operators, I endorse their position on the Western OR Plan Revisions. I wish to record my opinion as well and recognize Alternative 2 as the most reasonable BLM proposal offered.

O&C lands once belonged to Oregonians who entrusted the Federal Government to manage them prudently for the well-being of Oregonians. BLM forests are critical to the economic well-being of Oregon. Western Oregon's timber industry provides an important source of family wage employment and the economic backbone for rural Oregon. The O&C Counties are dependant on timber receipts to fund public safety, roads and social programs. The O&C Act devised a method where Counties shared in the stumpage payments from timber sales while making substantial investments in growing trees for the future. In recent years the same counties have been recipients of a welfare program paying them a stipend while these forestlands lie fallow. Congress has made it clear this cannot continue, without continued Federal assistance or a change in forest management policy the counties will languish.

County budgets have been devastated in recent years due to timber harvest cutbacks under the Northwest Forest Plan. The plan has failed to produce either a predictable supply of timber to promote employment or receipts to reinforce basic county budgets. This couldn't be at a worse time because social services are needed the most during times of economic dislocation.

Sustainable and predictable timber harvests from BLM lands are critical to maintaining a strong mill infrastructure. As a small woodland owner, I am concerned that a viable mill industry remains as a strong market for my logs. It's of great concern that our Federal neighbors' lands be managed to promote healthy forest conditions by reducing the risk from wildfire, insects and disease.

From my personal observation historically BLM forest lands have been wisely managed, once harvested areas now support vigorous stands of young timber. Figures indicate the timber inventory has grown dramatically since the inception of the O&C act.

While I support active management and commercial thinning, regeneration harvesting is vital in the Douglas fir region to successfully reproduce and maintain healthy forests. One simply needs to look at areas such as the Oxbow Burn to confirm the past success of harvesting and reforestation to promote timber, wildlife and water values.

Under the Northwest Forest Plan, management practices have been dominated by endangered species preservation, the goal of the NWFP was to balance economic needs while providing suitable habitat conditions for all wildlife. An active timber sale program will complement big game habitat and hunting opportunities on BLM lands. Improved road maintenance and upgrade of crossings and culverts will benefit fish habitat and water quality.

Analysis shows that Western Oregon BLM lands have the biological potential to sustainably produce 1 billion board feet annually. I strongly urge the BLM to adopt an alternative which will harvest a minimum of the preferred alternative 2.

Thank you for consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gordon Culbertson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Gordon Culbertson
Whitewater Forests, LLC
39074 Easton Lane
Springfield, OR 97478