



Kelleher, Stephanie &lt;skellehe@blm.gov&gt;

## Comment! on "Pilot Thompson" project.

1 message

Tue, Apr 23, 2013 at 5:40 PM

To: skellehe@blm.gov

Hello Stephanie and all at the BLM.

I did not manage to attend the recent walkthrough of some of the now-marked "Pilot Thompson" sites, but I have been in contact with some who did attend, and I have also been in contact with several passionately interested Thompson Creek residents who did not attend. Universally, those who did not attend expressed both a deep interest and concern in the local forests, the animals who live in them, and their fate, and a deeply ingrained fear and distrust of the Bureau of Land Management. It would not be honest to pretend surprise at this lack of faith- really, "fear and distrust" conveys it far better. I suppose that's still a step up from "fear and loathing", but clearly if the local populace is to develop some real trust in the BLM, whatever the stated intentions of that agency might be, the BLM has a great deal to live down. Again, it would be less than honest to pretend that this is news to anyone concerned in this project, it's process, and it's outcome- the fate of the forests.

That acknowledged, the principles brought to the whole Northwest timber harvest quagmire by Franklin and Johnson really offer the possibility of forestry operations that are genuinely accepted by the public, and the beginning of the process of reconciliation between the community and the BLM.

"Over the long run, we believe this program can provide an acceptable pathway to sustained yield on federal forestlands in the Pacific Northwest." Franklin and Johnson, "A Restoration Framework for Federal Forests in the Northwest", Journal of Forestry, December 2012

This may well be the case if the principles are actually conscientiously implemented. There is another possibility as well, that as many suspect, these principles will fall to expediency and greed, along with commercially valuable and completely irreplaceable old trees.

In the end it will be commercial logging interests who are running the chainsaws and the heavy equipment out in the woods. These companies have repeatedly demonstrated their total willingness to devastate sensitive ecological areas (read, forests). Perhaps these parties are making a deep and honest effort to understand Franklin and Johnson's biological and ethical principles, and then again maybe they will say whatever is necessary to get the men and equipment on the ground and make however much money they can.

Conjecture aside, it is the BLM and only the BLM in this case who is in the position to see that the stated principles are actually adhered to. Once again, history is not unduly encouraging, but the whole Pilot Project dialogue is actually quite promising, especially the area of accountability and transparency.

If the BLM really walks its talk this time, there will be significant progress along "an acceptable pathway to sustained yield on federal forestlands in the Pacific Northwest." If, on the other hand, this all appears to be the widely expected scenario in which the BLM talks one way and walks another...

According to Luke Ruediger, one of the citizens working with the BLM in the interest of, at least, accountability,

"Unfortunately, the agency has refused to review the majority of the mark in unit 19-4 although a few more large trees have been re-marked for retention due to the efforts of community members. The agency has also initiated some research into the age of large trees in the unit, but John Gerritsma indicated at the end of the day that unless they find major problems they will not commit to retaining all trees that are found to be over 150 years in direct violation of statements made in the EA and dry forest restoration principals."

This is exactly the kind of failure of integrity that could doom any possibility of public acceptance of the kind Franklin and Johnson write about.

Ruediger, again:

"The EA makes it clear that a large amount of northern spotted owl habitat. 611 acres of nesting, roosting, and foraging (NRF) habitat is proposed to be treated in Alternative 3 (the helicopter alternative), of this 611 acres 214 acres will be downgraded to dispersal. This means if the BLM approves the heli units far more big trees will fall and far more owl habitat will be severely impacted. For reference Alternative 2 proposes treating 378 acres of NRF habitat and will downgrade 57 acres."

The BLM is not exempt from the legal injunction to preserve the habitat of the Northern Spotted Owl.

It is clear that if occasional departures from the Franklin and Johnson principles are indulged in, much more money can be made by the commercial timber sector, and it must be tempting to give into expediency. Again, these departures from principle are exactly the kind of thing that will leave us stranded in the nobody-wins quagmire the Northwest timber situation has been in recent decades.

I heartily encourage the BLM to make the most of this opportunity for trust-building. Please do the responsible thing and operate by the principles so clearly stated.

Thank you.

