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Western Oregon Plan Revisions
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The BLM Draft Environmental Impact Statement set of books has been very difficult reading. There is not an alternative that would be best or preferred for either the forests or the communities that would be impacted. What all of the alternatives show is a great deal of greed and lack of thought. BLM has distorted the Purpose Statement of the O&C Act, by omitting the very important words "protecting watersheds, regulating stream flow, and contributing to the economic stability of local communities and industries, and providing recreational facilities." Many of Western Oregon's forests do need to be thinned; thinned, not clearcut. Regeneration harvesting, sustained yield forest management, is basically clearcutting, just a new name. We want well-managed public lands. Each of the alternatives calls for removal of too many mature trees per acre. What we really need to accomplish in western Oregon is to thin our overstocked, fire-prone second and third growth forests and realize that there is value in small-diameter timber.

There are many indirect effects that would occur from regeneration harvesting:

INVASIVE PLANTS Invasive plants and brush would overpower any young conifers. By removing too much cover, the invasive plants would be given an advantage to take over. Just fly over old clearcuts in the spring when they are yellow with Scotch broom. Heavy equipment operators are not going to clean their equipment between sites. Invasive plants and diseases will be spread around. Weed free straw mulch is often not weed free. By taking fewer trees per site, there would be a less drastic change in the exposure to sunlight, giving invasives less of a head start. Page 48 of Volume I says Invasive Plants would be controlled. Not true.

FIRE Any of the alternatives would only reduce fire hazard for the first few years, in each site, when there isn't anything left to burn. That is like scarping off all houses in the urban/forest interface so there won't be any houses burned in the next wildfire. In reality, brush comes back faster than marketable conifers after any kind of disturbance, whether natural or human caused. On page 772, is an admission that most Alternatives would increase the chances of and severity of wildfires.

GLOBAL WARMING With global warming happening, whether it is caused by humans or not, there is less snowpack retention. A mixed age forest with mature trees in the mix will survive better than an even aged young stand, especially one planted with off-site seedlings. If less trees are taken per acre, and the trees with the best genetics left growing, there wouldn't be any need to plant. Large healthy trees need to be left behind to protect the soil and act as fog-to-drip condensers. With hotter summers and less available water, the trees will grow abnormally fast at the start of season, run out of water in the summer, and in their distress, be attacked by insects, and/or burn in wildfires. More green, healthy retention trees would lessen this downward spiral. Many of our rare wildflowers won't survive the drastic conditions of regeneration harvesting. Plant communities are not able to get up and move in order to save themselves. Our Northwest forests are the lungs and filters for a wider area than simply where they grow. Nothing will sequester and offset carbon dioxide better than healthy forests. A

more gentle and take less approach would be safer and healthier for the forests and the human residents of Oregon. True thinning is sustainable, and harvesting in such a way does not ruin the forest for decades, create a fire hazard, and repel tourists. It is possible to manage the forest, extracting resources in a sustainable way.

PROPERTY VALUE Trashing BLM lands, which abut most private lands in western Oregon on at least one side, will lower property values. Would those who wrote the new WOPR want to live next to BLM lands? The maps provided, without specific markings, are vague about what would be happening next to individual properties. Was this an omission to frustrate readers?

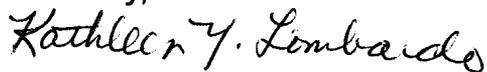
TOURISM Flocks of tourists come to western Oregon from all over the world. Whether it is our beautiful forests that they come to see, or not, that is subconsciously part of the experience that goes home with them, calling them back for another vacation. Clearcuts in our midst will leave a sour impression. If all of the small towns and communities in western Oregon, with residents who have worked hard for years to attract tourists, are now surrounded by clearcuts of various stages, what does that say about the inhabitants of these areas? Those people have a "clearcut mentality" and "they don't know what they are doing". The resources that are taken away, will not return an equal amount of value to the counties' financial bases. In five years' times, the fire hazard will be worse than before. Now, BLM can say it won't be done all at once, it won't be regeneration harvested at the same time. No, the insanity will go on and on, until there is a new plan. Instead of forests, we will have brushfields. And, we will have lost much of what tourists came to see.

EROSION There was a lack of information about slope percentage required to withdraw lands that could slump or have landslides, whether into riparian areas, or onto homes below. Without enough healthy trees, there will be more damaging flooding. After the Chicago slide, south of Takilma, a 1997 flood event removed a 150 X 30 foot section of riverbank. It caused the house to be removed, and almost undermined the main road in and out for many residents. The area that slid had been clearcut. The property damage was extensive. The WOPR allows too much to be taken in riparian areas. With our native salmon and steelhead having so much trouble surviving, it would be extremely irresponsible to be damaging their habitat now.

ECONOMICS This is actually a very bad time for producing more lumber in hopes of making money, while the housing market is down. The housing market will most likely stay down as long as our country remains at wars in other countries. If the 1980's were supposed to be somewhat of a timber based economy, why do many who lived in the Illinois Valley then, remember it as a "recession"? We had a business that people needed and wanted, but could not afford.

After all that money and effort, the WOPR has earned an F. This needs to be rethought and rewritten, with more than resource extraction in focus.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Y. Lombardo