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Willamette University College of Law Environmental Law Society
245 Winter St. SE
Salem, OR 97301

**Willamette University Environmental Community Outreach
Society**

c/o Office of Student Activities
900 State St.
Salem, OR 97301

RECEIVED
JAN 09 2008

November 20, 2007

Bureau of Land Management
Western Oregon Plan Revisions Office
333 SW 1st Avenue
Portland OR 97204

Re: BLM Western Oregon Plan Revisions

Dear Bureau of Land Management,

We are very concerned with the management plan revisions currently proposed for the six Bureau of Land Management (BLM) districts in Western Oregon under the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR). The preferred alternative in BLM's WOPR Draft Environmental Impact Statement¹ more than doubles the amount of old-growth logging, and increases clearcutting threefold overall in the first decade of its operation when compared with the "no action" alternative. The WOPR is ecologically unsustainable, scientifically flawed, and contrary to the values important to Oregonians.

BLM lands subject to the WOPR contain some of the best remaining low-elevation forests in Oregon. These lands are important sources of clean air and drinking water, provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife, and are important for their aesthetic and recreational values. The changes the BLM is contemplating will eliminate important Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) protections, which the courts have stated to be the bare minimum necessary to ensure for the survival of the Northern Spotted Owl and other old-growth associated species. Adopting the management changes proposed in the WOPR will lead to water pollution, degraded habitat, increased fire risks and severity, and increased conflict and controversy.

¹ USDI 2007. Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Revision of the Resource Management Plans of the Western Oregon Bureau of Land Management Districts of Salem, Eugene, Roseburg, Coos Bay and the Medford Districts, and the Klamath Falls Resource Area of the Lakeview District. Available at <http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr/index.php> (hereinafter WOPR DEIS)(Last visited November 20, 2007).

The BLM initiated the WOPR as part of a settlement agreement with the American Forest Resource Council and the Association of O&C Counties.² The BLM's stated purpose and need for the WOPR is to "to manage the BLM-administered lands for permanent forest production in conformity with the principles of sustained yield, consistent with the O&C Act."³ We believe that the BLM's interpretation of its statutory mandate under the O&C Act is fundamentally flawed.

The O&C Act requires that O&C lands:
shall be managed . . . for permanent forest production, and the timber thereon shall be sold, cut and removed in conformity with the principal [sic] of sustained yield for the purpose of providing a permanent source of timber supply, protecting watersheds, regulating stream flow, and contributing to the economic stability of local communities and industries, and providing recreational facilities.⁴

By its own terms, the O&C Act requires that the BLM consider watershed protection and recreation together with forest production. WOPR's preferred alternative dramatically reduces riparian buffers on perennial fish bearing streams and rivers and predicts the need to build over 1000 miles of new roads.⁵ These actions will undoubtedly degrade watersheds on BLM lands, many of which are already listed as water-quality impaired under section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act.⁶ The BLM must ensure these watersheds are adequately protected by the explicit mandate of the O&C Act.

Moreover, some lands that the BLM manages in Western Oregon that will be subject to WOPR are not subject to the O&C Act at all, but instead are so-called "Public Domain" lands. Congress' mandate to the BLM is that these lands be managed under the Federal Lands Management and Policy Act, therefore they should not be subject to WOPR's stated purpose and need. The BLM should specifically address this distinction in its analysis.

Notably, the WOPR ignores the strong scientific consensus that anthropogenic global climate change is a very real and present problem.⁷ The BLM instead "assumes no change in climate conditions, because the specific nature of regional climate change over the next decade remains speculative."⁸ The BLM should consider role of old-growth forests in long-term carbon dioxide sequestration and consider the altered fire effects caused by global climate change in its analysis.

Most Americans want federal land managers to manage publicly-owned lands by thinning second-growth forests, safeguarding communities from wildfire, and protecting what

² *American Forest Resource Council et al. v. Clarke*, Civil No. 94-1031-TPJ (D.D.C. 2003)

³ WOPR DEIS at 3.

⁴ 43 U.S.C.A. § 1181(a) (West 2007).

⁵ WOPR DEIS at 585.

⁶ 33 U.S.C.A. § 1313(d).

⁷ See e.g., IPCC Fourth Assessment Synthesis Report, Summary for Policy Makers, available at <http://www.ipcc.ch/> (Last visited November 20, 2007).

⁸ WOPR DEIS at 491.

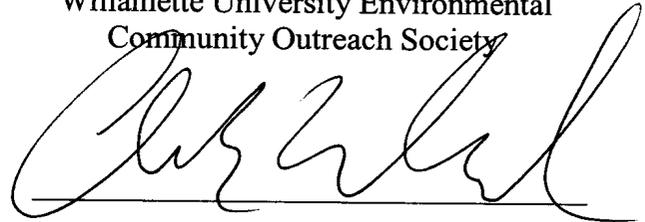
remains of our old-growth forests. By focusing on previously logged public forestlands the BLM could provide wood to local mills while improving conditions for fish and wildlife.

Instead, the WOPR will undoubtedly inflame controversy by increasing old-growth logging for short-term economic benefit. We believe that the BLM should protect remaining old-growth forests and consider alternatives to the WOPR' preferred alternative that focus active management of BLM lands in younger stands. The BLM can and should fulfill its statutory mandate under the O&C Act through restoration thinning projects that benefit watersheds, create jobs, and generate wood products without resorting to unsustainable old-growth logging.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Snell
Willamette University Environmental
Community Outreach Society



Chuck Brushwood
Willamette University College of Law
Environmental Law Society



Natalie Sashkin
Willamette University Focus the Nation

CC: Governor Ted Kulongoski, Oregon Congressional delegation

Governor Ted Kulongoski

160 State Capitol, 900 Court Street, Salem, OR 97301

Senator Ron Wyden

1220 SW 3rd Ave., Suite 585, Portland, OR 97204

Senator Gordon Smith

121 SW Salmon St., Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204

Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-4th)

405 East 8th Ave. #2030, Eugene, OR 97401

Rep. Greg Walden (R-2nd)

843 East Main Street, Ste 400, Medford, OR 97504

Rep. Earl Blumenhauer (D-3rd)

729 N.E. Oregon St., Suite 115, Portland, OR 97232

Rep. Darlene Hooley (D-5th)

315 Mission Street SE #101, Salem, Oregon 97302

Rep. David Wu (D-1st)

620 SW Main, Suite 606, Portland, OR 97205

Genna Louise Robertson-Hall [Electronic Signature]
Genna Robertson-Hall
Willamette University College of Liberal Arts
Tillamook County, Oregon Resident

Hannah Wells [Electronic Signature]
Hannah Wells
Willamette University College of Liberal Arts
Multnomah County, Oregon Resident