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January 9, 2008

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BLM- Western Oregon Plan Revisions Office
P.O. Box 2965
Portland, OR 97208

Dear WOPR Evaluators:

As a small woodland owner in Josephine County, I am writing to sincerely question fundamental assertions made in Mr. Shepard's website letter inviting public comment on the WOPR proposal and in the draft EIS "Summary" describing the purpose and need for the action being proposed.

The concept that language in the O & C Act calling for sustained timber yield somehow justifies reduced protection of late-succession and old-growth forest systems and that harvesting portions of these relatively few public stands will best "benefit" 18 western Oregon counties does not stand up under any measure of scrutiny.

I have yet to see any respectable, peer-accepted scientific response (either within the EIS, anyplace on the WOPR website, or elsewhere) to the February 15, 2002 letter signed by economics professors specializing in natural-resource and economic-development issues at leading universities in Oregon, Washington, Montana and Northern California. Nor to the cited letter dated September 4, 2001 by other qualified Pacific Northwest scientists. Both letters (convenience copies attached), together with the studies they reference, demonstrate why the so-called "benefit" claim is false with respect to cutting down any of these these 195+ year old trees except to marginally increase timber profits for a few years at the expense of our children and our children's children.

The recently published Register-Guard guest opinion by a retired BLM Chief of Forestry Planning correctly indicts the unrealistic explanation of why a land use plan revision is needed for the acreage managed by your agency. He urges starting all over with a more balanced and fair statement of purpose. A copy is also enclosed.

My wife and I own 75 largely timbered Josephine County acres surrounded by checkerboard O & C land. Over the years we have planted an enormous number of trees on our previously logged property, as well as pre-commercially thinning many other acres, all with highly encouraging results. In the meantime, during the years that we have worked and lived part time in the Applegate Valley, we have had the pleasure of meeting more and more and more enterprising families moving into southwestern Oregon from elsewhere, buying property, contributing to economic expansion and thriving of our local community. One of the principle attractions is the landscape represented by thousands of acres of BLM lands with their older

forests, remarkable wild life, lovely watersheds and our common understanding that the Northwest Forest Plan was in place to protect that in the future. Wildfire reduction efforts in our area by the BLM have been welcomed and done with efficiency and skill. Thinning and taking trees from previously logged areas makes sense, not clear cutting.

Your "interactive map" shows the relatively small remnant of isolated dark green groves containing these two-century old trees among which my family and friends often walk, encountering many other visitors to these ancient giants. I suppose our experience is replicated in other BLM Districts throughout the area. The true economic values that these remaining cathedral-like patches represent is well described in the attached letter from Professor Hagen and his colleagues. The short term board feet sale benefit advocated by Mr. Shepard and the EIS statement of purpose is incredibly short-sighted.

If I may be permitted to draw a comparison from an example on your own WOPR website, I would like to call your attention to the map example of Northwest Portland and your use of the aerial photo to explain why adjacent property owners in different blocks may legitimately have different intentions for their own land, thereby drawing a parallel with O & C checkerboard patterned property that your agency manages. Legally correct but, as I am sure that all of your Portland managers are aware, the enormous growth and economic vitality of "The Pearl" and surrounding area was anticipated only by a few visionaries who saw the potential to attract newcomers ("build it and they will come") when most of the rest of us saw only a rundown warehouse and fading industrial area.

Similarly, the nature and attraction of the old growth ecosystems throughout BLM-administered land in SW Oregon is a significant magnet for well-heeled, capable newcomers migrating from other parts of the nation who are going to be the true, long term "benefit" to the area (to use the words of the EIS). The following description of the Applegate Valley from the Heritage Forest website seem apt and prophetic, based upon my experience with what has and is continuing to happen in Portland:

"The Applegate is also a microcosm for the changing economy of the western United States. While still dependent on natural resources, the valley's rural economy increasingly depends on a new generation of businesses built around the scenic mountain views, clear-rushing rivers and outstanding quality of life. Yet a new plan by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) could reverse protection for some of the most accessible and visible lands in the valley.

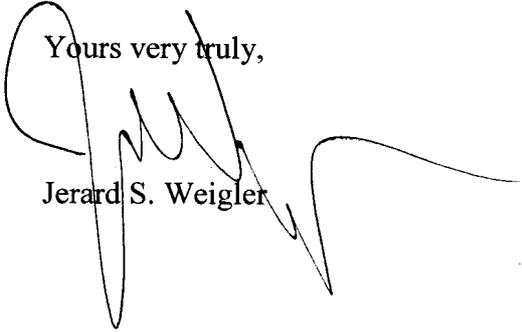
The agency's current Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR) would weaken protections for these publicly-owned lands, including old-growth forests in the Applegate Valley and throughout western Oregon. The BLM plan is out of step with the economic trend that is moving communities away from the boom and bust of intensive resource extraction and towards more sustainable economies. "

The far better view of what can be done to benefit these southwestern Oregon counties is contained in a recent Oregonian op-ed piece by former deputy U.S.F.S. chief Jim Furnish describing enlightened practices for a radically different forest management approach he oversaw in the Siuslaw National Forest during the late 1990's:

"In just a few years , management of the Siuslaw National Forest went from being loathed by environmentalists to being praised. Timber harvest activity remained lively, but was designed to nurture existing mature and old-growth trees. Logging was limited to small-diameter trees in the overcrowded stands growing in previously clear-cut areas. This placed ecology before economics."

The WOPR premise, allegedly utilizing the O&C legislation mandate to promote the "interests" of these Counties, is shortsighted, strongly opposed by a very large majority of the citizenry and should be scrapped.

Yours very truly,


Jerard S. Weigler

cc: Oregon Congressional delegation:

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