

# Common ground exists

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By STEVE PEDERY

**W**ith all the controversy being generated by the Bush administration's Western Oregon Plan Revisions and efforts to boost old-growth logging on Bureau of Land Management lands, it might be hard for the average Oregonian to imagine there being much consensus on forest policy today. In reality, however, there is a great deal of common ground between conservationists, responsible land managers and forward-thinking timber industry leaders. Unfortunately, in his Sept. 30 opinion column, David Schott, a spokesman for industrial logging interests, seemed intent on calling names rather than finding solutions.

In his column, Schott wrote that the "extremist environmental movement is solely to blame" for the economic state of rural timber counties in Oregon. The Bush administration has joined in the finger-pointing, seeking to portray their rewrite of forest management rules for BLM lands in Western Oregon as a windfall for rural schools and libraries. But it is really

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a devil's bargain.

The plan would remove over 2 million acres of publicly owned land from the science-based management of the Northwest Forest Plan. It would lead to a 700 percent increase in old-growth logging and a return to widespread clearcutting, while weakening safeguards for rivers and wildlife. Funding education by sacrificing our children's natural heritage is the truly extreme plan and one that Oregonians will not support.

In the decade and a half since the Northwest Forest Plan was adopted, public attitudes in Oregon have shifted dramatically. Simply put, Oregonians will not stand for a return to forest management that allows 400-year-old trees to be clearcut. The logging industry may long for the "cut and run" days of the 1970s and '80s, but the public has moved on.

Today the overwhelming majority of Oregonians want salmon, clean

water, wildlife and recreation to receive a higher priority than logging on our public lands because they realize the benefits these natural assets provide. Over the past decade tourism and recreation have become the lifeblood of communities in the Rogue Valley and throughout Southern Oregon. Protecting the places where fishermen, hikers and whitewater boaters come to spend tourist dollars is common sense. Spoiling these places with clearcuts and muddied streams is a radical plan that puts our economic future at risk.

Schott's attacks paint a picture of a polarized, all-or-nothing debate over logging. Fortunately, Oregonians do not have to choose between clearcutting old-growth forests or losing our libraries and schools. The real choice is between adopting a scientifically sound, rational approach to managing our forests or buying into the Bush administration's plan for the kind of reckless logging Oregon hasn't seen in two decades.

There are places in Oregon where conservation-based management of our public lands is working. In the

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Siuslaw National Forest, Oregon Wild, the U.S. Forest Service, loggers, local elected officials and others came together in the early 1990s to craft a compromise plan for the future of this area. What resulted was a common-sense vision to halt old-growth logging and logging in pristine roadless areas. Instead, managers focus on conservation-based thinning projects in younger stands, with a goal of improving habitat for fish and wildlife while still producing timber and jobs for the local community.

That strategy has paid off. In recent years the Siuslaw has won three national awards for responsible forest management, including "Breaking the Gridlock" and "Rise to the Future" for their thinning program. They haven't had a timber sale appealed in a decade, and yet they consistently produce as much timber as any other national forest in Western Oregon.

Projects like those in the Siuslaw are now taking off in other areas,

projects sold for double their asking price. And these projects are moving forward without the divisive, time-consuming controversy that the WOPR is sure to cause. Opposing drawn-out, bitter and expensive plans in favor of smart, economically sustainable ways to log now is not radical, it's common sense.

In Schott's attack on Oregon Wild and other conservation groups, he blames advocates for clean water and wildlife for all of rural Oregon's problems. The reality is that most conservation groups today support smart logging that provides jobs and timber while protecting the future economic opportunities that preserved public lands provide.

If Schott and his supporters truly care about finding a sustainable way to fund schools and rural services, he will join with us in trying to advance these goals, rather than cheering for a misguided, backward-looking scheme to return to old-growth logging.

*Steve Pedery says everything I want to say & much better than I can. You don't have to reinvent the wheel - just adopt successful strategies that are already working in other areas.*

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