

The mission of the Olympic Forest Coalition is to protect and restore forest and aquatic ecosystems on the public lands of the Olympic Peninsula.



Olympic Forest Coalition

Spring 2009

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No question, these financial times are hurting conservation organizations. OFCO has cut its budget 30% and may need to cut further. We know you are hurting too, but please consider a generous donation to OFCO so we can continue doing our great work!

We are including a self-addressed envelope for your convenience or, if you prefer, you can donate to OFCO online on our Web site [www.olympicforest.org](http://www.olympicforest.org).

## Washington State Conservationists Call for Pacific Northwest Forest Climate Reserve

by Bonnie Phillips

*"Protect and keep connected the remaining intact forests and watersheds in our national forests, including old growth and mature forests, roadless areas, old and mature trees in younger stands, and early seral, unlogged natural stands" and*

*"Restore the natural ecological resilience of forest ecosystems so they are better able to adapt to the stresses of global warming"*

These are the main conclusions reached by Washington state's conservation community whose focus is protecting and restoring our national forests.

In 2007 and 2008, many activists spent a great deal of time understanding and commenting on various draft legislations floated by Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR). There was much to dislike about both approaches and although some organizations felt it was worth trying to make the eventual legislation better, others felt it was a waste of time. There was also concern that if we had conversations with our own congressional delegation about such legislation, we could not all speak with one voice.

In fact, the varying very strong opinions on whether or not thinning could be considered restoration kept some groups from talking with each other in any sensible fashion. Last summer we decided to try to change that dynamic and after a few meetings and conference calls, we went to work on our common themes.

In early January, we decided unanimously that we needed our own vision for what we wanted our forests to look like. Entering into this discussion was the need to take climate change into account—including how this would affect our forests and those critters which depend on healthy forest ecosystems for their very existence.

The final document is too long to print in this newsletter, but we have posted it on our Web site at [www.olympicforest.org/196.pdf](http://www.olympicforest.org/196.pdf).

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Washington Forests Vision.....Continued from Page 1

The major points really speak for themselves:

1. Establish a Pacific Northwest Forest Climate Reserve
2. Protect Large, Mature and Old-growth Forests and Trees on Federal Lands
3. Restore Protections for Roadless Wild Forests
4. Reinstate Strong Ecosystem Protection through Forest Planning Regulations
5. Retain and Improve Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) Protections
6. Increase Funding for Watershed Restoration
7. Protect Public Lands from Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Damage
8. Maximize Agency Wilderness Recommendations in Forest Plan Revisions
9. Support Local Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River Designations
10. Ensure Money for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

This entire document, well worth reading, will be presented to our full Washington congressional delegation. We will use it also to measure legislation coming from Oregon and other Pacific Northwest states. Just before press time, Senator Wyden came up with his draft legislation, which is really bad. A summary appears below and a full evaluation by Oregon Wild is available on our Web site at [www.olympicforest.org/197.pdf](http://www.olympicforest.org/197.pdf).

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## New Draft of Wyden Legislation Bad News for Northwest Forests

by Bonnie Phillips

Shortly before press time, Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) posted his latest draft legislation which purports to save very old trees—defined as 120 years old on wet, westside forests like the Olympic and 150 years on dry forests—but, alas, not forests. It would allow a collaborative group named by the government to waive National Forest Management Act (NFMA) rules on big "restoration" thinning projects and would provide very insignificant protection for aquatic resources. Most scientists believe that all forests 80 years and older (not just the *trees* but the entire *forests*) should NOT be logged and all naturally regenerated forests, regardless of age, also should be left alone. Although this bill (62 pages and very poorly written) specifically targets Oregon, there is a long-standing belief among conservationists and political leaders that Wyden will attempt to extend this prescription at least to Washington state and to get support from our senators.

OFCO's board believes that this bill is so bad as to be unsalvageable and that responsible conservationists should try to kill it. That discussion will happen among Washington conservationists sometime later in May.

Oregon Wild (OW) has developed a good summary of this legislation and we have posted it on our Web site for those interested in learning more (see [www.olympicforest.org/197.pdf](http://www.olympicforest.org/197.pdf)). The only real difference between OW's and OFCO's evaluation is that we don't feel there is good science behind the belief that thinning wet, westside forests helps the ecosystem—at least not the kind of logging we have seen on the Olympic Peninsula.

### DEAR READERS,

We are considering names for the OFCO newsletter, and would like to hear suggestions for a title from you. Please let us know your ideas!

Also, some of you are receiving both this printed newsletter as well as an abbreviated e-version. If you are not receiving the e-news now but would like to, please send us your e-mail address.

Please reply to [bonnie@olympicforest.org](mailto:bonnie@olympicforest.org).

## President's Column

### Vision at Slab Camp

by John Woolley, OFCO President

It worked! OFCO's collaborative work with the Forest Service has resulted in a little re-wilding of the Olympics by enabling decommission of the last mile-and-a-half of FS Road 2875, and in progress toward protecting the wetlands at the head of Slab Camp Creek. Pacific chorus frogs were sounding off during our late April visit. Nice to have "thinking like a mountain" actually become a reality. We are acting appropriately for the long run.

Snow at 2,500 feet was welcome, as my brain is programmed for "keeping water in the mountains." We hiked what is now the last half-mile of Road 2875 to the Deer Ridge/Slab Camp Trailhead. A vehicle was stuck in the hollow where the road crosses Canyon Creek. Following up on our visit last November, we went on to hike the Deer Ridge Trail from the original trailhead at Canyon Creek Campground to Sea Blush Point, looped back on the old shortcut trail, and observed:

- Rock barriers protecting Slab Camp Creek wetlands are improved.
- No new erosions, and the Pacific chorus frogs were in full April chorus. (They sing only in January and April, according to Bob Pyle.)
- Straw on the decommissioned part of old 2875 has settled in well.
- Rock boundaries at Canyon Creek Campground, much abused by dirt vehicles, are still effective in preventing renewed damage in the "archaeological site."
- Gravel pits are still successfully protected by boulders to prevent vehicle dumping. This has reduced gunnery activity at the sites, though family rifle recreation continues—six vehicles were present.

Have we enabled users to show "more respect for the resource," as called for in OFCO's mission?



Forest Service Road 2875 above Slab Camp after decommissioning project, successfully re-wilding the Gray Wolf River valley.

— photo by Jim Scarborough

### Other Visions:

**Wilderness Vision:** OFCO has identified 14 potential Wilderness Study Areas in Olympic National Forest. Rugged ridges and Late Successional Reserve (LSR) forest dominate these 14 areas. A Trail Guide is available from OFCO's Web site at [www.olympicforest.org/hiking\\_guide.pdf](http://www.olympicforest.org/hiking_guide.pdf).

OFCO's Middle Dungeness Canyon Wilderness proposal has complexity. Steep and exposed trails pass through this unusual Douglas-fir climax community. Rock outcrops (locally referred to as dirty faces) host Rocky Mountain junipers and a variety of flowers. Trail use is low—mountain bikers and some hikers. Can we have Wilderness and mountain bikes?

**Sadie Creek Vision (DNR lands):** Salmon wetlands are threatened by the "need" for a public shooting range. Local citizens, Audubon and OFCO support presenting Clallam County with hard science in defense of ecological integrity, which is not compatible with a shooting range. The proposal is currently on hold, until Shooting Range Associates members present a viable rebuttal.

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President's Visions.....Continued from Page 3

**Dabob Bay Vision:** A proposed expansion of a Dabob Bay Natural Area is close to reality. Designation of a Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA) will enhance protection of two existing Natural Area Preserves (NAPs), as well as complement the restoration of the Dabob Creek valley.

**Jefferson County Vision:** Proposed consolidation of DNR forest lands will include land swaps with private timber companies. Jefferson County residents are concerned about consequences that increase development and deforestation. Should county authority be trumped by the state?

Good Vision takes education. OFCO needs your support. You can help us implement our mission, our Vision for the Olympic Peninsula. Your financial support, renewal and encouragement of others to join OFCO enable us to become informed and to help us educate each other.

## Olympic National Forest Announces Preferred Alternative for the Dosewallips Road Washout

by Jim Scarborough

On May 5, the Olympic National Forest belatedly announced to the public the preferred alternative for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) released last summer for proposed rebuilding of the Dosewallips Road after the major washout seven years ago.

The Dose Road has been a perennial concern for OFCO and a regular topic of discussion in this newsletter.

Typically, a draft EIS (DEIS) identifies a preferred alternative, enabling citizen activists to focus their attention when preparing comments rather than studying all options at length. (Some have observed that the Olympic National Forest has shown scant regard for public comments in any case.) During the comment period for the DEIS last summer, over 500 comments were

received. A clear majority, 72 percent, opposed the road in any form and wanted the road to be decommissioned and turned into a trail. Only 28 percent wanted the road reopened.

Now that a preferred alternative has been identified, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service will review and provide the legally necessary biological opinion. In the past, NOAA's letters about this project have been especially scathing. All federal and state agencies that submitted comments opposed the road.

*Alt. C ... would still penetrate the 500-year-old Polly Dyer Grove.*

According to the DEIS, instead of using standard construction practices as described for what was the proposed action (Alt. B), the preferred Alt. C would "narrow the road's footprint to limit the amount of clearing and excavation needed for the proposed construction. This alternative was also developed to minimize impacts to aquatic habitat and riparian function that would otherwise occur ... by allowing gravel recruitment from the high bank by the river."

Alt. C "would generally follow the same alignment as proposed under Alt. B. However, some slight shifts in grade and horizontal alignment may be used to help minimize disturbance in the LSR [Late Successional Reserve] as compared to Alt. B." Logging trees over 80 years old in LSRs is prohibited by the Northwest Forest Plan.

Alt. C would amount to 0.84 mile of new, single-lane road construction with turnouts and would clear 6.5 acres of LSR (versus 7.1 acres in Alt. B). It would still penetrate the 500-year-old Polly Dyer Grove. "Construction would occur over a 3 year period. Construction of retaining walls and potential reinforcement built into fills would minimize the disturbed area."

Estimated cost is \$3.76 million, as opposed to Alt. B's \$2.55 million. So, \$1.2 million extra

would be spent to spare a mere 0.6 acre of LSR. Hmm. Methinks this may have more to do with public relations and trying to keep the thing from sliding off the slope.

Alt. C would entail four Northwest Forest Plan amendments: 1) pre-project survey requirements; 2) protection of murrelet habitat; 3) neutral/beneficial requirement in LSR; and 4) wetland avoidance.

The damaged road at Dosewallips Falls, inside the park, would also be repaired as part of Alt. C at an estimated cost of \$350,000.

Photos of the old-growth forest that would be lost through Alt. C's road construction are available for viewing at

<http://olympicforest.org/gallery-6.htm>.

OFCO, Olympic Park Associates and the Sierra Club continue to watch this process and to comment at every opportunity. The Forest Service expects the final EIS to be released sometime in the fall. There will be a 30-day comment period before the Record of Decision is signed. This is when our groups will begin preparing and then filing our administrative appeal. The next step after that is a lawsuit.

Check our Web site for more information at [www.olympicforest.org](http://www.olympicforest.org).



## "Great Old Broads" Plan Late-June Event at Dosewallips

A new local group or "Broadband" of Great Old Broads for Wilderness is planning a camping/hiking/advocacy trip to the Dosewallips River watershed. This trip will combine learning, service, hiking and laughter into one great adventure resulting in advocacy for preservation of a wild and beautiful place, the magnificent Dosewallips watershed.

Great Old Broads for Wilderness (which welcomes members regardless of age or gender)

was founded in 1989 in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

The trip will begin on Thursday night, June 25, and conclude on Sunday evening, June 28, although participants can modify the times to fit their schedule. There will be speakers to help attendees learn about the area and the Dosewallips Road issue. Delicious meals will also be featured. Those who do not wish to camp may find lodging in local motels or guest lodges.

For more information about the Dosewallips event, or the organization, contact OFCO Board Member Shelley Spalding, (360) 427-7444, [saschar44@gmail.com](mailto:saschar44@gmail.com) or check out [www.greatoldbroads.org](http://www.greatoldbroads.org).

## Proposed Pope/DNR Land Swap Gets Thumbs Down from Goldmark

For the past year, OFCO has been following closely the introduction of a proposal between the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Pope Resources for a land exchange in Jefferson County (see <http://olympicforest.org/193.pdf>.) During all of the public meetings held, DNR has received comments from citizens concerned about the increased risk of development of eastern Jefferson County's timber lands posed by such an exchange.

The Jefferson County Commissioners, at the urging of thousands of constituents, sent a letter to Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark rejecting such a proposal, unless several conditions were met.

During a public meeting on May 4, 2009, Peter Goldmark stated that he will not be supporting the land exchange as currently proposed because Pope Resources had failed to convince the Jefferson County Commissioners that this is a "good deal" for the county. Whether this means that the doors are left open to initiate another version of the proposal remains to be seen. OFCO will keep its eye on it.

OFCO applauds the tireless and effective work of our vice president, Connie Gallant, in helping to bring about this interim victory.

## OFCO Proposes Clearcutting Ban to Preserve Murrelet Protection Options

by Marcy Golde

Because the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) budget constraints have postponed completion of a long-term Marbled Murrelet protection strategy as called for in the agency's Habitat Conservation Plan, OFCO is recommending that all clearcutting proposals in murrelet habitat be dropped until such a plan is adopted.

Following a recent meeting of representatives of the environmental community with Commissioner Goldmark, DNR is scheduling a meeting between OFCO board members Marcy Golde and Jill Silver, Charlie Kahle of Audubon Washington, and Paula Swedeen, one of the authors of the 2008 Marbled Murrelet Science Team Report.\* They will be comparing DNR maps of proposed timber sales against the detailed maps of the proposed protection areas in the report.

In late 2008, DNR issued the final version of the report, which addresses the future management of DNR Trust Lands for Marbled Murrelet protection in the Olympic and Pacific Cascade Regions. The Management Strategy identifies a large area on the Olympic Peninsula and in southwest Washington as murrelet habitat. In the summary, the authors state: "The Science Team reviewed the objectives for the marbled murrelet conservation strategy in the Washington Department of Natural Resources' 1997 Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). From these commitments, the Team identified the biological goals for the Long-Term Conservation Strategy to be to manage forest habitat to contribute to 1) a stable or increasing population; 2) an increasing



– Larry Eifert

geographic distribution; and 3) a population that is resilient to disturbance.

"The Science Team recommends that DNR manage 176,000 acres of DNR-managed land on the Olympic Peninsula and in Southwest Washington for the development and maintenance of high-quality nesting habitat for marbled murrelet ..."

In the meantime, nothing has been done toward the completion of the long-term Marbled Murrelet strategy. And unfortunately, only the much smaller area identified through the DNR's HCP (section on Interim Marbled Murrelet Strategy) is currently being

protected. The longer the decision is delayed, the more habitat identified for protection in the long-term strategy is likely to be irreparably lost through clearcutting. OFCO's analysis has shown that in 2008 in the Olympic Experimental State Forest and 2007 in Pacific Cascade Region, a total of 1,277 acres of potential long-term murrelet habitat was clearcut. Clearly these figures give an incomplete picture, but they do give an idea of the ongoing loss of habitat.

OFCO recognizes that the budget shortfall has forced layoffs of scientists working on this project and is postponing its implementation. Given this reality, the immediate need is to preserve all protection options by suspending all clearcutting; however, careful thinning from below for biodiversity could be possible and a positive thing for the development of Marbled Murrelet habitat.

*\*Recommendations and Supporting Analysis of Conservation Opportunities for the Marbled Murrelet Long-Term Conservation Strategy* by Raphael, Nelson, Swedeen, Ostwald, Flotlin, Desimone, Horton, Harrison, Escene, and Jaross; [www.dnr.wa.gov/ResearchScience/Topics/TrustLandsHCP/Pages/marbled\\_murrelet.aspx](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/ResearchScience/Topics/TrustLandsHCP/Pages/marbled_murrelet.aspx)

## Volunteers Needed to Help OFCO Monitor Back Roads of South Fork Skok

by Kevin Geraghty

This summer OFCO will be conducting a walking survey of undrivable federal roads in the South Fork Skokomish watershed.

The "Skok" probably has the greatest visibility of any watershed on the forest. A history of abusive logging has led to a severely aggraded bed and chronic flooding along the lower river floodplain, non-federal land which is home to private residents and to the Skokomish Tribe. The Skok is the most important river to flow into Hood Canal, and its freshwater contribution is vital to the aquatic health of the entire Canal. Historically, it had the most significant anadromous fish runs on the Canal. Re-establishing these imperiled runs is a priority for the Skokomish Tribe and for Hood Canal restoration efforts. The Skok's visibility has made it a magnet for aquatic restoration dollars and for restoration planning efforts. Over the last five years, a high proportion of the Olympic National Forest's (ONF) road decommissioning and aquatic upgrading expenditures have gone there.

Against this background, our field surveying will focus on two sorts of roads: 1) roads which have been decommissioned as part of ongoing Skok restoration efforts and are no longer system roads; and 2) system roads which are not currently drivable, either by intent (level 1 "storage" roads) or by neglect (level 2 roads, which are officially drivable, high-clearance roads).

Although the Skok is arguably the most studied and monitored watershed on the ONF, the parts of the extended road system that cannot be reached by automobile are in fact still under-monitored. Walking roads is time consuming, and the ONF has few "boots on the ground." We hope OFCO can help fill this knowledge gap. Significant aquatic risks often lurk undetected on undrivable system roads, and our system road surveying will focus on those which, by virtue of their landscape

position, are likeliest to conceal such problems. On decommissioned roads, we will be most interested in those segments which have been tested by at least one big winter flood. We will be looking for any evidence that the decommissionings were not done properly, or were not successful in reducing sediment delivery into streams to natural background levels. Recent road removals on the ONF have generally been done to fairly exacting standards, but some earlier work does not meet modern standards.

Mike Haggerty, the fisheries hydrologist who is under contract to OFCO for work on state lands, will be collaborating with me on a protocol (survey form) for the monitoring work. Wildlands CPR, one of our partner organizations in the Washington Watershed Restoration Initiative Coalition, developed a survey form for use in tracking implementation monitoring of the work done through the Forest Legacy Fund. Mike will use some of that information for our final survey form. He also will be producing special maps and entering data into GIS. In mid-May, a small group of our board members will spend a day in the field with Mike and me to test the protocol and to learn what to look for. Then we'll modify the survey form, as necessary, and be ready to start the program—with your help.

**We are looking for volunteers for the surveying project this summer.**

Volunteers will receive training and should expect an enjoyable time walking the ground in seldom-visited portions of the Skokomish watershed. Contact OFCO Executive Director Bonnie Phillips at [bonnie@olympicforest.org](mailto:bonnie@olympicforest.org) or (360) 456-8793 for more information.

## WRIA 19 Plan Faces Powerful Opponents—Your Help Needed!

by Coleman Byrnes

In 1999 the Washington state legislature passed legislation that divided the state into Watershed Resource and Inventory Areas (WRIAs). This legislation allowed for citizens, property owners, treaty tribes, Public Utility Districts, local government bodies, and other stake holders to meet and establish plans that set water quality and quantity standards for their respective WRIA. Tribes and governmental bodies have veto power over the proposed plans and, in case of a veto, the Department of Ecology (DOE) will set the standards. Most WRIAs now have plans that are in the implementation stage.

WRIA 19, however, which includes all rivers and streams between (but not including) the Elwha River and the Makah Indian Reservation, is still involved in a very contentious planning process. WRIA 19 has a small population, little in the way of agriculture and virtually no industry. The largest employer is a state prison. But it does have a lot of commercial forest land. There is some Department of Natural Resources and some Forest Service land, but the greater portion is owned by private timber companies opposed to any change in the status quo. These companies successfully lobbied the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration not to label any fish stocks in WRIA 19 as endangered, and so these anadromous runs lack the basic protections that some fish stocks of Puget Sound and coastal waters now enjoy.

The citizens who were involved with drafting the WRIA plan decided to set minimum flow standards and have called for rigorous monitoring of water quality standards and fish populations. We were helped in this endeavor by DOE scientific personnel. The timber industry is vehemently opposed to both minimum flows and monitoring. They have lobbied DOE, the Clallam County government, and the local P.U.D. in an attempt to derail and stop the process. The citizens have so far refused to back down. As a result, the

timber industry has withdrawn from the WRIA process and has threatened to initiate a lawsuit if the governing bodies accept the plan.

The next step will involve presenting the plan to the Clallam County Commission. Public testimony before the commissioners promises to be very acrimonious and letters of support for the WRIA 19 plan will be appreciated. Contact them at [commissioners@co.clallam.wa.us](mailto:commissioners@co.clallam.wa.us); fax (360) 417-2493; phone (360) 417-2233, or go to [www.clallam.net/Board/html/board\\_contact.htm](http://www.clallam.net/Board/html/board_contact.htm).



## OFCO Meets with New Commissioner of Public Lands

In late April, Marcy Golde and Bonnie Phillips met with the new Commissioner of Public Lands, Peter Goldmark. The topic of this meeting was our concern that the Landscape Management Plan for the Olympic Experimental State Forest, as required in both the Habitat Conservation Plan and the lawsuit Settlement Agreement, not only is way behind schedule but lacks consensus on just what it should cover.

Although the elements of such a plan are clearly defined in the Habitat Conservation Plan, a legal agreement between the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (aka NOAA Fisheries), the DNR has treated its work on the Landscape Management Plan thus far as a Timber Harvest Plan, with a separate plan for research and monitoring. This is not a holistic approach. The Conservation Caucus agreed to OFCO's preferred alternative and submitted that information to DNR some time ago.

Commissioner Goldmark is going through the difficult process of resetting the course for DNR—that is, revising practices and procedures that OFCO and other environmental activists have long recognized as broken.

At the close of our meeting, Goldmark said he planned to convene a meeting of major stakeholders within the next month or two in order to discuss how to proceed. The financial bad times, with many DNR employees losing their jobs, will not help with this process but it is our role and desire to continue pushing for a scientifically sound Landscape Management Plan.

- B.P.

## To Catch a Thief

by John Woolley

Finding orange ribbons denoting the start of a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) logging operation, as you hike through a splendid Douglas-fir and cedar forest near your home, is shocking. Returning to find wood poachers in action is enough of a jolt to consider letting the air out of their tires. Or is it? Having heard our approach, they seemed to have made themselves scarce, and only silence filled the air around their vehicle. Most likely they were watching us from the woods, as we memorized their license plate. I might even know these wood poachers. What's the next step?

We drifted away, following the wear marks of their slow driving trips in to gather the wood rounds of the dry-habitat vital Douglas-fir snag that they had cut down. The rounds were two feet in diameter. Their access route was subtle. The next morning I notified the DNR office, while my friend called the sheriff. We did what we could, and should. Do not confront thieves.

Later that morning, my friend arrived at my place with near-screaming tires. Sheriff's deputies had called him to say that they were having trouble finding the subtle access. We arrived to find two sheriff's department squad cars and a red DNR vehicle. The deputies had also called the DNR folks, who apparently were already on their

way to the scene. While they hiked to the poaching site, a sheriff's deputy was already talking to the suspect on the phone.

But no arrest could be made, nor could any prosecution take place, since neither we nor law enforcement personnel had seen the culprits actually in the process of committing a crime. My friend and I had decided not to try, even though we had stood by their vehicle. Perhaps the spirit of Ruby Holt's *The Untamed Olympics* has permeated my mind after 37 years around here. No matter: access is supposedly blocked now. My friend and I will check again on our next cross-country hike into the beautiful forest.

Both DNR and the sheriff's office checked with us later. Both thanked us for our vigilance, but did not encourage us to have confronted the thieves. What do you think?



## Bear Creek Saddle and Newbury Creek Timber Projects Come to Pass

by Jim Scarborough

OFCCO has opted not to pursue further administrative appeal or litigation of the Bear Creek Saddle timber project, located on the Pacific Ranger District of Olympic National Forest (ONF) just north of the Sol Duc River and west of Lake Crescent.

This controversial commercial thinning project encompassed the full range of problems we've seen in recent proposals put forth by ONF's timber program. OFCCO appealed the project to Region 6, and soon after that appeal was denied, we filed our first and (to date) only lawsuit against the Forest Service in U.S. District Court. The decision

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Bear Creek.....Continued from Page 9

handed down last May validated many of our concerns. Specifically, Judge Ronald B. Leighton ruled that the Forest Service didn't comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and Aquatic Conservation Strategy component of the Northwest Forest Plan in issuing its initial decision to pursue this project.

Thereafter, the Forest Service quickly got to work to remedy the procedural flaws identified by Judge Leighton, releasing a new environmental assessment for Bear Creek Saddle in late 2008. Apparently, as it turns out, government bureaucracies can move with near-lightning speed given sufficient motivation (or coercion from the now-historic Bush administration). Following an additional round of public comments and direct negotiation involving OFCO and other stakeholders, the Forest Service released its second "Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact" for Bear Creek Saddle in late February. Supervisor Dale Hom writes that 471 acres proposed for thinning have been dropped from the project's original iteration, with (re)constructed logging roads reduced by about 1.7 miles. Helicopter use is proposed to reduce the need for additional roads.

OFCO is appreciative that the Forest Service was responsive to some (albeit certainly not all) of our more pressing concerns for this project, as they relate to harm from logging roads and risks to older forest stands in the area. Several of the more troublesome aspects have been remedied, though this is no cause for celebration. Bear Creek Saddle still features 1,718 acres of commercial thinning, ostensibly to "accelerate" old-growth forest characteristics, despite a lack of supporting research in the wet, maritime forests of the Olympic Peninsula. At the conclusion of this project, this acreage will be homogenized and

simplified, leaving an engineered "forest" with biomass accumulation (the most distinctive element of wild Olympic forests) set back by decades. Ten miles of old road grades will be reconstructed accompanied by an additional 0.8 mile of newly bulldozed road on a virgin alignment, with a years-long window before they're closed again—long after the worst aquatic insults have occurred. Equally concerning, landings for helicopter logging are expected to be constructed within Riparian Reserves.

One cannot make an obvious mistake gleam and shine, regardless of the quality of the polish.

Yet one can work to minimize the mistake's negative fallout, which the Forest Service has arguably done to at least a marginal extent. As for OFCO's goals and responsibilities, we have succeeded in raising the profile of Riparian Reserves and of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy on the ONF, both within the agency and among the interested public. Mismanagement of Riparian Reserves continues in slightly reduced form, but it's safe to say we'll be seeing fewer instances of

the Forest Service treating this important forest zoning as a mere inconvenience. Rivers and streams are the veins and arteries of the forest, and it's high time they were recognized and treated as such. For this benighted project, however, we have done about all that we can short of declaring a legal war that would threaten to monopolize and overwhelm OFCO's resources.

Attention turns now to ensuring that the taxpaying public gets something approaching a fair return on the individual thinning sales derived from Bear Creek Saddle in years to come. Given the condition and prognosis of the world economy, there are, of course, no guarantees. The Forest Service's timber program has long been a notorious money-loser for the U.S. Treasury. The state's Department of Natural Resources hasn't sold a thinning project in the Olympic Region since fall 2007, suggesting that if potential buyers for Bear Creek Saddle are hiding beneath a rock,



- Larry Eifert

the timing of their re-emergence into the market sun is uncertain. How ultra-expensive helicopter logging fits into this equation is anyone's guess.

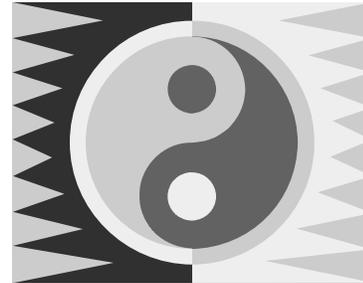
OFCO also very recently appealed a small, post-disturbance (blowdown) logging project on Newbury Creek in the Humptulips Valley for these same tiresome reasons. This sale was put forth under a "categorical exclusion," meaning the agency can avoid an environmental assessment. This is allowed by the Forest Service if the project's acreage is less than 70 acres (thus we tend to see a number of 69-acre sales) and has no more than one-half mile of road construction. OFCO questioned whether the Forest Service would be able to implement this sale as written using less than one-half mile of logging road, but we have no way to prove this except after the fact, when we plan to measure the length of the final road. However, as part of a dispute resolution conference call with the Forest Service, our request that eight acres of salvage logging within a Riparian Reserve be removed was granted. In exchange, we then withdrew our appeal of Newbury. Despite the adversarial circumstances, we do appreciate the Forest Service's willingness to be flexible and to meet us halfway, at least in this instance.

## Upcoming on Olympic National Forest or Putting the Forest Service on the Couch

*by Jim Scarborough*

The split personalities of the U.S. Forest Service on Olympic National Forest apparently aren't merging any time soon, despite the change of administration in Washington, D.C. We've recently become aware of a flurry of new projects from rainshadow to rain forest, ranging from very good to horrid. With one foot tentatively pointed toward a water-centric future and the other firmly planted in the bad old days of industrial forestry, the Forest Service's peculiar angle of repose has to

be an object of wonderment to the concerned citizen.



But that's where OFCO comes in. To assist the public (and for that matter, the Forest Service) in coming to grips with this seemingly chronic schism, we've decided, after careful deliberation, to give these two contradictory and beleaguered agency psyches their own unique monikers. We feel that only with respectful personification of these opposing poles of behavior can the Forest Service begin to reintegrate itself to face our modern, multitudinous challenges and needs. Let the healing process commence.

On the affirmative, ecologically sensitive, and insightful side of the Forest Service, we have Annalee. Miraculously birthed from the agency wreckage of the early 1990s, Annalee concerns herself with aquatic restoration, protection of native forest and wildlife abundance. Although relatively new on the scene and unfairly maligned by certain museum pieces within the agency, an infusion of Legacy Road and stimulus funding has allowed Annalee to pick up the pace of late for the good of the Olympic National Forest. In the past few weeks, the Forest Service has announced major decommissioning projects for a suite of superfluous, damaging roads. Highlights include removal of the upper reaches of FSR 2918 at the South Fork Sol Duc River's headwaters and Pine Mountain Botanical Area. Also being put to bed is the FSR 3050 system on the north slope of Baldy Ridge, above Lake Sutherland. Another road we won't miss is the 2208-100 spur between the East Fork Humptulips River and Moonlight Dome Roadless Area. These are all outstanding projects. Annalee comes through!

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Then there's Biff. This fellow's old school. Biff believes the best way to respond to any situation—be it a strong economy, a weak economy, regenerating forest, depressed salmon runs, problem dandruff—is to get out there and log some trees. Beaten senseless with the listings of half a dozen local creatures under the Endangered Species Act, Biff remains unapologetic. To him, a forest without the roar of chainsaws is just a sorry waste. And so now the public is faced with, as far as we can tell, the single biggest logging project in the 102-year history of Olympic National Forest. Dubbed "West Fork Humptulips" after the river running through the center of this behemoth, it would let ol' Biff thin well over 4,000 acres of second-growth trees in a Late Successional Reserve (LSR), while constructing or reconstructing 23 additional miles of haul roads. Never mind that the Northwest Forest Plan prohibits "programmed timber harvest" in LSR and discourages road building. Meanwhile, a second new logging project in the South Fork Calawah watershed to the north, called "Sitkum," appears nearly as bad. You see, there's a recession on, so Biff must logically add to the sawlog glut.

Ridiculous, isn't it? Mightn't it be time for the friends of the Forest Service (that's us, believe it or not) to stage an intervention? The first step to recovery is admitting one has a problem. We can start by pointing this out during the public comment period for the West Fork Humptulips logging project. As we went to press, OFCO prepared an action alert e-mail to inform members how to make their voices heard in this respect. And after we've said our piece to Biff, let's not forget to say a kind word to Annalee for her good work.

## Winter in the Quinault: Looking for a Giant

*Adam Martin, OFCO's new volunteer, is currently studying forest ecology at The Evergreen State College (TESC). He will be helping with volunteer outreach for OFCO's new road monitoring*

*program as well as bringing us into the 21st century via a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=153819940112](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=153819940112)), already up and running. With a strong interest in "bringing forest issues back to the forefront with people my age," he also serves as a coordinator for the Environmental Resource Center at TESC.*

*Adam grew up in the foothills of the White Mountains of New Hampshire and has also lived in rural Maryland and Washington, D.C. He has had a "love affair" with the forests of the Olympics since moving here in 2006. "I am excited to do what I can to protect these wonderful forests, the most magnificent I've seen in my life," Adam says. "I hope to do forest research science and help to develop a forestry practice that is actually sustainable."*

*Following is his essay about a winter visit to the Quinault rainforest.*

The drive along the West End of the peninsula forces us to grapple with the historical and current calculated destruction of the forests on this continent. It asks us where we stand in the sea of scientific justifications, mathematical equations, social values, and the orthodoxy of thinking we know more than we do. At one end we find the logical outgrowths of the industrial paradigm, efficiency and materialism. At the other we find the tyranny of proximity and the result of taking something for granted. Or, as Lieutenant O'Neil fatefully said in 1885, "The day will come, when people will glory in [the peninsula's forests'] wealth and beauty."

The Quinault rainforest is a shining example of the dominant culture's battle between wealth and beauty. It's the last and largest unprotected temperate rainforest, making up some of the last 3 to 4 percent of the remaining old growth rainforest in the lower 48. The largest individuals of nearly all Northwest conifers, besides the redwood and one or two alpine species, are found in this watershed. Unfortunately, as many a big tree enthusiast would tell you, that's not because this is where the biggest trees grow, but because everywhere else has long since been logged. Some of the largest organisms that ever existed became the first houses and buildings of Seattle and San Francisco.

Along Gatton Creek you will find Douglas-firs as large and tall as respectable redwoods, and Devil's club as large as a small tree. On the north shore you can find cedars growing since the beginning of the Middle Ages. You can find and crawl into hollowed trees that could sit 4 or 5 comfortably. Per acre along the shores and creeks of the Quinault, you will find the most living biomass found anywhere on earth.



Last winter I made my yearly trip to the forest. It was snowing and the forest floor had nearly half a foot of snow on it. My goal was to re-find the largest known yellow-cedar in the world. At one point it had a trail going to it, but after the subsequent windstorms of the past four years, the trail has closed and I was curious about whether the tree was still even standing.

The forest was quiet, the same quiet that so overwhelmed the first white settlers that they loathed it as much as they did the forests that harbored it. It is that same quiet so many of us now constantly seek. All that could be heard was the wind, the falling of snow and my footsteps as I tried to recall the way there. The tree stands a mile

or two west of the main Rainforest Nature Trail and the old trail is still there, under hundreds of blow-downs caused by the recent windstorms.

Wind is the natural and major successional force in coastal forests, and though many large trees were down, I could find bonsai hemlock trees only a few feet tall, gnarled and bearded with lichen like old men, growing in the sunlight—hemlocks that had been suppressed by Douglas-

firs growing since the last fire that had swept through the area 400 or so years ago. Now, with the break from the few hundred years of dark forest cover, they can grow to their true potential and become the next stage in succession. The deep crevices of the Douglas-fir will become the perfect nursery for the Sitka and hemlock to grow in its place. This has the been the process for at least 10,000 years, though this forest assemblage may be older.

Some small sleight of hand or act of fate has kept this sizable forest tract from the chopping block. The precarious nature of the rest of this forest is laid bare along Hwy. 101. On one side lies an old-growth forest that stretches all the way to the boundaries of Olympic National Park. On the other you'll find a maze of connected clearcuts stretching to the coast. In some places a tree has yet to grow back.

I've come to the spot where the trail once crossed a creek. Now a log jam is in its place, the tree trunks large enough for two people to cross side by side comfortably. A layer of ice has formed from the snow and the cool draft that flows with the water. I crawl across and look up to find a hillside with nearly all its trees blown over. In my heart is a fear that the great yellow-cedar has gone with them.

— Adam Martin

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As a Forest Service Natural Area, the Quinault block is not directly up for timber harvest, and as some of the last habitat for Marbled Murrelets and Spotted Owls, it would not be easy prey for overly enthusiastic forest planners, nor could they easily guise it as "restoration." One would also have a hard time finding a surviving mill able to process the lumber. The trees of Quinault would be a throwback to the glory days that have all but vanished—a legacy of insatiable greed, mismanagement and indifference.

Environmental laws and administrative decisions have provided some cursory protection. But these can be revoked for quick and short-term solutions to economic woes, in response to consistent lobbying by the good ol' boys—as the trauma of the past eight years and the fiasco happening on BLM lands in Oregon will attest. Now is a better time than ever to give this gem of a forest lasting protection, before the recession leads to shortsighted decisions or the Forest Service decides it needs to salvage timber in one of these large blowdowns.

Navigating blowdowns in an old-growth forest is not easy, never mind when they're covered in fresh snow in the chill of a winter's afternoon. At points I crawl along trees 10 feet or so off the ground, trusting nets of fallen branches as I hop from tree to tree, slowly making my way up the hill. Cold, and exhausted from the constant concentration, I finally see the tree above me. Two firs had fallen onto it, and the cedar was one of a few trees standing in a hundred-yard radius. The claw-like base of the tree has allowed it to grow firm for so long, and I focus my binoculars to try and find some green foliage in its upper reaches. I can discern none between the few sprigs I know were there and the firs that now balance dead against the upper branches.

In the waning pink sunlight that breaks through the clouds I sit on a downed fir, legs dangling a dozen or so feet from the ground, thinking about death. Thinking about how these legacy trees have been a saving grace of this forest, bringing hundreds if not thousands of people to stand in

their wealth and beauty. I think how alone I am next to this giant, wondering who was the last person to try to make a pilgrimage here. Some lone dedicated Forest Service employee? Some intrepid tree hunter? Someone inspired, like me, simply by the thought of something so vast and mysterious? Who would come here again, through the senseless mess of downed trees, to experience death and loss? Or the wild indifference of wind and rain?

So I ask you to go see this forest for yourself, if you haven't. When you do, go when it's raining, the reason this forest is as large and wondrous as it can be. Go find a place to lie in a bed of moss or Oxalis. Smell the rain. Let it hit your face. Watch the fog as it collects in the upper branches of a spruce. Look for saplings no bigger than your finger in the cracks of a downed tree. Listen for the movement of rocks in the riverbed, or the way the old trees moan like whales in the wind, each at its own frequency, singing a song for the wild we once all knew by heart.



– Larry Eifert

## Know Before You Go

It's always a good idea to research current conditions as part of any trip preparation. One source is the Olympic National Forest Web site, [www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/conditions](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/conditions), containing district reports for some Forest Service trails, roads and campgrounds.

Also included are phone numbers and the hours information is available.

Details can be found on the site regarding the Northwest Forest Pass for parking at designated trailheads, for which trailheads it is required, and where it can be purchased.

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