

OFCO News

December 2004

The Newsletter of the Olympic Forest Coalition

Protecting and restoring Olympic forests

OFCO Sues to Block DNR Logging Plan *by Josey Paul*

OFCO joins with WEC and two other environmental groups to stop the state's aggressive new logging plan, which would increase logging by 30 percent on state land. Most of the state's chainsaws are aimed at environmentally sensitive areas such as salmon streams and habitat for the northern spotted owl.

On a windy north bluff of Sadie Creek, a few miles after Highway 112 outruns the powerlines, the view turns panoramic. A sweep of the arm takes in mile after mile after mile of forest, a rich green blanket spread out under a flat gray sky. Ranks of pyramid-shaped mountains rise to the south. Far below, dark and damp valleys clutch their secrets and disappear into rolling banks of white clouds.

It's a lovely and inviting view, but I don't dare move an inch closer. One step would drop me 100 feet faster than I could scream out the name of my god.

Here, at this spot, a half million cubic feet of earth slid into a beautiful salmon stream following a Department of Natural Resources cut that cleared trees right to the edge of the bluff. Subsequent storms picked up the sediment and turned Sadie Creek dark and muddy. The mud washed down-

stream, choking every salmon spawning bed below the slide, all the way to the confluence with the East Twin River. There the mud turned north and continued its damage. There's no way to tell how many salmon eggs were smothered by these sediment flows.

And now the DNR promises more of this kind of cutting.

If you missed the news, the Board of Natural Resources, chaired by Commissioner of Lands Doug Sutherland, approved a plan in early September to aggressively expand logging on the 1.4 million acres of forestland that the DNR manages in western Washington.

Much of this logging will be cut on unstable slopes like the one I'm standing on above Sadie Creek. And

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much of the logging will tear up riparian buffers that protect salmon streams. Not even the dwindling habitat of the northern spotted owl, whose population is plummeting, will be spared the chainsaw.

The Olympic Forest Coalition thinks this policy is more than just unwise. It's illegal.

So on October 4, OFCO joined with the Washington Environmental Council to file a lawsuit against the DNR in King County Superior Court. The suit, also joined by the National Audubon Society and Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, seeks an injunction that would stop the DNR's new logging plan.

This is going to be one of our most important battles. Commissioner Sutherland's plan will increase logging on DNR land to 597 million board feet annually. That target means that logging will increase by at least 30 percent, most of it in sensitive areas such as salmon streams and owl circles.

Despite new studies showing a dramatic decline of the northern spotted owl in Washington, DNR logging in owl habitat would increase. The DNR did not even look at whether the aggressive new logging plan would extirpate the owl in Washington.

The DNR plans to log more than 26,000 acres of riparian land in its five Westside planning units every decade. Another 6,000 acres of riparian land will be logged in the DNR's Olympic Experimental State Forest in the Forks area. Most of this logging – some 71 percent – will be what the DNR calls “high-volume removal harvests.”

To make matters worse, poor logging practices have already left half of the DNR's riparian land without the large conifer trees necessary for good salmon habitat.

Our lawsuit charges that the DNR's final environmental impact statement on its new logging plan did not fairly address the adverse effects the plan will have on water quality and habitat for salmon, owls and other wildlife.

Even the DNR's sister agency, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), is openly critical of Commissioner Sutherland's logging plan. In documents obtained by Seattle Weekly, WDFW charges that DNR harvest plans “would likely result in landscapes that do not support a significant proportion of native wildlife species,” and “may not provide adequate protection against cumulative impacts and will increase impacts significantly above current practice.”

In plainer language: Things are about to get much worse in our forests. And the forests, streams, wildlife and people on the Olympic Peninsula will suffer.

And the view from this windy bluff above Sadie Creek will not be so lovely.

Our lawsuit asks the court to block the DNR's new logging plans, to conduct a proper and meaningful environmental impact assessment of the logging plans and to consider reasonable alternatives, such as Forest Stewardship Council certification, which already has been adopted by eight other states. The FSC certification ensures that timber is cut in a socially and environmentally responsible manner. Certified lumber is then sold at a premium.

Please help if you can by becoming an active, dues-paying member of OFCO. We need to win this battle.

Want to get out in the woods?
Check with Rick
for forest monitoring info

rick@olympicforest.org

*Happy Holidays
from OFCO!*

Editorial

CALL TO ARMS, CALL TO ACTION

Let's Fight for Our Country!

An editorial by Bonnie Phillips, Chair, Olympic Forest Coalition

I am a veteran of what has often been called the Timber Wars, having worked on forest protection for 20 years now. I've resisted the military language of the battle (there I go again) to protect and restore wildlands. Stereotyping and demonizing those who don't agree with me has always been a risk, one that I have tried painfully to avoid. I've been blessed to be able to work with people of great integrity in natural resource agencies, state and federal, in the timber industry, and in the environmental community. At the same time, I'm not naïve. I've also worked with people -- on all sides -- who are not moral exemplars. And let's admit we all, at times, stray from the high road.

Given that introduction, why would I write a "Call to Arms"? Like many others, our Board members were suffering from Post-Election Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PETSS!) when we met for our retreat in early November. To our credit, we didn't entertain any thoughts of giving up. We discussed the need to continue the good relations we've established with the Olympic National Forest and the Olympic Region of the DNR. Yet we understand that forces beyond the control of these local agencies may require different strategies and tactics. But not yet, not while our laws are still intact and citizens are given a say on how public land is managed.

This editorial is titled A Call to Arms because we deeply believe that everyone who loves the wildlands, the wildlife, the salmon, the great and awesome beauty of the Olympic Peninsula should pay serious attention to the threat of losing so much over the next four years. But the term "arms" has such a military connotation, and we absolutely don't advocate any violence to any individuals or property.

So what do we mean? I've been struggling with this all week. Then I remembered my friend the environmental troubadour, Dana Lyons, who has been my poet

and musician of choice when I'm really at a loss to explain my feelings for the forests.

This morning I listened to one of my Lyons favorites, his own Call to Arms: I'll fight For My Country. Dana talks about learning the Pledge of Allegiance at the age of four, learning how to carry the flag when he joined the Scouts, and, through the Scouts, getting to know our wildlands. In his early years, fighting for his country meant fighting against an enemy outside our shores; once he understood the threats to our beautiful wildlands, his idea of patriotism changed. This was his country, and he was going to fight for the land. In his words:

I love this river, love this land, love my
green mountain home.
When they come to cut the forests down,
I wouldn't be fighting here alone.
The wildlands are the places we go
To remember what it means to be free.
When bad forces attack our land
I'll fight for my country.

That's it. Dana said it better than I could. We can't afford to sink into apathy. Whatever this country means to me or to you, there are many ways to fight to protect our wildlands and keep our shredding democracy together. Although each of us has deep concerns at many levels and on many issues, OFCO's mission is to protect and restore the forest ecosystems on the Olympic Peninsula. It won't be easy, and it's going to get harder, but we love our country and we're committed to working hard, using all legal tools at our disposal, treating people and the land with dignity and respect, but nevertheless fighting to protect that which we love.

We hope you stand with us. We are the only group on the Olympic Peninsula that works to protect the Olym-

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Looking Ahead: THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES ON THE OLYMPIC NATIONAL FOREST

by Bonnie Phillips

Four more years.... The administration has already signaled its intent to ignore climate change alarms. They want to fiddle with the Endangered Species Act, drill oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and continue their (un) "healthy forest initiative."

What's a grassroots group to do? We need to pay attention to the big picture -- write letters, hold meetings, make our voices heard in many ways and keep a weather eye on the power centers. But grassroots groups are usually those who know the dirt, hike the trails, walk the areas where timber sales are planned, worry about new roads -- all those local things.

We walk a tightrope. If we're too locally focused, we may feel we're making progress, but bigger forces, regional or national, can bring it all crashing down. This is what we always risk, but now more than ever.

We are fortunate that public employees in the Olympic National Forest and Olympic Region of the State's DNR in the main want to do good forestry. But with pressure to log more land, troubles will surely arise. Likely problem areas include:

- Protection for Roadless Areas will now depend on what a state governor wishes to do. We may face a state administration with no interest in protecting Roadless areas -- one that could, theoretically, promote a plan to foster logging of these precious wild areas.

- "Restoration" forestry. It's not surprising that this Administration terms all logging, short of old growth clearcutting, "restoration" -- whether or not it fits any definition of restoration. This is the most serious problem facing the Olympic National Forest today. OFCO continues to push for an objective defi-

inition of "restoration" or "beneficial" to supplant the current mantra: best professional judgment. Deeply embedded in this conversation is the administrative reality that these sales have to make money; honest restoration principles are an expected casualty.

- Building too many new or reconstructed roads in commercial timber sales (aka "restoration" timber sales). This is a universal concern with the Northwest Forest Plan: aquatic and terrestrial protection or restoration seem to exist as separate thought patterns. OFCO wants the Olympic National Forest to consider aquatic concerns, especially with roadbuilding damage, when designing terrestrial "restoration" timber sales.

- Weakening the Endangered Species Act, a stated administration goal. We sometimes forget that the reason that Old Growth is not logged on the Olympic National Forest is because the Northwest Forest Plan requires protection of all marbled murrelet habitat. Yet the Administration is beginning the process to delist this species. The Northern Spotted Owl's population is crashing; fortunately, the Administration announced on November 18 that the species still warrants listing as threatened.

- Dismantling the Northwest Forest Plan. During the first Bush term, the Northwest Forest Plan was significantly weakened. Expect further changes, including increased logging in the Olympic National Forest, all in the name of "restoration." The Administration is also trying to greatly weaken the National Forest Management Act.

We have our work cut out for us. Stay tuned, keep in touch, and don't get depressed -- get active!

OFCO, Forest Service, Others, Take Field Trip to Matheny Creek

By Jim Scarborough

OFCO board members John Woolley, Jim Davis, and I, along with several Forest Service personnel and representatives from the Quinault Indian Nation, Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, and Alpine Lakes Protection Society, assembled in the Matheny Creek valley on November 8. The purpose of this field trip was to view and discuss commercial thinning units within the proposed Matheny Complex timber sale. The sale is expected to encompass over seven hundred acres in a Late-Successional Reserve (LSR), which is designed to protect and enhance habitat for old growth-dependent species, including the northern spotted owl. Matheny Creek's drainage lies within the larger Queets watershed.

OFCO supports the Northwest Forest Plan's original management prescriptions for Olympic National Forest (ONF), which entail an average annual cut level of ten million board feet in second growth stands. Although several recent timber sales on the ONF have inappropriately targeted naturally diversifying LSR second-growth in the 60-to-75-year-old range, we are pleased that the Matheny Complex sale is focused on stands in the 40-to-50-year-old range, where the limited benefits of thinning are much more likely to be realized. Of continued concern, however, is the Forest Service's penchant for punching temporary roads into LSR – a practice that is specifically discouraged in the Northwest Forest Plan.

The Matheny Complex sale is likely to result in construction of roughly two miles of new temporary roads, coupled with reconstruction of a comparable amount of abandoned ghost roads. Both categories of road would be obliterated and decommissioned following the sale, which could improve the long-term situation on the ground with regard to the ghost roads. However, potential soil and aquatic hazards, along with numerous other well-known risks (e.g., habitat fragmentation, noxious weed infestation, ORV abuse, etc.), remain with the intended temp

roads. Optimistically, though, the Forest Service did suggest that somewhat less temp road mileage might be needed for the sale than what is presently indicated in the environmental assessment.

The favorable and/or maladaptive ecological outcomes associated with thinning in second growth will be fully known only after decades, if not centuries, of longitudinal empirical research. (No such ambiguity exists insofar as the damaging effects of roads.) Given that thinning remains an experimental endeavor, OFCO will continue to urge the Forest Service to utilize this tool conservatively and cautiously, in conformance with the Northwest Forest Plan, and to cease road construction in LSRs in all but the rarest of circumstances. We greatly appreciate the Forest Service's and other participants' willingness to devote their valuable time for constructive, on-site dialogue.

(Fight, continued from p. 3)

pic National Forest and the Olympic Region of the State DNR—over a million acres of public land. That's a lot. As a fully volunteer grass-roots group that often has to scrape to get a newsletter out, we seriously need financial contributions. There are also many ways for people to volunteer through OFCO. This issue deals with some of our programs, some successes and some threats. Next issue, we'll discuss our programs at greater length and add a volunteer questionnaire.

Whether you choose to stand with OFCO, put your concerns, talent and money into another organization, or simply find your own individual ways to make a difference, please remember that these are critical years. Public service begins with personal integrity. Each of us is charged to find a way to make a difference during our time on this earth. Apathy and indifference lead to the self-fulfilled prophesy of defeat. With a "peaceful heart and steady mind," let's all join to Fight for Our Country.

Climate Change, Energy and the Future of Washington State

A Conference Sponsored by The Graduate Program in Environmental Studies, Climate Solutions, and the National Association for Environmental Professionals

Friday, February 11, 2005
The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington
8:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

We are pleased to announce an exciting conference on Climate Change, Energy and the Future of Washington State to be held on campus at The Evergreen State College in Olympia on Friday, February 11, 2005. See website at: www.evergreen.edu/events/climatechange

There is strong scientific consensus that we have already moved into a changing climate. There is also scientific agreement that anthropogenic emissions add significantly to carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, increasing whatever natural fluctuation in climate change may be occurring. Despite a renewed awareness that we must become more energy self-sufficient, the link between energy use and climate change is not always clear. Unfortunately, scientific findings have led to few changes in policy. We can no longer afford to ignore the science and deny the reality that people and governments must begin to take decisive action.

Our conference will serve as part of the conversation that must happen between citizens, government agencies, businesses, nonprofit organizations, political groups, tribal leaders and others as we move towards agreement on potential solutions.

Three keynote speakers will address these major issues relating to climate change:

- **The Global and National Outlook on Climate Change.** Dr. Daniel M. Kammen, Director, Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory, University of California-Berkeley
- **Current Energy Policy and Prospects for Sustainable Energy Sources.** J. Rachel Shimshak, Director, Renewable Northwest Project.
- **Action on Energy and Climate Change: Economic Opportunities and Risks.** Dr. Eban Goodstein, Professor of Economics and Director of Environmental Studies, Lewis and Clark College.

Each major speaker will be followed by a panel of three experts who will discuss one aspect of the issue that directly relates to the Pacific Northwest.

The conference begins at 8:15 a.m. and ends at 5:00 p.m. and is open to the public. Free to all faculty, students and staff of the Evergreen State College, as well as students at other colleges and universities. Admission is set at \$25 for all other attendees. To see the entire agenda and read speakers' biographies and other details of the conference, see www.evergreen.edu/events/climatechange. You can also contact events coordinator **Bonnie Phillips at BonnieBandR@comcast.net or (360) 456-8793.**

Mountaineers to Host Jan. 21-22 Environmental Film Festival

The Mountaineers and the Hazel Wolf Environmental Film Network will host a two day celebration of the magic and power of film to spread environmental messages and encourage activism. Documentary films from around the world will cover topics such as agriculture, consumerism, forestry practices, activism, global warming and pollution. Seminars on cost-effective production will also be offered.

The Festival will be held at the Mountaineers Building (300 Third Ave. W., Seattle, 98119).

Tabling opportunities are available at the film festival on Friday evening and Saturday. Contact Fatima for information, fatimao@mountaineers.org.

Film Festival Schedule:

Friday, Jan. 21 6 - 10 p.m. Film Session 1

Saturday, Jan. 22 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Two Concurrent Media Workshops ~ Free

12 - 1:30 p.m. lunch break

1:30 - 5 p.m. Film Session 2

5 - 6:30 p.m. dinner break

6:30 - 10 p.m. Film Session 3

10 p.m. - 12 a.m. Celebration with the Band Creeping Time! ~ Free

Tickets: \$15 single session; \$25 Full Day Sat.; \$40 Full Festival. Member and discount rates available. Calling 206-284-6310 or contact Fatima Oswald, 206-284-6310 x3029 or fatimao@mountaineers.org, or visit www.mountaineers.org or www.hazelfilm.org.

Help Protect Your Forest! PLEASE JOIN US AS AN OFCO VOLUNTEER--OR SEND A CHECK!

OFCO is a 501(c)(3) organization; all donations are fully tax-deductible.

I would like to donate to OFCO (all donations come with a membership):

_____ \$25 -- regular membership

_____ \$10 -- living lightly

_____ \$\$\$ -- other

_____ I would like to do volunteer work for OFCO. Please call or email me and let me know how to help!

_____ I would like to join OFCO's email action network

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____

Email: _____

Return this form and/or your check to: Bonnie Phillips, Olympic Forest Coalition, 606 Lilly Road NE #115, Olympia, WA 98506. On the web: www.olympicforest.org

Mountaineers to Offer NW Environmental Issues Course

The Mountaineers Northwest Environmental Issues Course offers to help participants protect the natural resources of the Northwest. Lectures and field trips cover forests, agriculture, wildlife, green economics, global warming, transportation, activism and more.

The course runs from Feb. 2 to April 6, 2005. Lectures are Wednesday evenings, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. at The Mountaineers (300 Third Avenue West, Seattle). Cost is \$45 for members and \$50 for non-members, \$10 discount for students and seniors.

Register online at www.mountaineers.org or call 206-284-8484 to register by phone. For more info, please contact Fatima Oswald, 206-284-6310 x3029 or fatimao@mountaineers.org.

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