

OFCO NEWS

Olympic Forest Coalition Newsletter

May 2003

Threats to Forests Mounting

OFCO Needs Your Help to Stay on Mission:
Protecting and Restoring the Olympic National Forest

New threats to our national forests are now a regular feature of news from the other Washington, while timber industry lawsuits add to political pressures for more logging.

Major current threats to forests nationally and here on the Olympic Peninsula include:

- **The Bush Administration's attempt** to gut the National Forest Management Act (abandoning the viable species requirement that led to the Northwest Forest Plan);
- **The welter of proposed new rules** that would weaken the National Environmental Protection Act. Some

requirements and weakens requirements for the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.

Closer to home, timber interests on the Olympic Peninsula rally for more logging, and the Olympic National Forest plans timber sales with too many miles of new roads. Meanwhile, new studies show that the **northern spotted owl**, long demonized as the nemesis of an industry, is rapidly losing ground and may be heading for extinction in Washington State. The Olympic Peninsula population is particularly vulnerable.

So what's a volunteer grassroots group to do? We need to stay focussed, increase our grassroots base, keep in touch

New studies show that the northern spotted owl is rapidly losing ground and may be heading for extinction in Washington State.

of these would curtail the citizen's opportunity to comment for the record on a proposed timber sale and to administratively appeal a decision. These changes would accelerate timber harvest without adequate environmental analysis.

• **The "Healthy Forest Initiative,"** an Administration proposal to promote more frequent and extensive logging without environmental review or challenge. At this writing, this Initiative is working its way through Congress in the McInnis-Walden bill. The Olympic National Forest is not considered a fire-prone forest, but its northeast corner would be affected, and the bill's insect and disease provisions would allow logging of up to 1,000 contiguous acres.

• **Major threats to the Northwest Forest Plan** as the administration removes "Survey and Manage"

with decision-makers and--not least--keep our spirits up and rejoice in these beautiful wild lands we're determined to protect. For us this means forests in Western Washington, especially the Olympic National Forest.

Whether we're working towards a future wilderness bill or other form of legislative protection, restoring an aquatic ecosystem, or doing a local conservation project, we begin at the grassroots level. OFCO will continue its work to protect and restore our forests. And we need more help. We need you!

These new OFCO programs will begin early this summer:

• **Field research** on the Olympic National Forest. Our first project will be to evaluate how temporary roads

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Memberships and Donations Needed!

Thanks to all of you for past contributions. We hope you will be generous with new memberships and donations. With greater threats to the Olympic National Forest looming, we will be far more active in the future, but only with your help. We also need more volunteers. There are many ways to contribute to the Olympic Forest Coalition. Membership in OFCO is:

- \$25 - regularly annual membership dues
- \$10 - living lightly membership dues
- \$___ - all donations gratefully accepted

Please send your check to: Bonnie Phillips, OFCO, 606 Lilly Road NE #115, Olympia, WA 98506. If you are interested in volunteering for OFCO, give Bonnie a call and she'll plug you in.

Get on our newsletter mailing list: We are trying to save paper by sending electronic copies of our newsletter to everyone with an email address. Please let us know how to reach you electronically. Just send a note to info@olympicforest.org. Thanks!

Editorial Policy: It is our policy to provide a by-line to any article that expresses a personal opinion or tells a personal story. Personal opinions are those of the author; other OFCO members may or may not agree. We welcome submissions from members and readers.

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have been decommissioned after timber sales. Rick Darnell is heading this program. If you are interested, email him at: Rick@olympicforest.org.

- **Outreach efforts.** We are beginning an outreach program in Olympia and around the Peninsula. This will include having materials at fairs and other events, making presentations to other organizations, and having discussions with others who care about forest protection and restoration around the Peninsula. Liz Tuttle will head this program. Contact her at: Liz@olympicforest.org.

- **Field trips.** John Woolley chairs this activity, (John@olympicforest.org). We are looking for people with knowledge of birds, insects, butterflies, forest ecology and all the other pure joys of wild areas to lead or join educational field trips.

Other opportunities with OFCO include:

- **Forest Service project response.** OFCO Chair Jim Scarborough (Jim@olympicforest.org) leads in research and preparing comment on timber sales and other projects proposed by the Olympic National Forest. Field trips are often a major part of our research before commenting on projects.

- **Newsletter.** We encourage you to submit articles for OFCO's newsletter. Contact Peggy Bruton (Peggy@olympicforest.org).

For general information on how to get involved, contact Bonnie Phillips (Bonnie@olympicforest.org). We are building an organization of many volunteers who can all contribute their best skills and talents.

The pace of agency activity on Olympic National Forest (ONF) has accelerated in recent weeks. There's good news and bad news.

Let's start with the good news. The final draft of ONF's Access and Travel Management (ATM) Plan, released in March, has been warmly received by local conservationists. The ATM Plan guides the Forest Service's future management prescriptions for ONF's extensive network of roads. Of the 2,254 existing road miles on the Forest, the ATM Plan specifies that 36% of these will eventually be permanently decommissioned or converted to trail. This is an especially positive development for watershed health, depressed fishery stocks, and sensitive or threatened species, as well as the integrity of the core Olympic wild country. OFCO was also grateful to see several of our recommendations for road closure incorporated in the final ATM Plan draft. More information is available on this topic at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/aboutonf/atm_web/atm_maps.htm.

The not-so-good news pertains to the aggressive thinning planned via the Snow Salmon Timber Sale, to be implemented within ONF's northeastern corner. Forest Supervisor Dale Hom signed a decision notice April 9 for this sale to proceed. Although some improvements have been adopted as part of the final decision (including dropping two harvest units, reducing the size of a third unit, and improved standards for decommissioning logging roads), several concerns remain. Ostensibly designed to "accelerate" late-successional habitat characteristics of these forest stands, the Snow Salmon sale would log within 675 acres of second-growth trees, while constructing 9.24 miles of so-called temporary roads. OFCO intends to appeal this timber sale to the Regional Forester in Portland, based on: a) anticipated hydrologic damage from new road construction in two already heavily roaded watersheds; b) entry into a *de facto*, uninventoried portion of the Mount Zion Roadless Area; and c) possible forest stand simplification of some harvest units.

Two other timber sales, first proposed in 1998 but not yet implemented, have been dusted off with reinitiated scoping phases. The Flat Timber Sale, in the South Fork Skokomish Watershed, would thin up to 197 acres, with up to 2.35 miles of temporary road construction. The Lilly

Timber Sale, straddling the Hamma Hamma and North Fork Skokomish watersheds, would thin up to 269 acres, with up to 3.47 miles of temporary road construction. OFCO has submitted preliminary comments to the Forest Service for both sales, and will monitor their progress. We are very concerned, in particular, that the adverse ecological impacts of new road construction, even for temporary mileage, are not being adequately assessed. For more information these three timber sales, go to: http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/projects/env_docs.html

Finally, OFCO is tracking a proposal in the Hoh River watershed of ONF's Pacific District. In the winter of 1996, the Upper Hoh Road into the national park was heavily damaged by the surging river. Jefferson County personnel subsequently repaired the road with expanded armoring and rip-rapping of the riverbank. To mitigate the aquatic habitat destruction (river turbidity) of the new rip-rap, however, the state's Fish and Wildlife Department required the county to install logjams. Part one of this mitigation has already been completed. Part two has now entered the scoping phase, as the project would utilize a parcel of ONF land for access to the river. A temporary road of 900 feet would be constructed through a Late-Successional Reserve, with a narrow, 15-foot riparian buffer between the roadbed and river channel. Heavy equipment would both cross and divert the Hoh River for a period of about two weeks.

Contact the Pacific Ranger District at 360-374-6522 for more information on this project.

-- Bonnie Phillips

Coyote at the Movies

by Tim McNulty

We've all seen it before: Weyerhaeuser, Georgia Pacific, Simpson Timber, Crown Z. The same forestry promo film, rundown of the industry from forest tree to suburb box; but when Coyote got hold of the lost film can and took a look at the end of the reel, *he* knew immediately how to run it, and invited all his friends.

So: The finished tract houses and tormented lawns and shrub that so upset and displaced all the animals there, became the beginning.

"Here we are," said Coyote, and all agreed.

Once there, there were huge towers as tall as a Douglas fir that carefully lowered the logs down to just their precise spots on the hillside. The squirrels were beside themselves! But who are these blue-shirted workmen who wait in the brush? Coyote says they are shamen who possess magic wands of smoke. And if everyone watched closely, they would see them placing all the limbs and branches back onto the broken trees. Amazing! They were even joining and healing the cut trunks back together! Everyone agreed these must be powerful priests (and marveled at the special herbs they kept in small tins

...The trees leapt into the air amid great clouds of needles and dust and noise...and then sat majestically back on their stumps, unscratched!

But suddenly there appeared a whole crew of human workers who carefully and quickly began taking the houses down, shingle by board by window by door, and loaded the pieces in large flat trucks. In a flash the trucks had delivered the lumber to a great lodge Coyote told them was the Lodge of Many Healing Wheels, told them he'd been there himself, at night, and seen it all. Inside, the great wheels, with teeth sharper than Beaver's, spin all the boards back into logs again. No one had ever seen anything like this. (Even Coyote was taken aback at the sight.) And in awe they watched the logs be carried by huge machines larger than elephants and loaded onto long trucks which -- driving backward so the trees could steer them to exactly where they wanted to be -- carried them through many small towns far into the mountains on special roads built just for them. It was such a wonderful sight, even the old man himself had to smile. All those old trees going back home.

in their pockets and kept adding endlessly to endlessly from behind their lips).

"They all work for me," Coyote said, but no one was listening. Instead, they were watching the shamen wave their wands over the stumps, as the trees leapt into the air amid great clouds of needles and dust and noise. Everyone ducked, and when they looked again, the trees sat majestically back on their stumps, unscratched!

Now there were such great cheers from the crowd that Rabbit had to place his forepaws into his ears, and Mole hurriedly dug his way underground. Coyote decides right then and there that was just the way he was going to work things. And that he was going to start the very next day, "Even if it takes a while," he thought out loud. "Yes, even if it takes a good long time."

Copyright (c) 1992 by Tim McNulty, from "In Blue Mountain Dusk," *Pleasure Boat Studio*.

A Tale of Two Foresters...

by Bonnie Phillips and Liz Tuttle

Forester One: OFCO and Friends Meet with Olympic Forest Supervisor

Concern for changes to the Northwest Forest Plan along with initiatives from the Bush Administration that would weaken environmental rules and regulations provided the impetus for a meeting March 17 between Olympic National Forest Supervisor Dale Hom, OFCO Board members, and representatives from Olympic Park Associates, the Sasquatch Group of the Sierra Club, Alpine Lakes Protection Society, and Evergreen College's "Protecting Washington's Wildness" program. Issues and views discussed included:

- **Small timber sales without analysis.** After concerns expressed by environmentalists that Olympic National Forest personnel might abuse the availability of categorical exclusions (CEs), curtailing citizen input and appeal rights for small timber sales on the Forest, Dale Hom stated he was not planning to use CEs for this purpose as it would be a breach of public trust.
- **Healthy Forest Initiative (a Bush Proposal):** Mr. Hom also said the Healthy Forest Initiative is not appropriate on the Olympic National Forest, since this is not a fire-prone area, nor are major insect outbreaks a factor.
- **Upping the Cut:** We asked about the 10 million board-feet probable sale quantity delineated in the Northwest Forest Plan, and our concern that Olympic might be planning an increase. Mr. Hom stated that 10 mmbf was not a hard target and that Olympic National Forest had often sold less than this amount since the Plan went into effect. He further asserted that he did not perceive these as timber sales per se, but rather as means for "improving the landscape" by thinning. He did *not* foresee a major increase in board-feet taken off the Forest.
- **Forest Stewardship Contracts.** These will be mandated for national forests; the agency is waiting for further direction before implementation. (Note: Although this is a benign sounding name, most conservationists refer to this provision as "goods for services"; that is, an entity does something "good" for the forest in exchange for logging marketable trees.)

We left the meeting feeling the management of Olympic National Forest was in good hands, albeit with unresolved concerns that Bush appointees above Mr. Hom might have other ideas.

Forester Two: New Regional Forester Talks to Community of Forks and Delivers a much Different Message

Unfortunately, Dale Hom's new boss, Regional Forester Linda Goodman, subsequently gave a very different message regarding management on the Olympic National Forest. Liz Tuttle went to the meeting held in Forks and brought back Goodman's message.

- Ms. Goodman stated she was "very excited about what Bush is trying to do with the Healthy Forest Initiative and all." Although she stated that the HFI does not apply from the standpoint of fire (except on the northeastern corner of the Forest), she felt that other aspects of the HFI do apply and will assist in "actively and appropriately" managing the forest.
- Ms. Goodman felt that categorical exclusions for small timber sales were positive and would allow forest managers more freedom without environmental oversight or challenges.
- She wanted to see the annual cut level on Olympic National Forest accelerated beyond the current 10 million board feet. She was also excited that changes to the Northwest Forest Plan would free up managers to "actively and appropriately" manage streamside buffers.

In summary, Ms. Goodman's assertions appear to contradict most of the important commitments made sincerely by Olympic National Forest Supervisor Dale Hom. Ms. Goodman described herself as "very excited" about a lot of anti-environmental proposals coming from the Bush Administration. OFCO, however, finds nothing so exciting (in a positive sense) about her message. We are deeply concerned that this Bush appointee may well overturn the good intentions of Olympic's supervisor and personnel.

East Crossing: A Reasonable Walk Along the Dungeness River

by John Woolley

Directions: Turn off Highway 101 in the vicinity of Sequim Bay State Park, on either Palo Alto Road or Louella Road. Follow the paved road up for about five miles to the large pasture lands of Palo Alto. The road then makes two doglegs; a junction follows, keep right on pavement, Schmith Knob meadows will be on the right. This area is now Forest Service land, but was formerly the staging ground for outfitters taking folks into the extensive backcountry of the Upper Dungeness. The paved County road ends after Schmith Knob, In a short distance is a right turn to the closed 2860 Road. Park here, and walk 40 minutes down this old road to the now decommissioned East Crossing Campground.

The closed road/trail can be a little muddy at first, caused by the slumping of the water heavy roadbed and slopes, but then becomes a pleasant walk as the now wide trail

For a longer outing, continue along the River on the old road nearly a mile to the bridge that crosses to the west side.

The Gold Creek Trail starts just before the bridge, and provides a distinct contrast with the open areas along the River. A short walk gets you into the middle of classic Dungeness River old-growth forest and intermittent rock walls, locally referred to as Dirty Faces. Gold Creek itself is only a quarter mile walk, and marks the end of salmon spawning, as just up river is The Gorge, where waterfalls block migration further upstream. Across the creek is an old shelter site (not rebuilt). Continuing up river, a careful observer will see the remains of an old horse/hiker bridge over the river. The Gold Creek Trail continues uphill behind the shelter site to Sleepy Hollow and eventually the Tubal Cain area.

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allows for conversational walking. Views are of large Douglas firs, the rushing waters of Eddy Creek, and glimpses into the Dungeness Canyon.

Once at the River, explore the old camp loop to the right, which has good access to the River and opportunities to approach very large Douglas firs. Picnic tables, fire pits, outhouses have all been removed, as part of Forest Service decommissioning policy. The old campground makes a good turn around point for a 2 to 3 hour outing.

Back at the bridge that crosses the Dungeness, signs indicate State Fishery efforts to increase nutrients in the river to help restore salmon migration. Water ouzels (dippers) can be regularly observed diving and feeding in the swift waters. The old road/trail continues west uphill to the Lower Dungeness Trailheads that can be reached via the 2870 Road. A short walk up this old road will provide a view of a remarkable Douglas fir, down slope to the left.

USFS DOSEWALLIPS ROAD WASHOUT REPAIR: GOING DOWN A ROAD TO NOWHERE?

By Ted Labbe, Habitat Biologist, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

In early January 2002, a large rainstorm hit the northeast Olympic Mountains, melting snow packs and resulting in record runoff to area rivers. On the Dungeness River, with nearly 80 years of stream flow monitoring, the largest ever recorded flood occurred. Just “over the hill” from the Dungeness, Brinnon old-timers living along the Dosewallips River claimed the flood on their river surpassed even the epic flood of 1949. Kayaking down the Dose in the weeks following the flood, I observed organic debris deposits in trees and on riverbanks 10 feet above the normal base flow river level.

Picking up after the flood on the Dose-wallips, folks soon discovered that part of a road was missing! Ten miles upriver, a 300-foot long road section and a portion of the hillside above it had been completely washed out. As an important travel corridor serving a National Park trailhead and the busy Elkhorn and Dosewallips campgrounds, the washout was quickly earmarked for remedy by the USFS.

Forest Service staff soon realized no easy solutions existed. The road could simply be closed and the upstream road section converted to trail, but certain influential area residents feared road closure would doom the recreation-based local economy. Another option to construct an upslope bypass around the washout would disturb protected spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat. The final option, reconstruction of the road in its former location, jeopardized threatened salmon habitat.

One year and two environmental assessments later, Hood Canal District Ranger Dave Craig issued his recommendation to rebuild the road in its former location, now entirely occupied by the river. The preferred alternative of road reconstruction is clearly at odds with ecological conditions outlined in the EA and the agency’s own mandates to protect wildland ecosystems and natural processes. Under this alternative, a

section of the river would be filled and the outer meander bend heavily armored to prevent future road erosion. To “replace” lost ecological functions, the USFS is proposing constructed logjams downstream of the washout.

Recent studies of the river indicate that natural erosion of river-adjacent bluffs is critical to the recruitment of habitat-forming spawning gravels and large wood to the river. Many of these bluffs --like the one across which the USFS is proposing to rebuild the road --have been armored to protect downstream homes and infrastructure, cutting off natural erosion and material recruitment to the river, and preventing channel migration that creates and maintains fish habitat. Besides, historical wood cleanouts and riparian logging have robbed the river of raw material for logjams, which are important safe-havens for fish. As a result of these changes, biologists currently believe the availability of large wood and spawning gravels are key limiting factors for salmon in the river. These habitat factors would be incrementally degraded by the Forest Service’s preferred alternative of road reconstruction.

Visitors to the washout site can still observe a line of angular rock threading up the middle of the present-day river channel that marks the toe of the old rock-armored roadbed. The volume of material exported from the site by the flood is striking, and the power of the river to literally eat a whole road section is awe-inspiring. A casual observer driving downstream from the washout can see other locations not unlike the washout site where future river-road collisions are imminent. Shouldn’t such events give us pause to consider the wisdom of re-building the road and force us to wake up to the potential for other washouts?

In spite of the Forest Service’s lofty “ecosystem management” goals, the reality is that imperiled critters and their habitats don’t vote. As a result, day-to-day USFS

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operations often ignore important environmental conservation concerns in the name of doing projects that purportedly benefit local, economically-distressed rural communities. In this sense, it is critically important to recognize and support the work of groups like Olympic Forest Coalition that elevate and speak for ecosystem conservation concerns. OFCO's recent letter to the USFS on the Dose washout is a wonderful example of the group's leadership role in this arena.

In the letter, OFCO Chair Jim Scarborough suggested an original and creative solution that would address the needs of both natural and human communities in the Dosewallips watershed. Jim noted the wonderful potential for creation of a loop trail to the natural landmark of Dosewallips Falls, just upstream of the washout. Such an idea might serve as "mitigation" for the loss of upriver recreation opportunities; and the appeal of this idea is that it may even represent an improvement over the former end-of-road recreation opportunities, while protecting the integrity of the Dosewallips River.

OFCO and the conservation community await a decision from the Forest Service on this important issue.

What you can do: Write Olympic National Forest and tell them your reservations with their preferred alternative to rebuild the Dosewallips Road at the washout. Tell ONF that you are concerned about impacts to threatened salmon populations, and the aquatic ecosystem. Tell them you would also oppose construction of a road bypass that would needlessly disturb upland forest environments. Support road closure at the road washout and a road-to-trail conversion above the washout and ask them to investigate the OFCO-proposed idea of a Dosewallips Loop Trail that would benefit the local community and economy. Although the official comment period for this issue is past, providing personalized feedback to the Forest Service assists them in better gauging local and region perspectives. Send letters to:

David Craig, District Manager
Olympic National Forest
Hood Canal Ranger District
PO Box 68
Hoodsport, WA 98548

OFCO Welcomes New Board Members

Liz Tuttle and Rick Darnell have joined OFCOs Board in early May, increasing our Board size to nine. We welcome them!

Liz will receive her master's degree in environment and community from Antioch University in June. She has been working this spring quarter to finalize our May 10 conference through an internship with OFCO. Liz will work as a back country ranger in the Olympic National Park this summer, and will be helping us with our outreach program, as well as adding many other talents to our Board mix. She lives in Port Angeles.

Rick is a student at The Evergreen State College. He is now completing a program called Protecting Washington Wildness and has written part of the book that students and faculty will soon be publishing through the Mountaineers. Rick is interested in OFCO's budding forest monitoring program and will be coordinating our field research, to begin in June. Rick lives in Olympia and has applied for the graduate program in environmental studies at Evergreen, beginning this fall.

Please Join OFCO
www.olympicforest.org.
And Get Personally
Acquainted With Your
National Forest.
Go Hiking this Summer.

Forum Report: Young Stand Management in Western Washington and Oregon

By Rick Darnell

Editor's Note: Rick Darnell is a student at The Evergreen State College. He and others from his program on Protecting Washington Wilderness attended a forum of scientists on second growth thinning. OFCO asked him for his impressions of the forum and he obligingly wrote this article.

The April 10 forum at TESC was sponsored by: Northwest Ecosystems Alliance, Biodiversity Northwest, Oregon Natural Resources Council, The Nature Conservancy, Northwest Old-Growth Campaign, with guest presentations by Dr. Jerry Franklin, Dr. John Tappiener, and Dr. Andy Carey; the investigative panel commenting on the presentations included: Dr. Jan Henderson, Dr. Linda Winter, Dr. Chris Frissell, Amy LaBarge and Doug Heiken.

Scientists, conservationists, agency staff, timber interests and students gathered in a large Evergreen lecture

exclusion is significant, thinning can have extremely positive results with prolonged benefits. Older stands begin to exhibit a natural opening of the canopy and thus lessen the biological benefits of the thinning. Species selected for cutting, the density of trees, and the amount and type of biomass on the floor will also significantly determine the resulting characteristics. Adding the variables of soil type, climate and existing parent species can make the outcome somewhat of an educated guess. Yet, previous variable density thinning projects have led to an increased rate of succession of old growth characteristics.

The majority of the scientists appeared convinced that, in the short term, thinning would result in increased habitat and function of the forest. The audience voiced concerns that thinning prescriptions were meeting the demands of the forest managers, not of the forest habitat. In the Pacific Northwest, habitat is predominately man-

How much thinning can be undertaken without significant ecological harm, especially from roads, albeit temporary?

hall to discuss second growth thinning and its potential for ecological restoration. Using the Northwest Forest Plan as a guide, a series of presentations weighed the benefits of such restoration.

Presenters suggested that the success of managed forests depends on availability of species. Monoculture stands with understory exclusion are considered undesirable. Ideal conditions exist where diverse understory and multi-layer canopies are prevalent. It was agreed, without contest, that a variety of pathways could result in the favorable conditions. Generally speaking these include the age of forest and the type of prescription.

Thinning early may result in unsuccessfully sustaining an open canopy. In slightly older stands, where

aged for spotted owls and marbled murrelets. This makes sense, given the depleted status of current populations.

As with any science, the conditions of the unknown pose the greatest dangers. Incentives to increase thinning projects raise the potential for disaster exponentially. Detrimental outcomes can arise when we fail to weigh all the potential effects of management decisions. The fact that the US Forest Service has an extensive and failing road system raises concerns over new temporary roads needed for thinning activity. Fragmentation can promote introduction of invasive species and sedimentation of nearby streams, harming aquatic systems while attempting to aid some terrestrial species.

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Part of the thinning debate can be seen as a tension between science and economics. Architects of the Northwest Forest Plan consciously tried to sustain high timber production while maintaining ecological integrity. Some national forests, like the Olympic and Mt. Baker Snoqualmie, can log only in second growth stands. On these and other forests under the Plan (which allows thinning in stands up to 80 years of age), the question becomes how much thinning can be undertaken without significant ecological harm, especially from roads, albeit temporary.

Some who caution against large-scale “restoration” thinning programs believe this kind of ecological disturbance can be justified only in terms of short-term economic gain. In my opinion, young stand management should not be seen as a tool of re-establishing the natural processes. It is a method of timber extraction that can reduce, but does not avoid, serious ecological impacts.

Keep up with OFCO’s activities. Visit our website, www.olympicforest.org. Please keep in touch!

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