

The mission of the Olympic Forest Coalition is promoting the protection, conservation and restoration of natural forest ecosystems and their processes on the Olympic Peninsula, including fish and wildlife habitat, and surrounding ecosystems.



Olympic Forest Coalition

Spring 2014

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President's Column

A Review of Recent and Current OFCO Activities

Marbled Murrelet: After being successful in two court cases, OFCO still has to persevere to get the state of Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a "long term conservation plan"—now eight years overdue—for this federally endangered species. Marbled Murrelet habitat still is being marginalized by DNR logging proposals. Recent logging plans along our Pacific Coast in the Goodman Creek management area are Rainbow Rock and Goodmint Creek. Each of these logging sales would further reduce potential murrelet habitat and OFCO is challenging these sales. (See article, p. 3.)

Stream Typing: DNR lacks adequate protocols for categorizing streams for potential salmon habitat and aquifer quality. OFCO is working to harmonize stream typing procedures of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and DNR. There is a definite need for more scrutiny of surface and subsurface hydrology.

Storm Sediment: OFCO has long supported the volunteer Streamkeepers in Clallam County who collect turbidity data after storms with high runoff. Data collections are verified by certified laboratories and offered to the county to construct a better database. Sample collecting requires accessing remote streams and ravines in bad weather. It's time-consuming work and more volunteers are needed.

Queets Thin: OFCO, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, and local Sierra Club volunteers will be starting a road survey of Olympic National Forest's proposal to thin a number of units to restore old-growth characteristics and create jobs for local workers. The number and timing of thinning sales can be managed to provide longer-term employment. OFCO will be advocating to pull back some temporary roads to limit intrusion, which often results in abusive recreation and introduction of noxious plants.

Skokomish Watershed Action Team (SWAT): OFCO road surveys in the area have contributed greatly to the Forest Service's road management. The Skokomish Tribe and federal agencies involved have created a role model for forest recovery, fisheries improvements on the North Fork Skok, and decommissioning of no-longer-necessary roads. Some have been converted to trail. A [video](#) of these successes is now available.

We thank all our members and donors for their financial support. If you have not yet contributed, we hope you will become inspired to do so. We gratefully acknowledge 2013 donors in our website blog.

We are including a self-addressed envelope for your convenience or, if you prefer, you can donate to OFCO online on our website olympicforest.org.

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Collaborative: OFCO is working with Representative Derek Kilmer, the timber industry, and the Forest Service as part of the Olympic Peninsula Collaborative to determine appropriate forest practices for selected parcels as part of two initial thinning pilot projects. The collaborative will look for ways to increase timber harvests and provide economic benefits to communities through restoration thinning and other timber treatment while also improving forest habitats and environmental conditions.

Dungeness Watershed Management Plan: OFCO has been engaged actively in the public process for this management plan. Lack of funding seems to have slowed implementation, which is under scrutiny. It's too early to tell the outcome.

Salmon Restoration Activities, including monitoring the results of the **Dosewallips Engineered Logjams:** OFCO is watchdogging a five-year pilot project to analyze the effects of river re-engineering.

Devils Vista DNR Logging on Mt. Walker: DNR recently announced plans to log over 400 acres adjacent to Devils Lake Natural Area Preserve on Mt. Walker (Quilcene). The area includes slopes leading directly to the bay. In a previous DNR cut in the vicinity, a lot of silt and sediment washed down the slopes right into Quilcene Bay. There are other concerns about this proposed logging because the site contains potential Marbled Murrelet and Spotted Owl nest habitat, in addition to a rare tree/shrub community near the Devils Lake Natural Area. Only five associations of these trees/shrubs are known to exist.

Olympic National Park Wilderness Stewardship Plan: The National Park Service has released a range of preliminary draft alternatives for the Olympic National Park Wilderness Stewardship Plan. The alternatives were designed to reflect key topics raised during the initial public scoping process last spring. For more info, visit olympicparkassociates.org.

Olympic National Forest Travel Management Plan: OFCO has been engaged actively in this endeavor, especially by recommending appropriate road decommissioning projects, identifying priority candidate roads, and closely monitoring efforts to convert old roads to recreation trails.

Calawah/Sitkum Rivers Watershed Management Plan: This process has included active involvement in a proposal for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use on federal



watershed land. OFCO has analyzed the Bonidu OHV proposal; a decision is due in July, and we are not optimistic that it will offer an appropriate level of protection. Trouble can be anticipated whenever OHV routes are permitted near streams, rivers and sensitive grounds. In our past research and experience, some OHV enthusiasts do not adhere to marked paths and, often unfortunately, the least responsible among them destroy prime areas. The newest SEPA determination says Bonidu now has been delayed for a year.

Elwha Quarry: Early this April, Judge Wood of the Clallam County Superior Court entered an order that the site is not an erosion hazard. The county had previously found that the site is not a landslide hazard area either, even though rocks rained down on Olympic Hot Springs Road (the access to Olympic National Park on the Elwha River) when the miners were blasting an illegal road up the hill a few years ago.

Fortunately, the rock quarry proponents do not have a single permit, or even an application submitted. Now that the superior court has given them a "victory," it is possible the miners will go to DNR and ask for a mining permit. The Upper Elwha River Conservation Committee likely would oppose that effort because the project still needs to obtain a shoreline permit from the county.

Miller Peninsula: This peninsula (undeveloped state park land between Sequim and Discovery Bays) was in the planning stages to become one of two destination parks for a centennial celebration. Lack of funding caused the governor to dump the plan after spending \$150,000 getting it going with public input. Ideas included hotel, computer hookups, and a near-wilderness experience. Ranger Steven Gilstrom came here to manage a big park that would finance rangers privately. That idea is revised and Miller Peninsula trails are kept out of guide books because there is no staff available to

keep an eye out. OFCO is engaged in watchdogging development on these 2,900 acres in an effort to maximize natural protections.

Herbicide Use: OFCO is educating itself actively and encouraging public agencies to have transparent application policies, especially in regard to Herb Robert and Knotweed.

Wild Olympics Campaign: After introduction of the Wild Olympics Wilderness & Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 2014 by Representative Derek Kilmer and Senator Patty Murray, the bill sits in the House without much hope of its getting out of committee this year—especially because the Republican majority is pushing for more logging on public lands, more mining, and more fracking—with more devastating consequences for our natural heritage. Congressman Doc Hastings, of eastern Washington, refuses to pass any wilderness bills. The one light at the end of the tunnel is that he has announced he will be retiring at the end of this year's term.

Recent Progress: Illegal motorized vehicle use on the Boundary trail, paralleling the Park's northern boundary, has become problematic, especially since it could compromise the qualities for which it is under consideration for Wilderness designation. DNR has been contacted but it's a good idea to for the public to check in and ask about the situation. Contact person is Brian.Turner@dnr.wa.gov.

DNR and the Landslide: OFCO believes DNR needs to review its logging and permitting policies in the aftermath of the Oso slide. Our hearts are with the victims and their families. A comprehensive article about logging and the Oso slide can be found at: kuow.org/post/dnr-investigates-out-bounds-clear-cut-other-possible-factors-oso-landslide. See Josey Paul's editorial, p. 7.

Protecting Marbled Murrelets in the OESF: A Continuing Saga

by Marcy Golde

In early April, at the request of OFCO and the Seattle Audubon Society, the Washington Forest Law Center (WFLC) filed appeals in Clallam and Jefferson Counties of two clearcut timber sales in the Goodman Creek Marbled Murrelet Management Area (MMMA) in the Olympic Experimental State Forest (OESF).

DNR filed for these sales, known respectively as Rainbow Rock and Good Mint, last fall. Rainbow Rock

is a 70-acre tract that contains 12 streams and two wetlands and will require about 2/3 of a mile of new and reconstructed road, less than a tenth of which is to be deactivated after logging. The stands vary from 36 to 61 years in age. I found on my site visit that the trees along the road were growing very well, and headed for murrelet habitat in the future. This parcel was previously deferred because of OFCO's objection to harvest in the MMMA.

Good Mint is a clearcut sale of 235 acres, close to half of this acreage in the MMMA and 52 acres adjacent. It contains 59 streams, including a Type 1, Goodman Creek, and one wetland. There would be nearly 2,100 feet of new and reconstructed road, including 800 feet in the Riparian Management Zone of Goodman Creek. The trees are aged 33–45 years, and the land spans the border between Clallam and Jefferson Counties.

Despite our objections, the sales were approved and, on March 4, were also approved by the Board of Natural Resources and scheduled for sale in May.

The WFLC appeal summarizes the threats as follows: "The current threat posed by the timber sales is impacts to surrounding occupied habitat from fragmentation and resulting predation. The strategic concern is that logging in MMMA's will reduce the likelihood that DNR will adopt the 2008 Science Report (or an acceptable version of that Report) in the OESF."

The story behind these appeals goes back almost two decades. In 1997 DNR signed a contract with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service called a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), allowing some "take" or killing, of species listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act, in exchange for major, and clearly stated, protections. No one knew enough to delineate those protections for the murrelet, so a five-step process was agreed to. The last step was a Long-Term Conservation Strategy (LTCS), to be completed by 2006 at the latest. DNR (eight years later) is now working on the LTCS, finally due for public comment in late 2014 or early 2015.

In 2008 DNR issued their Science Report on the needs of the murrelet for use in the LTCS.

In the meantime an Interim Strategy is in place, which has continued to add protections due to pressure from OFCO, Sierra Club, Seattle Audubon and other groups. DNR, however, never included many of the key elements of the Science Report, such as large, contiguous MMMA's. These have various requirements in the OESF. In the meantime, in 2013 the courts ruled against DNR's effort to harvest 12,000 acres of previously protected murrelet habitat in southwestern Washington.

Buffering the Marbled Murrelet

by Josey Paul

Murrelets are extremely difficult to see because their nesting activity is entirely designed to foil sight predators. Their chicks are helpless sitting on an open branch, and their primary nesting mortality comes from sight predators. So it is critical that crows, jays, ravens and such are not able to find murrelet nests. The adults switch off on egg sitting during the dark hours, just after sunset and just before sunrise, to avoid sight detection. The birds come in fast and low in the dark, also to avoid sight detection. They nest in dense forest stands where sight predators—mostly corvids—are less likely to forage. The adults take on a drab feather pattern during nesting season to avoid sight detection while sitting on their egg.

So DNR rules which, for the most part, require sight detection to establish nesting habitat, make it likely that nesting habitat won't be discovered or protected. These rules are not an accident.

DNR should be required to prove that murrelets do not nest in forest stands suitable for murrelet nesting habitat before the agency can log within 328 feet of those stands. DNR could actively establish the absence of murrelets with marine radar and ground-listening surveys taken during the breeding season during the times when murrelet pairs are changing nesting duties.

DNR's 328-foot buffer is a managed buffer, which allows a lot of logging within that buffer. That clearing activity attracts the corvids that are responsible for most nesting mortality. The alternative 165-foot no-cut buffer is not wide enough to protect murrelets. The buffers need to be 328 feet of undisturbed forest, at a minimum.

Murrelets are fast becoming extirpated along the strait, and their numbers are plunging faster than these low-productivity birds can tolerate. DNR rules should be challenged as being too skewed in favor of logging to represent meaningful protection. The agency has the ability to prove absence of birds and should be forced to do so, rather than being allowed to assume absence of murrelets on the basis of a lack of evidence for their presence.

Reflection on Ecosystem (Mis)management Harvesting the Biggest and Best—and Impoverishing the Future

by Josey Paul

Harvest pressures do terrible damage to fish, trees and other living things. The thing about an ecosystem is that

everything is connected. Harvest regulations have significant impacts on fish size and fecundity, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. There's the problem of hatcheries, which are genetically enfeebling salmon. And the loss of habitat. And how the changes in fish size echo through the entire ecosystem, affecting us in many ways and coming back around to affect the fish all over again.

Not that size pressure isn't important. The ocean used to have an entirely different species structure based on size. Larger fish actually had a greater biomass than smaller fish species, such as forage fish—just the opposite of what we see today. Two factors used to sustain this inverted structure: large predators moved slowly and needed fewer calories to survive; small fish reproduced extremely fast, making them a viable food resource for a larger biomass.

Now we have lost the large fish, but also the small fish. The Pysht nearshore used to be a vast eelgrass meadow. Herring used to mass spawn on the leaves, providing food for predators. With the logging of the Pysht watershed, staggering amounts of fine sediment washed off clearcuts, first smothering salmon redds and then smothering the nearshore eelgrass. The herring no longer have a place to spawn.

Everything is affected by our over-harvesting of flora and fauna. Marbled Murrelets used to have those herring as a food source, giving them the energy to sustain nests as far as 50 miles from the ocean. Now the murrelets are finding few forage fish and have had to switch to lower life forms with much less energy. We take away their old-growth habitat, wipe out their food resources and then say, hey, they can use some scrubby, high-elevation habitat on Forest Service land 50 miles from the sea.

Here's what science writer Natasha Loder said a few years back (<http://conservationmagazine.org/2008/07/point-of-no-return/>) referring to fish harvests: "Consider, for example, a farmer who, from year to year, grew seeds from only the smallest, weakest plants in the field. He would hardly be surprised to find his crops growing successively smaller and feebler as the years went on. Good farmers grow seeds from the largest or most productive plants and thus maximize their yields."

Yes, we seed savers save our seeds from our best plants, so our crops get better year after year. Our crops get better because we select plants best adapted to our microclimate. Loggers do just the opposite—they replant with genetically inferior trees. Over the centuries, our forest trees became acclimated to their own microclimate, just as salmon acclimated and genetically adapted to individual streams. My cool, wet valley is much different than Peter's higher, drier, sunnier and

warmer site just a few miles away at Salt Creek. The trees in my forest were the same species, but genetically different than the forest at Peter's farm, just as the salmon in my stream are different than the salmon in Salt Creek, even though they are the same species. And there were normal evolutionary pressures so that the fittest trees produced the most well-adapted seedlings. Our original forests also benefited from the entire, intact ecosystem, such as fertile soil, bountiful runs of salmon that conveyed marine-derived nutrients into the forests, and a canopy ecosystem that generated nitrogen for older trees.

Now we cut down forests on a 30- to 60-year rotation. Then we replant with nursery trees that were grown from stock sourced from other places and adapted to different conditions. We no longer have forests, but tree farms where the soil is damaged, the genetic structure of the trees enfeebled, and an ecosystem that no longer functions as it did when our forests evolved.

We won't save murrelets—or orcas—unless we allow a healthy nearshore ecosystem to return, which means we have to reform logging and animal harvests, and stop wiping out the salmon that used to convey massive amounts of marine nutrients into the forests. Only then can our trees resume a normal pace of growth.

What I find frustrating is that we are out of time. There is a principle in ecology called depensation, which means when a species falls to a critically low level, that species can no longer recover. We see that in salmon. Western Strait fall chum, for example, used to be the salmon with the most biomass in our streams in this area. They are now mostly gone, affected by harvest pressures and because they are especially vulnerable to fine sediment in streams. They build mass redds in low-gradient segments of low-elevation streams, the very places where sediment from clearcut logging and road building settles out. They have not recovered, just as the cod have not been able to recover once their numbers fell to critical levels.

Seven billion people cannot make a living by eating animals or by ruining the ecosystem. We're trying to do both.

Summer Volunteers Wanted to Survey the Queets!

by Shelley Spalding

OFCO is looking for volunteers this summer, for important field surveys in the Queets watershed. If you've never done this kind of work, don't worry—we'll give you all the training you need. It's a great opportunity to get to know the terrain while doing

valuable work and enjoying the good fellowship of like-minded folks.

OFCO is a long-time proponent of collaborative efforts to protect and restore our beloved Olympic Peninsula forests and streams. One of our most successful recent collaborative efforts has been our citizen road survey and monitoring program on Olympic National Forest (ONF) lands. For the past three years we have collaborated with the ONF and Great Old Broads for Wilderness to conduct surveys on the condition of roads and trails already existing or proposed for reconstruction in the South Fork Skokomish watershed. We have focused surveys on those roads and trails that have the greatest potential to impact the watershed's streams and rivers and their inhabitants.

This year we will take our "boots on the ground" surveys to the Queets watershed. The ONF is planning a commercial thinning sale within a 44,000-acre action area. We plan to gather baseline data in the watershed on roads planned for reconstruction and located in Riparian Reserves and/or roads that pose a risk to streams and rivers in the Queets watershed. Information from our surveys will help the Forest Service and others assess potential impacts from re-opening roads that have not been used for decades and determine how these roads can be treated adequately post-logging to prevent sediment delivery to streams. This information also will be useful to forest conservation organizations throughout the Pacific Northwest where similar "thinning" projects are being planned.

Success of this project depends on citizen volunteers—people like you! Even if you have never been a citizen road condition surveyor, we will train you in data collection, GPS use, map and compass reading, and identification of features such as tension cracks and post-construction channel adjustments that can contribute sediment to streams. And, thanks to a generous grant from The Burning Foundation and in-kind contributions of OFCO board members, we will be able to provide food for meals plus accommodations in a lovely cabin overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Each survey expedition will be for three days, with two overnights. The following are dates we are considering for citizen volunteer surveys: July 4–6; August 1–3; August 8–10; and/or August 15–17.

Please contact Shelley at saschar44@gmail.com if you are interested and willing to partake in this important work. It should be fun!

Eyes in the Forest: OFCO on Patrol

by John Woolley

Off Highway Vehicle Use – All-terrain Vehicle (ATV), or OHV, activity in a quality salmon stream caught the eye of a concerned citizen. He started the action by getting me out in the field to see for myself. Looking at maps helps, but the vagueness of motorized routes in use is not clear until you get into the field, or ground truth the situation. ATV intrusion over a no-longer-adequate DNR berm has been allowing motorized access onto a mile of old road in Olympic National Park (ONP). We followed the riparian invasion from Deer Park Road across West Siebert Creek and on to East Siebert crossing. Siebert is the only salmon creek on the strait that has a decent rest pool for salmon before they go up the tributaries to spawn.

OFCO has written Sarah Creachbaum, Superintendent of ONP, and received a response that she would take action immediately. Rumors of the OHV route into quality salmon habitat are now confirmed. DNR has also been contacted, as that state agency can repair the roadblock-berm and discourage use of the muddy route into the park. DNR's Brian Turner has responded to OFCO's request for action. A camera will be set up for a second time on this ATV route in the park. Currently DNR is waiting for park Superintendent Sarah Creachbaum to give the go-ahead to block the access.

Speaking of Mudslides: I checked out DNR's proposed biomass cut on the Duckabush River. Logging will occur upslope from near the Olympic National Forest (ONF) Service's Interrorem Cabin, extending nearly to the Mt. Jupiter Trail. Much of the 2,000-foot slope is covered with younger trees. The old growth is south of FS 2510, while most of the cut is to the north. Brilliant orange ribbons define the area and blue ribbons mark "leave" trees. Our job is to watch the old growth so the contractor does not add it to his take. DNR staff admits it happens. Note: The Ranger Hole Trail to the Duckabush River starts at the nearby FS cabin. It's a thought—the trail is short and you should walk it. The cabin is a rental, recently advertised by the Forest Service.

Dosewallips River: Running full and clear, the Dose has escaped a major flush for another year. The end of the road's informal trailhead and camp area are showing why management is needed. Parking at the end of the road washout is chaotic, and difficult conditions are resulting in wetland intrusion. Informal camping in the area, and at the river, was under control at first, but recent ATV use in the forested bottomland indicates a need for ONF

action. Toilet facilities are lacking because of budget limitations, especially for maintenance. Last year's herbicide application was the first. Young sprouts are appearing, which likely portends a second application this year. Herb Robert replaces several native species; animals do not eat it and eventually it will inundate much of the valley floor. Then again, herbicide application is not good for salmon, adding to the accumulating poisons we spread.

Dosewallips Engineered Log Jams have been added with the aim of aiding King Salmon's return to the river. The engineering projects appear stable, but OFCO is concerned that the FS has not pushed hard enough to start acquiring monitoring data. We do want to know what these eyesores do to the river. This is a five-year pilot project—to be repeated only if successful. Note: I observed 17 elk in a field down river, heard a conspiracy (flock) of raven voices, the whistle of the Varied Thrush, and saw some Ruffed Grouse sprinting across the road.

Discovery Bay – a place to sit in the midst: DNR has provided a gap in the gate so folks can walk 200 feet to a small peninsula that juts out into Discovery Bay. Shrubs and cedar have been planted, clear waters surround you and, at low tide, it is suggested you not explore the tidal mud. Good idea: it's fun to stand on terra firma and look, with no danger of bogging down! Park just south of the trains.

OFCO encourages you to get out on Forest Service and DNR lands and let us know what you see.

Editorial

Thoughts on the Big Mudslide and Logging

by Josey Paul

DNR is a publicly run logging company. That logging culture runs deep, and it's unlikely that any lands commissioner can overcome its bias. Usually, the culture within the agency changes the commissioner, not the other way around.

Unfortunately, the Legislature set up DNR to have a dual role: basically, a logging company is put in charge of protecting the environment from logging. These dual roles never work; the commerce side of the equation always dominates.

I'm relieved that the logging issue is finally being discussed. There was a lot more logging on that slope above Oso than the 7 acres, and it's well established that removing a mature forest from unstable slopes promotes landslides.

This is the time to get the media to look into all the other slides caused by logging—or where logging is the likely suspect.

Protecting a Rare Plant Community: Put It in the NRCA!

by John Woolley

Near Mt. Walker there's an unusual tree/shrub community composed of Douglas-fir, Western hemlock, rhododendron, and evergreen huckleberry. This association may be limited to just five remnant communities. The site is adjacent to the Devils Lake Natural Resource Conservation Area (NRCA), a special designation for ecologically valuable DNR land.



Western hemlock

OFCO became interested in the Devils Vista DNR sale near Devils Lake on Mt. Walker after hearing scuttlebutt about the lack of field work on this plant community. Five OFCO volunteers signed on, convinced that this area needed more ground truthing, and went into the field on four separate occasions to learn more about the site. Consequently OFCO concluded that proposed logging of unit numbers 2, 3 and 4 seriously would impact the remaining 30 to 50 acres of this natural community on the north and east slopes of Mt. Walker.

This tree/shrub community exists below 1,500 feet in elevation and receives rainfall of 25 to 55 inches a year. The Mt. Walker site is reportedly one of the three finest examples in the world.

OFCO disagrees with DNR's assessment that, if logged, likely it will grow back. The many weather changes and increasingly heavy rain spells we have been experiencing make it clear that the future of a hillside is not something we humans can predict. Logging of Units 2, 3 and 4 also would enable windthrow of the taller conifers. These trees are vital to the Marbled Murrelet as

potential nesting trees, in addition to enhancing opportunities for Northern Spotted Owl habitat.

The Devils Vista example of Douglas-fir/Western hemlock/Pacific rhododendron and evergreen huckleberry is in DNR's database. Budget considerations likely have contributed to DNR staff not accessing this site as thoroughly as they would like. Washington state has determined that such rare natural sites should be put off limits to logging and have created categories of resource protection. OFCO therefore has recommended that DNR transfer three units of the Devils Vista sale and add them to the adjacent Devils Lake NRCA.



Near the units proposed to be cut

Jefferson County Commissioners Join Drive to Protect Devils Vista from Logging

On March 2 the three Jefferson County Commissioners (Phil Johnson, David Sullivan and John Austin) wrote to DNR urging that the Devils Vista timber sale not go forward, citing the significant degradation it would cause to the rare plant association—Doug-fir/Western hemlock/Pacific rhododendron/evergreen huckleberry—that grows there. Like OFCO, the commissioners request that the 415 acres be added to the adjacent Devils Lake Natural Area.

OFCO applauds this action by the commissioners, and joins them in the hope that DNR will, in fact, see fit to protect this land, cited as "one of the top three best remaining examples of this community type in the world and the only viable occurrence" on DNR land.

Special mention also goes to OFCO members Peter Bahls, with Northwest Watershed Institute, and Linda Saunders and Tom Meyer, who especially have worked hard to inform elected leaders and the public about the special nature of the Devils Vista tract and other watershed stewardship issues.

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