

SUBMIT COMMENTS TO THE MT. HOOD NATIONAL FOREST ABOUT THE PROPOSED POLALLIE COOPER TIMBER SALE BY FEBRUARY 25TH, 2016!

Potential talking points include:

Mt. Hood National Forest originally proposed the Polallie Cooper Timber Sale in 1998, and cancelled it in 2005 after fierce community opposition. Now it's back and over twice as large, totaling 2,830 acres with 12 miles of road building.

- The proposed project includes 39 road segments, some in roadless forest that is 180 years old. These never-logged forests (*more than half* of the Polallie Cooper Timber Sale area) are critically important to sensitive species, clean water, and carbon storage, and **should be analyzed for potential additions to nearby wilderness areas, not commercial logging.**
- **The proposal would log and build 4.5 miles of roads in the Crystal Springs drinking water aquifer.** The aquifer is shallow, is highly permeable to the vertical movement of water, and is unconfined, meaning it is not protected by an impervious layer of material above it. Building new roads, and renovating existing roads, in the Crystal Springs watershed is specifically prohibited by federal legislation, and the Forest Service should comply with these protective standards.
- Commercial logging has long-term impacts on species dependent on riparian areas by intact streams and wetlands, which will likely be adversely affected by climate change. **The Forest Service should not log & build roads in 247 acres of established Riparian Reserves,** or in the Wild & Scenic River Corridor, which currently provide high quality habitat to aquatic organisms.
- The Polallie Cooper Timber Sale is one of three large logging projects the Forest Service is concurrently planning across the north side of Mt. Hood that will impact over 10,000 acres of forest, much of it never logged before. **The Forest Service must accurately analyze the cumulative impacts of logging the Red Hill, Lava and Polallie Cooper Timber Sales.**
- **The Polallie Cooper Timber Sale logs in Critical Habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl, and the sale will degrade 687 acres of high-quality habitat for seven owl pairs.** The Forest Service admits the project will degrade Spotted Owl critical habitat for up to 40 years, while increasing the type of fragmented habitat used by the highly competitive barred owl.
- Polallie Cooper has high recreational value that will be adversely impacted. In addition to the Wild and Scenic East Fork Hood River corridor, the Cooper Spur winter sports area, trails like *Zigzag Vista 678A, Zigzag 678, East Fork 650, and Dog River 675* weave through these forests and would be temporarily closed and impacted by logging. The project will also limit access to Pete's Pile, a popular rock climbing area. Where conflicts arise, the **Forest Service should prioritize high-quality recreational opportunities over timber sales,** as these popular activities are growing the local economy more than any other sector.

The Forest Service calls all of Polallie Cooper a “Fuels Reduction” project. However, much of it looks like a timber sale, when you consider:

1) *Healthy, older forests should not be commercially logged under the guise of “fuel reduction.”*

More than half the project is planned in mature and diverse native forests, with large fire-resilient trees that have survived past burns and are providing excellent habitat for wildlife. Meanwhile, half of Polallie Cooper contains moist mixed-conifer forest which has been virtually unaltered by fire suppression.

2) *“Fuels reduction” isn’t always effective in altering fire behavior*

- Forest fires result from and are driven by a multitude of factors; topography, the fire history of the environment in question and most importantly, weather. These factors usually overwhelm the significance of fuels present.
- Many fuel reduction projects have little influence on fires because the probability that a fire will start in the treated area in the time frame which fuel reductions are presumed to work (about 10-20 years at best) is extremely small.
- A single fuel treatment, such as prescribed burning and thinning, cannot resolve fuel and fire issues over the long term and may actually lead to an increase in fuels that require prompt follow-up treatments.

3) *Road-building always increases the risk of human-caused fire* ignitions in the forest, especially in the areas that currently have no road access.

4) *Fuels reduction projects have adverse “externalities”* such as loss of biodiversity, sedimentation from logging roads into streams, and reduction of wildlife habitat. These forests have been evolutionarily shaped by fire, not logging.

5) *Fire, even a large high-severity fire, is good for forests and wildlife.*

Rather than a sign of unhealthy forests, natural processes like fire are vital for forest ecosystems, as they increase biodiversity, provide habitat for fire-dependent species and naturally *thin* forests.

Encourage the Hood River Ranger District to prioritize water, wildlife and recreation over logging in this important area!

Send comments to District Ranger Janeen Tervo, c/o Casey Gatz, Hood River Ranger District, 6780 Highway 35, Mt. Hood/Parkdale, OR 97041

or email: comments-pacificnorthwest-mthood-hoodriver@fs.fed.us