

December 5, 2002

Gary Larsen
Forest Supervisor
Mt. Hood National Forest
16400 Champion Way
Sandy, OR 97055

Dear Mr. Larsen,

My name is Rebecca Zinger, and I am a concerned citizen and student attending Portland State University. I am very interested in issues surrounding the timber practices currently being used in our publicly owned, national forests.

In the past three months, I have had the privilege of visiting the Upper timber sale which is projected to be auctioned off in the next six months. I have had the opportunity to hike the entire outer boundaries of this sale, and I have spent considerable time exploring each of the sale units extensively. Further, I have read the environmental assessment document coinciding with the proposed Upper timber sale.

My view regarding the issue of logging on public lands is that it must be stopped. These lands are a public asset, and may soon be the only remaining recreational forests available. As a lover of the outdoors, both for recreational purposes and simple, sheer beauty, I simply cannot weigh these interests over the contributions made by the forests to enhance biodiversity, and foster both clean air and water. Therefore, the Upper Sale containing 194 acres of matrix land, and 35 acres of riparian reserves, must be removed from the upcoming auction, this sale must not be sold.

That being said, this letter will turn to a more specific conversation concerning the Upper sale and the issues deserving attention surrounding this sale, if indeed you are incapable of altogether canceling the Upper timber sale.

Within the Upper environmental assessment, on page two under the section titled "Growth," the document states the desired future conditions as "having growth rates commensurate with the site's potential." Clearly, statements as these exhibit a tendency to see the public forest lands as a crop or product rather than a forest. Forests are an essential part of providing clean air and water to the entire population. We must manage forests as forests, for future generations, not as crops for income generation.

More specifically in this case, one must consider the issue of clean water. The projected Upper timber sale is located within the North Fork watershed. Further cutting within this watershed, clearly poses a threat to the sustained availability of clean water for 185,000 Oregonians.

Similarly, when communicating about water, this sale has a projected plan of thinning then fertilizing the matrix land. This proposes a problem for water quality. After the thin process, it is clear that much of the fertilizer placed aerially will, through the runoff process; end up in the streams that feed our drinking water systems.

I also have a concern for the resulting rise in stream temperature that would quite likely arise from this action. This sale is only projected to have a 30 feet no-cut buffer zone surrounding the streams, therefore from a result of the lacking shade present after the cut, a rise in stream temperature is inevitable. This rise will have a detrimental effect on both salmon restoration and maintenance in this region. Temperature gain becomes an even larger problem when you consider the cumulative effects provided by so many, already present, commercial thin sections in this watershed.

When speaking about water issues, I am taking into consideration both the human-use of the watershed and fish-use issues. When I visited the units of the Upper sale, the areas slated for logging appear to pose a clear runoff threat. Most of the areas involved in this sale are located on slopes directly above a stream area. I saw many areas of concern where it appeared that after the commercial thin, many of the streams would simply be filled in by massive amounts of sediment and debris runoff.

The issue of cumulative impact brings about another concern. No where in the environmental assessment for the Upper sale is there mention of this issue. Upon exploring the Upper sale boundaries, I found that this sale is nearly surrounded by either commercial thins or clear cuts. Clearly, a proper environmental assessment may not be made without taking into considerations the status of the surrounding areas. One sale unit does not work and exist independently of another from an ecological perspective.

Cumulative impact indeed has an influence on both animal presence and life patterns. On my visits to the Upper timber sale, I was fortunate to come across three deer. My concern for these deer, in relation to the lack of cover and habitat in the surrounding areas, is another major loss of habitat for an already disrupted population. Further, on my visits, I witnessed countless occurrences of both elk and deer scat.

Also regarding the issues of animal disturbances, I must take issue with the proposed road building for this sale. Many areas of the Mt. Hood National Forest are already over-populated with roads; therefore it seems excessive to build another 4000-9000 feet of permanent road and 2300 feet of temporary road. Not only is this area already heavily impacted by the use of off road vehicles on roads that are supposed to be closed, government subsidy for the building of logging roads seems, and is, ridiculous.

To make matters worse, portions of this projected road are to be built in a portion of the riparian reserve; clearly this will negatively affect the health of the riparian area. When I visited this unit (number five) of the Upper Sale where the riparian road is proposed, I was appalled. This section of Unit five appeared to be one of the healthiest and most

alive areas of the unit. Within a ten-foot-circle in this said area, I witnessed five species of mushrooms and found a distinct presence of multiple varieties of moss.

Scattered throughout Unit three of this sale are some phenomenal old growth trees that survived a previous fire. While these trees are marked as leave trees, there is much reason for concern about their ability to survive after all the surrounding trees are eliminated. Not only will this destabilize the soil and the root systems, but without the surrounding trees these few remaining old-growth trees are extremely susceptible to being blown down in future storms. There is already a huge instance of healthy trees having been blown down into the sale from a previous clear cut that stands immediately adjacent to unit number three.

Finally, I have concerns that the environmental assessment for the Upper timber sale was reflective of an older map that appeared to contain less acreage and different boundaries than the new map. The old map showed a total of seven units and appeared to cover much less area than the new map reflects. The new map contains only four units and differing boundaries than the original map. If this concern proves to be true, then this sale of the Upper units must be stopped and a new environmental assessment, reflective of the new boundaries and included acres, must be done.

Clearly, after having spent many days at this sale reviewing the area to be sold and cut in the future, I see no reason for any of the projected actions to take place. This portion of the Mt. Hood National Forest must be removed from the auction block and set aside to both enhance and promote ecological systems and biodiversity, as well as to foster future sustainable systems of clean air and water.

Please consider these comments from an extremely concerned citizen. I thank you for your consideration.

Rebecca M. Zinger

