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Summer 2007

Issue #39

100 Valleys

A Quarterly Publication for the Supporters of Umpqua Watersheds

Spotted Owls: In the Hot Seat Again

Francis Eatherington

The Northern Spotted Owl is back in the headlines. Even though its numbers are declining, more of the habitat Spotted owls depend on would be made available for logging. Add in other stresses, such as the appearance of the Barred owl and West Nile Virus, and the Spotted owl could be in big trouble.



The Spotted owl has been protected as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) since 1990. ESA protections include two items: a recovery plan and a designation of critical habitat necessary for the owl to survive. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is in charge of implementing these protections. Under the Bush administration's oversight, instead of strengthening protections for a declining species, the USFWS is weakening protections by opening up thousands of additional acres to logging and destruction of Spotted owl habitat.

This spring the USFWS proposed both a recovery plan and new boundaries for critical habitat. Unfortunately, political interference has put science on sidelines and pacifies a timber industry lawsuit to increase logging. The good news is that YOU have an opportunity to comment on these plans.

Recovery Plan: You have until August 2007 to comment on the recovery plan. (Do it now, don't put it off!) It would seem a Spotted owl recovery plan would increase habitat so the owl population could also increase, especially since the barred owl

is taking up some of that habitat too. But the Bush administration wrote a Recovery Plan that allows at least 27% more Spotted owl habitat to be logged than the current protections under the Northwest Forest Plan. The USFWS will "remove" (shoot) Barred owls in an attempt to make up for the additional old growth logging on public lands (Private land is not required to help recover endangered species).

You can get more information about the owl recovery plan, and submit written comments at:
<http://audubonaction.org/campaign/spottedowl>

Recovery of the spotted owl is important because it is about the health of forests, not just this one species. Best available science, not Bush administration

appointees, should determine how to protect the old growth forests that owls need to survive.

Critical Habitat: On June 12, 2007, the USFWS released a new designation of Critical Habitat. The USFWS had originally designated critical habitat in 1992, after the owl was first protected under the ESA. The BLM is not allowed to "adversely modify" critical habitat, such as clearcut it. The USFWS wants to change that so there will be 1.5 million acres LESS critical habitat (from 6.9 million acres down to 5.4 million). It makes no sense to reduce the critical habitat of an endangered species to help it recover.

One example of an old growth forests that the BLM could log under the proposed new critical habitat designation would be the Screen

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Our Mission

Umpqua Watersheds is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the watersheds in the Umpqua River Basin and beyond.

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From the desk Executive Director

Hit the Ground Running

I recently read through several years of 100 Valleys and I am invigorated, moved, and appalled. It's been such tough going around here. The level of commitment the people of Umpqua Watersheds have shown, and continue to show, to keep the forest alive and wild and to protect the rivers, the soil and the animals impresses and inspires me. It is our gift to the Earth, to ourselves, to our community and to the future. That is true love. I think about what Douglas County would look like without your work and support and I thank you all very, very much.

We are certainly encouraged to continue this work by the current administration with its steady program to eviscerate every forest protection it can reach...and its reach is long. The social damage to this community and the ecological devastation absolutely inherent in the administrations most recent attempt to curtail habitat protection for the spotted owl must be opposed and stopped. And we are the only ones who will do this.

Fortunately for us, we have allies—numerous and impressive allies. Our partner organizations cooperate with us on both regional and national issues. Here at home, we have allies in unexpected places. Everyone who loves the forest and the rivers and can see their value (outside of money) is actually our ally. And many people recognize that truth and act on it. The line between “us” and “allies” wavers a bit in places, it seems. Some of our allies have provided a significant portion of our recent operating expenses, and we thank them most sincerely.

Every critique of this new Bush initiative involves the phrase, “reignite the timber wars of the 90s.” This we cannot allow. Umpqua Watersheds has worked very hard over the years to develop relationships with our public land managers and with those in the timber industry. A space has been made for the discussion of conservationist goals and visions. These essential gains cannot be sacrificed to the human failings of greed and hubris. Both the forest and the community suffer far too much in any “war.”

Our community has options that involve keeping the mature forests we love and need while ensuring a sustainable forest-based economic present and future. We have hundreds of thousands of acres that need to be thinned for restoration. This can involve over thirty years of forestry work without cutting another old-growth tree. We also have an opportunity to develop a market for timber raised under impressively organic and sustainable standards. (see letter, pg 4) These are not new ideas but maybe, finally, these are ideas whose time has come.

My first few months here at Umpqua Watersheds have been an adventure. My warmest thanks to the Board and to the staff of UW for all you have done to welcome and help me. I have had so much to learn in the last few months. To all the folks who have shared their time, energy, knowledge, and love of the wild with me, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Judith Osborn

ThankYou ThankYou ThankYou ThankYou ThankYou

To all of our Funders and Supporters who have once again come through for us: Thank you so much. We really could not do this work without you. Your support encourages and nourishes our labors.

Umpqua Watersheds was recently awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Jubitz Foundation, if our supporters would match it. In less than two weeks, we had the necessary matching funds. We are particularly proud that contributions came in amounts from \$15 through \$1000 and everything in between. It is all of us together who get this done.

ThankYou ThankYou ThankYou ThankYou ThankYou

The Blame Game

Judith Osborn

Douglas County is in financial trouble. In the Sunday News Review Insert of May 27th, 2007, the Douglas County Board of Commissioners and Department Heads want us to understand why this is true and what it may mean for the county. In the Q & A box on the first page they ask, “what is the safety net” and “why did the safety net end.”

The safety net ended because the federal government “felt the issues that were preventing management on federal forest lands would be solved in a reasonable period of time....”

“Why wasn’t the problem solved?” they continue. Their simple answer is “The environmental movement gained momentum, and the public opinion about logging on federal forest lands changed. Court decisions have generally favored the environmental perspective which has reduced active management on federal forest lands....”

What conclusion can we come to but that the environmentalists did this to us?

Not a wisp, not a whisper about the idea of responsible planning on the part of our public officials. How many years have passed since it has been clear that other plans to fund necessary services must be implemented because revenues from federal lands would be decreasing and disappearing? Fifteen?

Also entirely absent is any critique of the use we have made of our “renewable resources.” Did the mills automate? Were jobs lost through automation? Did market realities change? Have timber prices suffered the fate of many natural resources as transnational corporations move markets all over the globe?

Blaming this situation on environmentalists, on the front page of their paper, is absolutely unacceptable. It is untrue, cowardly and inflammatory. This kind of simplistic argument to deal with an extremely complex problem shows a real lack of understanding of modern realities, not to mention a lack of the leadership we need. Perhaps they really do not know any better. Unfortunately, that level of ignorance will only dig us deeper into this hole in which we find ourselves.

Douglas County is richly endowed with abundant natural resources and with many concerned and intelligent people who want to see this community succeed on every level. As conservationists, we are concerned about our future, the quality of life we are able to sustain and the use to which we put our resources. For a county that prides itself on an ideal of self-sufficiency, it must be hard to need a federal safety net in the first place and downright depressing not to be able to fund our own library adequately and our own police, as citizens do all over this country.

They do it by paying taxes, not by blaming environmentalists.

We must never let this kind of statement go unanswered.

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BOARDERS & BEYOND

... brings you information on diverse challenges in the neighborhood.

LNG: An Unsafe, Uneconomical Proposal

Michael Fisher

I will start with a reasonable question about the proposed LNG (liquefied natural gas) terminal and 36" pipeline from Coos Bay to Malin, Oregon. Why do we need it? According to most sources that I have researched, if only a few of the proposed terminals were to become reality, we would have around 200% of our actual annual usage in the seven western states. It is a fact that about 90% of this gas would be headed for a California market, where several terminals have already been rejected by citizens of those communities. Some folks have suggested that we will have cheaper rates for gas in Oregon, but that's not true. Prices would be the same, regardless of the proximity of the source. Others suggest that this unnecessary enterprise will, at least, provide jobs for Oregonians; I'm told that there will be around 60 permanent jobs, mostly to employees with special skills from other areas. And there would be some construction jobs during the construction phase, but many of those would be from outside the area, and would be temporary.

Now, what would this cost us? There is a bill sitting in committee that would authorize \$60 million of our tax money to dredge the channel to accommodate the more than 1,000 foot long, 12 to 14 story high LNG transport vessels with millions of gallons of LNG. Many people believe that this dredging would cost much more in the form of destroying oyster and clam beds, and endangered species, which might include the fishing industry in the area. Many hundreds of tons of smog producing CO₂, the main component of greenhouse gas, are expected to be pumped into the local pristine air from the LNG degasification facility, from the refinery,

from the 24 / 7 flare, from 84 or more LNG transport vessels arriving annually, from locomotives, and from trucks. The cost here would be a health hazard to the people in the area, as well as a major contribution to global warming.

A second cost would involve the landowners who would lose the use of their land, because of eminent domain, where the 231 mile pipeline would be located. In addition to lowering their property values, this 36" pipeline would be a constant and significant danger to those who live along that route: There would be no odor to identify a leak, and the vapors or explosions would endanger humans in the area. In addition, the pipeline would cross five major rivers; the Coos, Coquille, Rogue, South Umpqua and Klamath as well as countless streams that are spawning grounds for salmon and steelhead.

Finally, there could be a terrible cost in safety from the large tanks close to an airport and huge tankers coming in 84 times per year, in an area that is labeled as a tsunami zone in an active earthquake area, not to mention the possibility of terrorist activity. The children and faculty of schools in the area, as well as the residents within the US government (1 1/2 miles), and US Coast Guard (1 1/2 miles), and LNG industry agreed upon danger zone would be in harms way several times a week by ships containing 4 billion cubic feet of LNG coming within 6/10 mile from their school. Those folks that appreciate Oregon's natural beauty and respect landowners' rights can go to: <http://citizensagainstlng.googlepages.com/> to get talking points for writing letters to the editor or lawmakers. (Michael Fisher, 586 Whistlers Ln., Roseburg, Or. 673-4288)

Rite Of Passage

Stuart Liebowitz

The boy beamed in anticipation as his father handed him the car keys.

"We need to talk, son. Now before you drive off, we need to refigure your allowance."

They sat down together as his father did the calculations.

"We get 35 miles per gallon in your car, so every 5,000 miles driven produces 2857 pounds of CO₂."

"I took science, Dad. What are you doing?"

"I'm figuring your carbon allowance to help reduce global warming. I want you to have a livable world when you are my age. You might think about taking the bus or carpooling."

His son rolled his eyes as he clutched the keys tighter.

"Have you put those two compact fluorescent lights in your room?"

His son shook his head.

"That will cost you 200 pounds."

"I liked the old allowance system better."

"I'm going to assume you will keep the tires inflated and the car tuned. That will save you 1500 pounds. Have you been turning the thermostat down to 68 degrees in your room?. That will cost you 1400 pounds."

His son was beginning to think he'd be lucky to get his car out of the driveway.

The father stood up, feeling satisfied.

"I'll have the exact carbon allowance figured by tomorrow. Meanwhile, I've got to get to the travel agent for our plane tickets to New York."

"Uh, Dad- Plane travel is one of the worst contributors of CO₂."

"But this is our summer vacation!"

"We need to talk, Dad," he said as they sat back down. "Now before you fly off, we need to refigure your carbon allowance."

His Dad started to roll his eyes, and then he listened.

For more information on your carbon footprint and what you can do to stop global warming, call the Douglas County Global Warming Coalition at 672-9819.

Conservation UPDATE:

Francis Eatherington

ATTEMPTS TO EASE LOGGING RESTRICTIONS ON PUBLIC LANDS

Due to your letters, our staff and lawyers, old growth timber sales on the BLM are stopped in a holding pattern. Many were stopped last November when the courts found the BLM sidestepped the Survey and Manage program of the Northwest Forest Plan. This program requires the BLM to look for uncommon wildlife associated with old growth forests before logging. Other lawsuits enforcing environmental protections have made logging old growth more difficult. For instance, a court found that clearcutting critical habitat "adversely modifies" the habitat, not allowed by the Endangered Species Act (see cover story for more on this).

Instead of just following the law by continuing with a thinning program in young, managed plantations, the BLM is hard at work trying to change all the laws they were caught breaking when trying to log old growth. It is the Bush administration's last chance to gut forest protections.

For instance, the agencies have released a new Survey and Manage proposal that eliminates the pesky surveys that the BLM had been required to do. When they make a final decision later this summer, timber sales like Cow Catcher and Dickerson Heights will be free to log. The federal agencies have also been busy modifying the protections of the ESA for marbled murrelets and northern spotted owl (see cover story). Finally, the Bush administration is doing away with protections of the Northwest Forest Plan for the BLM by changing their management plans in the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR, see www.oregonheritageforests.org).

All of these attacks on our environmental protections will have public commenting opportunities. We will let you know about these through our email list-serve. If you want to be on our alert list, email uw@umpqua-watersheds.org



I-5 from the Screen Pass Timber Sale (top);
Measuring a tree (below)



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Spotted Owls, from page 1...

Pass timber sale, near Azalea. Last year the BLM was sued to stop the logging of old growth critical habitat. The new designations will remove the critical habitat designation from this forest to make it easier for logging to begin. Screen Pass is a spectacular old growth forest, within view of interstate 5, and within an "area of concern" (designated in 1992) for connectivity between the Klamath and Cascade mountains.

In 1987 a fire swept through this area, burning up the thick, overstocked tree plantations, but cooling down under the old growth forest, cleaning out the brush and killing very few of the old growth trees. Converting Screen Pass to a tree plantation not only increases the fire hazard, it also takes away this critical habitat for owls that now dine on this old-forest ecosystem.

Comment on Critical Habitat designations before August 13, 2007. For the address, and for the USFWS side of the story, see <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/ecoservices/nsopch.html>

Thank you for speaking up for the Northern Spotted Owl and for all the other critters and humans who depend on old forests.

UW Presidents Column

The Board thanks all of you who support Umpqua Watersheds with your time and dollars. Your generous response to our recent appeals have helped our organization to continue to protect the forest, the creatures that live in them, and the clean water that filters from their depths.

In only eighteen months the current anti-environment administration will leave Washington. That may not seem like much time, but they can still do a lot of damage to the system of laws that protect our natural heritage in this country, laws that took over 40 years to build. Each week brings new proposals to undermine the National Environmental Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the other regulations that are the bedrock of species and forest guardianship. These proposals are marketed as improvements, but a brief examination reveals a different truth.

Currently we are seeing a renewed attack on the Northern Spotted Owl and its forest habitat. The National Fish and Wildlife Service has come up with two alternatives to change the NSO protection, both of which are inadequate at best. The agency put forth these alternatives after trashing the recommendations developed by their own task force, which had worked over two years to revise the regulations. It's another case of Washington politicians and lobbyists managing western forests, and going against the advice of the "people on the ground", those who have the best understanding of what's happening in the woods.

In addition, we expect the final word on the BLM's Western Oregon Plan Revision within the next weeks. Take the time to review this proposal when it arrives, as this document will guide the BLM in its attack on the old growth forests of Douglas County and beyond. The WOPR is another degradation of the regulations that have protected the NSO and the other critters that depend on old and contiguous forest for their survival.

See you on the trail.
Chuck

In Memoriam

Jim Jontz
1951-2007

Wilderness Defender
Labor Leader

Are You Wild About Wilderness?

The Wild on Wilderness Committee has been busy getting prepared for Wilderness Week. Our efforts have been directed to gathering support for permanent protection for the roadless areas in the Umpqua National Forest.

The WOW Committee has drafted an endorsement form that you will find in this newsletter. The endorsement form allows individuals, businesses, and groups to publicly support the permanent wilderness protection of roadless areas in the Umpqua National Forest. Please fill out the enclosed form and return it to the Umpqua Watersheds office. We are already getting great support from local businesses; however the more business supporters there are, the better. Please encourage any businesses you know to fill out the endorsement form.

Adopt a Wilderness

Anyone who has adopted a roadless area should contact the WOW committee. If you are interested in adopting a roadless area, or want to assist someone who already has, please contact the WOW Committee. Our understanding of the value of wilderness continues to deepen, but as time passes, there are less and less wild lands to call wilderness. Concern over the loss of wilderness necessarily preceded the first calls for its protection. Today it is our prerogative to protect these remaining wild lands

Some of the most beautiful wild lands left in the west are right here in the Umpqua National Forest. If you are interested in helping protect these unique and special areas, please contact Umpqua Watersheds (541-672-7065) or come to the WOW committee meeting at McMenemin's—last Wednesday of each month at 7 pm.

To All Umpqua Watersheds Inc Woodlot Owners

There has been a lot of interest in "green" certified forest products for decades. Woodlot owners, from 5 to 2000 acres, who want to manage their stands in responsible and sustainable ways, rarely have markets who care or can pay premiums for well-managed timber.

Umpqua Watersheds, in conjunction with certified resource managers, would like to help create a cooperative whereby those of us who manage sustainable timber could market our products.

The vision is from well managed forests to final products, whether they are structural lumber, hardwood flooring, cabinetry or firewood.

Let's get together to begin a discussion about this vision and to set a date for a formal meeting. On River Appreciation Day, July 21st, we will meet at 2:00. Look for David Parker and Richard Chasm. Tell anyone you know with timber lands.

OUTREACH CORNER

Umpqua Watersheds 101

Deborah Michel

Students from the Phoenix School, a charter school in Roseburg, visited Umpqua Watersheds office this spring. Umpqua Watersheds gave them an introduction to the work of our organization. We talked, looked at maps, showed a slide show, and sent them home with information and a postcard to write to the BLM telling them how they feel about logging old growth forests. Several weeks after this we were lucky enough to take the students into the field and show them first-hand some of the work we do.

On their visit to the office, the first thing we discussed was definitions and how they are used. How words like "environmentalist" have become negative due to the context in which they are used. We discussed the difference between an environmentalist, conservationist and preservationist. Many students were surprised that there were differences between them. I don't think any of the students felt they wanted to work for destruction or pollution so it began to look as though we all might be "environmentalists". We also talked about what the word "sustainability" meant and the definition of a watershed. They agreed that we are so lucky that Douglas County incorporates the entire watershed of the Umpqua – Umpqua Watersheds! We then gave a history of logging in the northwest and explained how listing the spotted owl brought logging to a standstill and how Northwest Forest Plan came into being so timber could continue to be harvested.

To finish the day, we played a game in which the students had to decide if a certain place was public or private land. The point was to make a notable distinction between the two. Private landowners, including companies with large land holdings can pretty much cut what and how they want. Public land is land we all own and is managed for the public – you and me, to use. There are different rules and regulations for each. They were happy to hear they had a say in how public land is used. We discussed the public land designations in Oregon and a little about the history and management of these lands, BLM, Forest Service, National Park, and State Forests.

A few weeks later we took the students into the field, visiting the Coos Bay-Roseburg gas pipeline near Iverson Park. Most of the students had no idea the pipeline was in place or the type of damage that a pipeline could cause to its surrounding natural environment. When told about the proposed natural gas pipeline that is to run from Reedsport to California they were shocked that the government would allow imminent domain. On that day they learned about the environmental responsibilities of private companies and the government's responsibility to American's and to their land.

We are excited to connect with a local school. The students were awesome, polite and fun to have in the office. We hope to connect with Phoenix and other schools on a regular basis and help them learn a little in Umpqua Watersheds 101.



Phoenix students discussing the pipeline near Iverson Park

Spring Fair and Earth Day

Umpqua Watersheds welcomed spring by hosting a booth at the ever popular Spring Fair and Earth Day Festivals. Staff and volunteers worked together to educate the community about some recent issues such as the LNG pipeline and the Boney Skulls timber sale.

The three days of the Spring Fair were a great time as usual. Our booth was next to the stage allowing all volunteers to listen to wonderful music all weekend long. Earth Day was a wonderful event with some exciting fun. This year we again had an Earth Day Jeopardy booth, with topics ranging from the Umpqua River to conservation in Douglas County. Many people tested their knowledge.

Events like these are an important part of Umpqua Watersheds outreach program. They allow us to educate the community, first hand, and are a way to reach many people who may be unfamiliar with the work we do. If you would like to help educate the public about the work that Umpqua Watersheds does, please contact our Outreach Program at 541-672-7065.