

Cowboy timber sale challenged

Plan may threaten owls and fragment old growth

By Stephanie Mencimer
Emerald Reporter

Conservationists are challenging the sale of a timber stand in a region designated as the last ecologically significant old-growth area, said Wendell Wood of the Oregon Natural Resource Council Friday.

The timber sale of the Cowboy stand, located in the Umpqua National Forest southeast of Roseburg, is one of the few sales that was to be protected under the terms of the Hatfield-Adams amendment to the 1990 Interior Appropriations Act, Wood said.

The act was a result of the summit between the Forest Service and environmentalists, Wood said.

"We had the summit, the window dressing, but the bottom line is business as usual," he said.

Wood said the Cowboy sale, one of five planned in the stand, would result in the logging of nearly seven million board feet from 219 acres of forest area, as well as the construction of 3.3 miles of roads.

The sale would also harm seven pairs of spotted owls, including two pairs whose habitat has already been fragmented, Wood said.

A Forest Service biologist recommended deleting most of the cutting units from this sale because: "High owl densities in the area are indicative of high quality habitat... The cumulative impacts of the ... proposed sales in the area on the resident owl population could be high."

Wood said the Forest Service

has ignored the biologist's recommendation.

Under Hatfield-Adams, conservationists may no longer challenge old-growth sales on the basis of protecting the spotted owl.

However, Wood said, the plaintiffs from the Seattle Audubon spotted owl lawsuit are challenging the Cowboy sale on the basis of Section 318 of the Hatfield amendment.

This provision requires the Forest Service to minimize fragmentation of the most ecologically significant old growth forest in its 1990 timber sales.

"By the Umpqua National Forest now offering the Cowboy timber sale ... most of the minimal protection guarantees granted by Senator Hatfield under Section 318 will be effectively negated," Wood said.

Wood said the plaintiffs in the case are asking Judge William Dwyer for a summary judgment that would immediately enjoin the Cowboy timber sale, because the sale would fragment ecologically significant old-growth forest and therefore would be illegal under Sec. 318.

Wood said the Hatfield-Adams amendment left environmentalists with few legal options to protect old-growth forests, but, "rather than give up or throw down our gun, we will still attempt to legally defend the ancient forest and bludgeon its assailants with a legal firearm that has now been rendered all but functionally useless except as a club," he said.



Wendell Wood

Jim Kauppila of the Umpqua Valley Audubon Society said, "This short term solution (Hatfield-Adams) was no solution at all." The burden of proof lies with conservationists to show that the Forest Service has been capricious in its regard of Sec. 318 of the Hatfield amendment, he said.

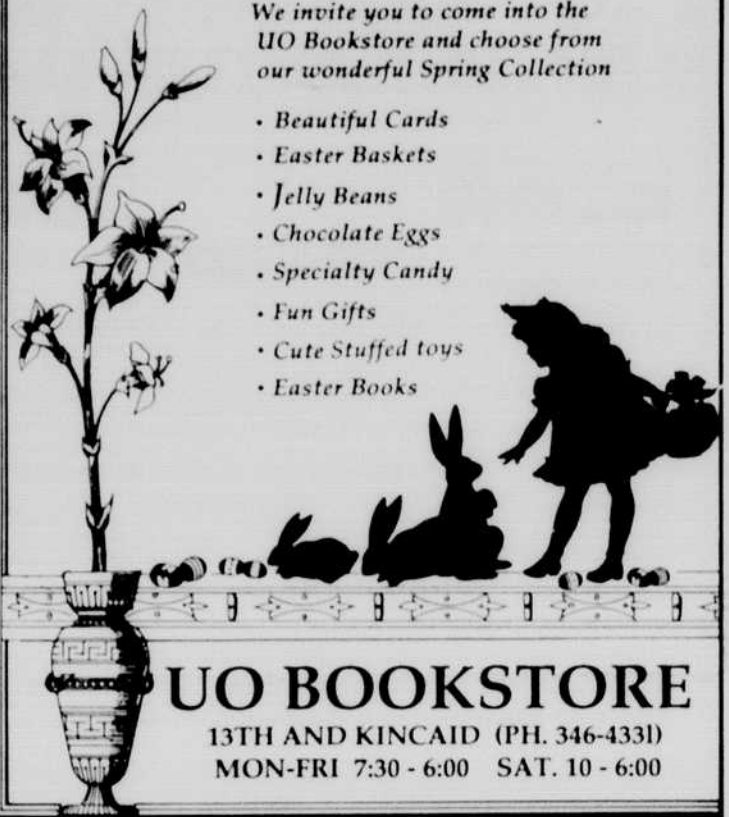
The National Audubon Society will release a report today showing numerous examples of Forest Service violations of Sec. 318 and its reluctance to prepare new timber sales that do not fragment the designated old-growth forests, Wood said.

April 18 has been set as the date for the Cowboy timber sale.

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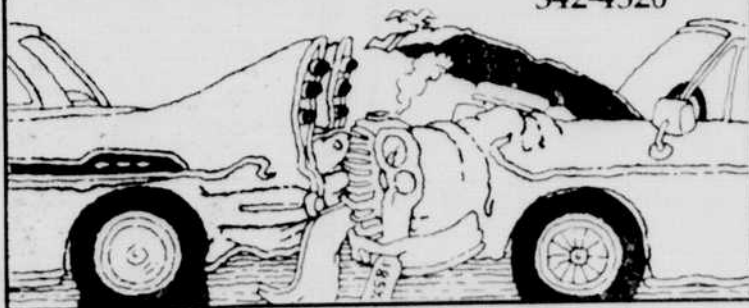
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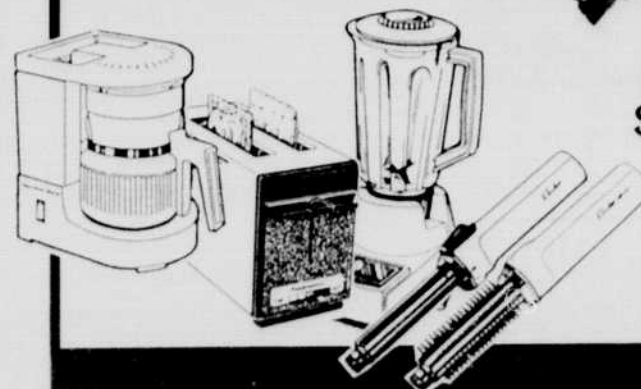
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