



Todd McKinley/Contributed photo

Lightning in 2019 caused four fires on the Malheur National Forest. An environmental lawsuit filed Monday, July 12, 2021, seeks to halt the Camp Lick Project, a 40,000-acre forest treatment project in Oregon's Malheur National Forest, for allegedly evading federal limits on harvesting large trees.

Lawsuit targets 40,000-acre Oregon forest project

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — An environmental lawsuit seeks to halt a 40,000-acre forest treatment project in Oregon's Malheur National Forest for allegedly evading federal limits on harvesting large trees.

The complaint, filed Monday, July 12, by the Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project, claims the Camp Lick Project violates the National Forest Management Act by permitting the removal of trees more than 21 inches in diameter contrary to the "Eastside Screens" limit.

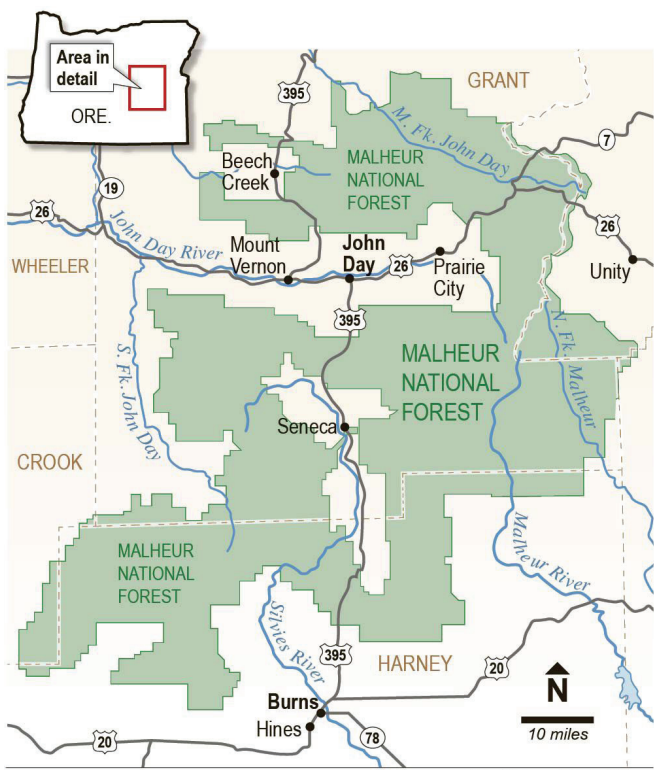
"The logging of large trees in projects such as Camp Lick is primarily driven by economic interests rather than true forest restoration," the complaint claimed.

Within the project's boundaries, the U.S. Forest Service plans to commercially harvest about 12,000 acres, largely using tractor yarding "where toppled trees are dragged through the forest by heavy equipment, causing soil compaction and erosion," the plaintiff said.

The Eastside Screens standard, which prohibited logging trees more than 21 inches in diameter in several Oregon national forests, was replaced by new guidelines earlier this year but was still effective when the project was approved in 2020.

The environmental plaintiff argues the Eastside Screens were established to rectify the dearth of large trees east of the Cascade Mountains but "this shortage has not been resolved and continues to this day."

The lawsuit alleges the Forest Service unlawfully made changes to the management plan for the Malheur National Forest to circumvent the East-



Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

side Screens even though site-specific conditions did not justify the changes.

The broader changes to the Eastside Screens provide "compelling evidence" that exceptions to

the Forest Service violated the National Environmental Policy Act in approving the project without conducting an "in depth analysis" of alternatives to the project or sufficiently evaluating its cumulative impacts, such as potential harms to steelhead and redband trout.

The agency didn't properly take into account "on any consistent geographical scale" the effect that several other nearby projects will have on stream temperature, sediments and other factors, especially in light of future timber sales, the complaint

said. "The cumulative effects analysis of this section relies on assumption of good outcomes from past, present and future projects, rather than actual analysis of their effects," according to the plaintiff.

"The logging of large trees in projects such as Camp Lick is primarily driven by economic interests rather than true forest restoration."

From a complaint filed by the Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project

the size standard within the Camp Lick Project weren't warranted, the complaint said. "If the alleged need to remove large trees was site specific, a region-wide amendment would not be necessary."

The complaint claimed

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BAKER COUNTY

ODFW employees kill 2 wolf pups

Two 3.5-month-old pups shot from helicopter

BY JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
The Oregonian

BAKER CITY — Officials from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife shot and killed two wolf pups Sunday, Aug. 1, days after approving a permit for ranchers to kill up to four wolves in Baker County.

The agency confirmed that officials in a helicopter shot and killed two 3.5-month-old pups from the Lookout Mountain Pack.

Just one day earlier, the state agency said it had approved a rancher's permit to kill up to four uncollared wolves in Baker County, where officials said the Lookout Mountain Pack had attacked four cows over the last two weeks of July.

Agency spokesperson Michelle Dennehy said Aug. 2 that the killing of the pups was "reducing the pack's food needs and disrupting the pack's behavior so they don't associate livestock with an easy meal."

She said while the pups are not a threat to livestock, they could be as they grow and learn to hunt.

"Killing pups is not something we want to be doing," Dennehy said. "But in this case, despite non-lethal measures, chronic depredation continues, which we have a responsibility to address."

The killing of the two pups has caused serious concern among advocacy and conservation groups.

Steve Pedery, the conservation director for Oregon Wild, said con-

servation organizations have been concerned that without the right training in managing endangered species, handing over supervision of wolf populations to the state agency could have some tragic outcomes.

"It's hard to see any justification other than ODFW wanted to kill some wolves, and all they could find was some three-month-old puppies," Pedery said.

The adult wolves in the Lookout Mountain Pack — a breeding male and female — have radio collars for state tracking, and were not eligible to be killed by livestock producers. The breeding pair had two pups last year, Dennehy said, and the state documented another seven pups in May.

Dennehy said the remaining pups would still have two experienced hunters to feed them.

Dennehy said in an email to The Oregonian/OregonLive that both ODFW and the rancher tried to find uncollared wolves on July 30, but only saw the breeding adults, which are collared. She said ODFW does not have plans to pursue other wolves, but the rancher has the permit until Aug. 21.

Dennehy said they also saw at least five pups, but did not see the yearling wolves they were looking for.

As of April, Oregon had 173 wolves in 22 identified packs.

Oregon rules allow ranchers to kill wolves if they repeatedly attack and present a significant risk to livestock, and when nonlethal methods such as electric fences or hazing don't stop the attacks. Kill permits allow livestock producers or ranchers to shoot a wolf from the

ground, and Fish and Wildlife staff are authorized to shoot wolves from the air.

Sristi Kamal, a representative for the Northwest branch of Defenders of Wildlife, said the group was "enraged" by the state's actions and called on the state agency to facilitate coexistence between livestock producers and wolves.

"The use of lethal measures is never a long-term solution to depredations and killing pups is simply unacceptable," Kamal said in a written statement. "Defenders will continue to work with livestock producers to help implement proactive nonlethal practices and strategic grazing practices."

Pedery disputed the agency's assertion that killing the pups would significantly reduce the caloric needs for the pack, noting that 3-month wolf pups weigh 20 to 30 pounds.

"ODFW has just joined the ranks of Idaho, Wyoming and Wisconsin in demonstrating why they are unfit to manage endangered wildlife in an ethical manner," Pedery wrote in an email to The Oregonian/OregonLive. "If Gov. Brown refuses to rein in her agency, it is clear that President Biden and (U.S. Secretary of the Interior) Deb Haaland need to step in and reinstate federal Endangered Species Act protections."

Gray wolves were removed from the federal Endangered Species list in January, allowing Fish and Wildlife to take over the management of their population. But just last week, a coalition of 70 groups filed a formal petition to relist the gray wolf as an endangered species in the western United States.

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