

Lawsuit filed to stop post-fire logging in Santiam State Forest

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
Capital Press

SALEM — Seven environmental groups are suing the Oregon Department of Forestry to halt salvage logging in the Santiam State Forest east of Salem.

The lawsuit, filed April 15 in Multnomah County Circuit Court, seeks an injunction to stop ODF from logging in areas of the state forest that burned in the 2020 Labor Day wildfires.

Plaintiffs include the Center for Biological Diversity, Audubon Society of Salem, Audubon Society of Corvallis, Benton Forest Coalition, Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild and Willamette Riverkeeper. The groups raise concerns over the impact of post-fire logging on healthy watersheds, recreation and

wildlife habitat.

“Salvage logging in the Santiam State Forest will do great damage to spotted owls, struggling salmon populations, water quality and forest recovery,” said Noah Greenwald, endangered species director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “The Oregon Department of Forestry is stuck in the 1950s and out of step with science and the values of most Oregonians.”

Proponents of salvage logging, however, argue it is a valuable tool that can expedite forest restoration by removing dead and hazardous trees, while also maximizing the value of timber to support rural communities.

ODF manages the 47,465-acre Santiam State Forest. An estimated 24,000



Stayton Fire District

The Beachie Creek Fire ravaged the Santiam Canyon of Oregon in September. Seven environmental groups are now suing the Oregon Department of Forestry to halt salvage logging in the Santiam State Forest east of Salem.

acres were within the perimeters of the Beachie Creek, Lionshead and Riverside fires, three massive blazes that tore through the Santiam Canyon last year.

Of those 24,000 acres, a little more than 16,000 acres actually burned in the fires,

according to ODF. The state has proposed logging and timber sales on about 3,000

acres. Timber sales would provide direct economic benefit to Marion, Linn and Clackamas counties, which would receive two-thirds of the revenue generated. ODF also estimates the work will create 675 primary jobs and 640 secondary jobs in the woods.

But environmentalists argue that post-fire logging increases sedimentation and runoff into streams and rivers, and eliminates habitat for a variety of plant, insect and wildlife species.

Nick Cady, legal director for Cascadia Wildlands, said ODF is treating these areas of the forest more like an industrial tree farm, instead of allowing natural regeneration and creating more complex forest structures.

“I think people were pretty disheartened to see the department was targeting areas where they never thought in a thousand years would be logged,” Cady said. “And they’re not supposed to be. They’re supposed to be older, complex forests.”

A spokesman for ODF said the agency cannot comment on pending litigation. Seth Barnes, director of forest policy for the Oregon Forest and Industries Council — a trade association that represents more than 50 Oregon forestland owners and wood products manufacturers — said the lawsuit is “disappointing,” and reflects an anti-timber agenda rather than a true conservation ethic.

Post-fire logging has several benefits, Barnes said. First, it removes dead standing trees that can burn again in future fires. Second, it can help offset the cost of reforestation, returning green healthy trees to the landscape.

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Mild winter prompts another busy rodent year in S. Idaho

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

Eastern Idaho farmer Will Ricks is always on the lookout for voles.

“I would sure love a miracle cure,” the Idaho Hay & Forage Association president said. “Voles, especially, cause a phenomenal amount of damage to our hay stands.”

Helped by a mild winter, it’s shaping up to be another busy year for rodent pests in much of southern Idaho and parts of the Pacific Northwest.

At Melba, Idaho-based Idaho Gopher Control, owner Erin Turpin joins the field crew when she’s not taking a barrage of service inquiries.

“Normally we don’t see evidence of the first litters until late February or into March,” she said. “And in the last two years, we have seen evidence in January.”

Canyon County Weed & Pest Control gopher trappers “were trapping all winter,” superintendent A.J. Mondor said. “They didn’t even miss a week.”

Turpin said gopher populations surged in 2018 and 2019 and have stayed strong since due to mild winters. “And we are on track to see possibly higher levels this year than last year.”

She said a slowdown in the gopher population’s growth may occur in 2022 based on last month’s dry conditions. March was wetter in 2020, 2019 and 2018, providing more food for breeding females by quickly greening fields and lawns.

“We can expect a normal increase in the population because of the mild winter, but I haven’t heard of population explosions for any of these rodents,” said Sherman Takatori, Idaho State Department of Agriculture Pesticide Services program manager.

He said more gophers can survive winter in mild conditions. The vole population can swing widely on several factors including weather, disease and predator pressure. Neither gophers nor voles hibernate.

As for ground squirrels, “depending on the region, they are either still in hibernation, or starting to get active and looking to feed on whatever is out there and available,” Takatori said.

Some Idaho regions and farms remain rodent-challenged regardless of winter severity or weather, he said. Operations heavy on forages and perennials have ground that isn’t disturbed much and offers limited opportunity to alter habitat.

Idaho Gopher Control machines force pressurized carbon monoxide into tunnels. Turpin said the company is busy with alfalfa hay growers.

She said the work ideally takes place before hay growth progresses to the point that mounds can’t be located. Otherwise, a farmer may sacrifice some yield to avoid mounds.

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Dairy Farmers of America

Members of the dairy industry are debating ways to improve the Federal Milk Marketing Order system.

Industry mulls improvements to milk marketing orders

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

The Federal Milk Marketing Order system is a means to maintain orderly marketing conditions for milk, but a lot of dairy farmers would argue it soured the vat during wild fluctuations caused by the pandemic.

From pricing to pooling, producers are calling for reform of the complex system — and how to make improvements has captured the attention of all sectors of the industry.

One improvement would be to simplify pricing so a negative producer price differential — which is alarming to producers — isn’t on the milk check, said Tom Wegner, director of governance and leader development at the Land O’Lakes cooperative.

Even more important is simplifying pricing so markets on the Class I side and Class III and IV side align in timing, which would make hedging easier, he said during the latest “DairyLivestream” podcast.

“I think more hedging at the dairy producer level ... will really result in durable dairy farms, sustainable dairy farms,” he said.

The second thing would be

changes to the make allowance, he said.

The make allowance is the cost of manufacturing dairy products and comes out of producers’ milk checks.

Make allowances should be updated on an annual basis, perhaps through indexing, so the industry doesn’t have to go through a formal hearing process to change them, he said.

Calvin Covington, retired CEO of Southeast Milk Inc., has been involved in federal orders for more than 40 years and said he sees four areas that could be improved.

The first item is to use the administrative process instead of the legislative process to amend federal orders.

“When Congress gets involved, they have the tendency to mess it up,” he said.

The administrative process also allows all partners to have a seat at the table, he said.

The second item is to look at the purpose of marketing orders, which is to encourage the movement of an adequate supply of fluid milk for drinking purposes. That purpose works in some areas, such as the Southeast, but federal orders in other areas might want to accomplish something else, he said.

The third item is participation in the orders and pooling requirements.

“There’s room there to have more equity and a fairer system of who participates in orders,” he said.

Only Class I processors are required to be regulated. Non-regulated plants can decide whether they want to be in the pool.

“We’ve had a lot of depooling here over the last year because it hasn’t been profitable to (stay in the pool),” he said.

And those processors can get back in the pool when it is profitable, he said.

A lot of processors depooled when the price of Class III milk, used to make cheese, skyrocketed so they wouldn’t have to pay the regulated price. The value of that depooled milk was not shared by producers in the pool.

“Looking ahead, there needs to be some kind of stability. You either need to be in or out. If you’re going to be out, you need to stay out for a period of time. If you’re going to be in, you need to be in to make the system more fair and equitable,” he said.

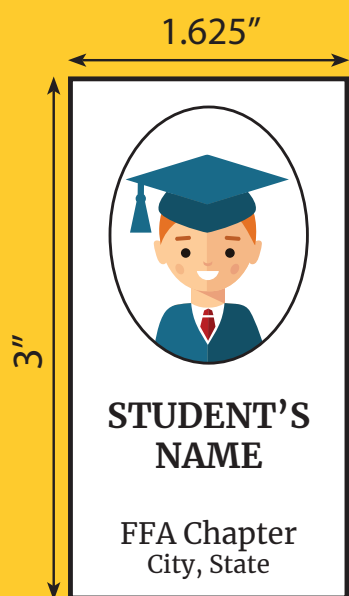
The fourth item is tweaks and updates to the milk-pricing system so the numbers used to calculate milk prices are looked at on a more regular basis, he said.

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