

individual site, how many trees need to be left standing on the site, and how much cleaning up needs to be done after the job is finished. Extremely steep access roads need to be built. Parts of the job, like the actual cutting and transporting of the cut logs, might be subcontracted. Environmental concerns need to be addressed.

Paulson has to put together a bid that includes his best guesstimate as to how much it's going to cost his company to do the logging. It is not an exact science, and complicated calculations need to be done. Sometimes bids are based on only a couple of days of driving or walking an area. Jobs can last two years or longer. Put together a sloppy bid or underestimate costs, and a company could be rewarded with a contract that makes for a couple of very lean years for the owners.

Paulson is a second-generation logger. "My father did the hard part. He absorbed the initial equipment costs and took the real chances to get us established," Paulson explained. Most of the equipment they use costs in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, some in the millions. It's a risky and precarious business. And I haven't even seen any actual logging yet.

A couple other things I learned: the sale of these logging rights by ODF funds the management of our state lands, but more importantly, is a major source of educational funds for counties throughout the state. Don't log as much or set areas aside and take them out of production, and we have less funding for our schools.

Logs from state lands can't be directly exported out of the country, so they tend to end up going to smaller local mills, creating local jobs and helping support local economies. Don't log as much and local economies suffer. Friends and neighbors lose jobs.

McNair drives us past Reeher's Horse Camp to Round Top near the headwaters of the Nehalem River where the Paulson outfit is working. We stop and look at an area that McNair logged last summer, an area that was thinned as opposed to being clearcut. The area is shady and cool, with some sunlight streaming in, and I can see far into the forest. Ferns, small trees and brush grow close to the ground leaving a lush feeling of beauty. A hiking trail crosses the road through this

area. This is a place where I would like to hike. It looks like a healthy forest one year after being logged.

As we drive McNair explains his view of state logging practices, a view he described as "enthusiastic." "Thinning has brought back the technical challenge to the job," McNair explains. "When we clearcut, it doesn't take as much skill. Machines do a lot of the work. With thinning, it takes knowledge and ability. A logger has to know what he's doing on these kinds of jobs."

McNair expressed respect for the ODF staff foresters. He says a lot of their people are graduates of the Oregon State University Forestry program that some consider the "Harvard" of forestry programs. "They could be making a lot more money in private industry. But they choose to come here where people are putting intelligent ideas to work."

Eventually we arrive on the job sites where I get a chance to meet the crew. Kurt Paulson, Greg's brother, is a contract cutter, and I watch him fall a tree. Jake Hartman is the Cat Skinner, dragging the trees up the hill. We move to another spot where Bryant Luttrell is the Yarder Operator, mechanically pulling logs from the bottom by a hanging cable up to the landing. Salvador Lopez is the Landing Chaser, releasing the logs on arrival. Skip Goodman is the Shovel Operator today, normally Bruce McNair's job, stacking the logs and loading them on the transport trucks.

McNair and I hike to the bottom of the steep hill to watch the rigging crew - Robert Raymond, Eric DeWitt, and Derek Warwick - set the choker, attaching the logs to the cable to be sent up the hill. It is extremely challenging work moving over and around the piles of fallen logs. I struggle to navigate the hillside, not having developed my "brush legs." The crew gives McNair a hard time about not working today - poking fun and ribbing him. I see this kind of banter all day long among the crew.

After climbing back to the top of the hill, we head to one last location. On the way, McNair shares some more of his views. "It's my opinion our federal government should emulate what is being done here in Oregon," said McNair. "Instead of just locking up lands, they should find ways to manage and get production from them."

McNair points out that ODF encourages Successional Forests where the trees are different ages and species. This can help protect against disease wiping out a forest. It also protects against fires. By actively managing the forests, ODF develops a source of income that supports the road system throughout state lands, allowing access for both fire suppression and recreation. "Without a viable timber program, there is no way to support these roads," said McNair. He points out that there have

been almost no significant fires in northwest Oregon for many years, in part because of northwest timber management practices.

He had earlier pointed out that the roads ODF builds and maintains are some of the best he has ever worked on, another example of the care and pride that ODF takes in their work. Another interesting point - there are no gated logging roads on state lands, except where there is active logging taking place, meaning they are available for everyone to use, all the time.

Our last stop was a "modified clearcut," a term that I think is supposed to sound more ecologically friendly. We have a fantastic view of Saddle Mountain on our way there. John Hartman was loading a truck with logs that had been cut here. This area looked like what I usually find objectionable about logging: land stripped bare. ODF does recommend this kind of logging in certain areas because it is more efficient and economical, and it creates open areas where large wildlife can thrive.

When I returned home, I decided to ask for a different perspective about ODF and how they manage Oregon's forests. According to Maggie Peyton, Director of the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council, ODF usually has loggers go beyond the required protective measures, asking them to leave buffers beside small streams and generally being good stewards of the land. "They manage our forests at a much higher standard and try to maintain them for the greatest permanent value for the public benefit. They are under a lot of pressure from environmental interests, public use interests, local counties, and the private timber industry. Local counties want to see the forest produce revenue for them, and private industry doesn't want them to raise standards because it is not to their economic benefit. ODF appears to take a lot of pride in their work," concluded Peyton, confirming what I had seen that day.

As expected, after touring three different sites in one day, I have more questions than I started with. How do they decide where to thin and where to do "modified clearcuts"? Is a modified clearcut any different than a clearcut or is it just term to quiet critics? Are the amounts being logged sustainable or is it too much? And how do you know? But I also had a chance to have a lot of questions answered and a chance to see a logging operation in action. I now have a much better understanding of how ODF manages our state forests, at least from a logging point of view.

The level of care the crew showed for their work impressed me. I was impressed by Paulson Logging's ability to embrace more sustainable practices while working within the system developed by ODF to actively manage our public lands. I still don't like what I see when I look at a clearcut. But I was especially impressed by the end result of an area that had been thinned. What I saw was a place that provides for many varied activities and uses: wildlife habitat, stream protection, hiking and camping, and logging. All that, and it still pays the bills.

Vernonia's Voice would like to extend a sincere thank you to Greg Paulson and his crew for welcoming us onto their site and taking time to explain their work. And to Bruce McNair for taking a day off from work to be our tour guide.

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