

OPINIONS

Controversy over Nedsbar Timber Sale spurs community alternative

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

The Nedsbar Timber Sale has stirred up considerable controversy in the valley. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposed this large timber management project in the Little and Upper Applegate Valleys in response to a timber industry lawsuit currently under appeal. The lawsuit, brought by Swanson-Superior Lumber, Rough & Ready Lumber, and others, contends that the Oregon and California Act of 1937 requires the Medford and Roseburg Districts of the BLM to double the volume of public timber offered to private industry.

For many years the agency has justified its commercial timber sales in the Applegate as efforts to reduce fire hazards, logging only smaller diameter trees, and although I personally saw different results on the ground, at least the rhetoric was going in the right direction. We do need to reduce fuels in the Applegate, and if we can do so while protecting ecological values and still get a commercial product out, then I support that. Unfortunately for the Applegate Valley, the purpose of the Nedsbar Timber Sale is solely to increase timber harvested on federal lands, not to address ecological, social, or fuel-reduction needs. The result is one of the most controversial timber sales in recent history with strong community opposition.

The roughly 3,000-acre project sprawls out across forest and woodland that is known for its dry, difficult growing conditions, extreme biodiversity, roadless landscapes, recreational opportunities and habitat variability. It also sprawls across the watershed of many homesteads in the valley because of its location within the Wildland Urban Interface of the Little and Upper Applegate Valleys. The Nedsbar Timber sale would also impact numerous low-elevation roadless areas, including the Dakubetede, Buncom, and Boaz Roadless Areas. The Nedsbar Timber Sale is as variable as the landscape it targets for timber production. Some units contain small trees in dense, young stands that create dangerous fuel hazards while others contain stands of spacious, old trees that have maintained resilience to fire and provide high-quality habitat for species such as the northern spotted owl, Siskiyou Mountains salamander and Pacific fisher.

Having hiked all 93 units in the Nedsbar Timber Sale, I can tell you with confidence that this will have a profound impact on our valley. You will see Nedsbar Timber Sale units from the lower end of the Upper Applegate Valley

and throughout the Little Applegate Valley, from the confluence with the Applegate River up to the headwaters near Bald Mountain. In a few units the BLM will do what they call “structural retention/regeneration harvest,” where they will leave only 16 to 25 large trees per acre and 30 to 40 percent canopy closure. Canopy closure is determined by the amount of light able to penetrate through the forest canopy to the forest floor. These “prescriptions” are targeting complex old stands supporting large, old trees. Sixty-three percent of the timber sale units will reduce canopy closure to as low as 40 percent. The proposed logging prescriptions and drastic canopy reduction will increase fuel hazards by increasing solar radiation and encouraging the development of dense understory fuels. Many units support healthy, fire-resilient stands with old-growth or late-seral characteristics. Logging these forests would increase fire hazards and impact water quality and habitat for species dependent on older forests. As many residents have chosen to live in the Applegate because of the beauty and recreational opportunities on neighboring public land, resistance to this sale is growing.

A group of very committed and determined local folks has stepped up to draft a Community Alternative that the BLM has agreed to analyze as one of the four alternatives (i.e., options to either accept or deny) in their Environmental Analysis (EA) due out May 15. The Community Alternative would address social, ecological, economic, and legal needs while allowing for a sustainable level of timber harvest. I encourage folks to support this alternative.

The Nedsbar Community Monitoring Program has helped inform the Community Alternative by hiking every unit in the sale, getting an on-the-ground look at what is actually proposed for logging, taking measurements of trees and canopy closure.

You can view unit descriptions and see photos and video of the Nedsbar Timber Sale at www.thesiskiyoucrest.blogspot.com.

Please sign on to the Community Alternative and come out for public hikes of the units to see what is at stake.

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Note: For a detailed map entitled “Nedsbar BLM Alternative 4,” please go to the home page of our website at www.applegater.org (under “Latest Issue”).



Nedsbar Community Monitoring Program public hike into unit 28-22B, a structural retention/regeneration harvest unit in the Nedsbar Timber Sale.

Let's use our imagination to create a better world

BY DELLA MERRILL

“For humans to have a responsible relationship to the world, they must imagine their place in it. To have a place, to live and belong in a place, to live from a place without destroying it, we must imagine it.”
—Wendell Berry, *It All Turns on Affection*

Amid all the national news of fracking, contaminated water sources, gas leaks, not to mention the infamous Keystone Pipeline, I’ve been feeling quite safe and protected—and yes, even smug—living here in southern Oregon. The events, while upsetting and of concern, didn’t seem to be happening anywhere in my home state. Then I learned about a pipeline project slated for my very own “backyard.”

Here’s what I’ve learned about the proposed Jordan Cove Project since becoming informed last December: A Canadian energy corporation, Veresen, is proposing to build a pipeline from Malin, Oregon (Klamath County) through Jackson, Douglas and Coos counties to a natural gas liquefaction plant, shipping berth and power plant 14 stories high, along the sensitive and environmentally important Coos Bay estuary.

There are numerous controversial aspects of this project and below are some of the big ones:

- The 234-mile-long pipeline will cross more than 400 waterways, including the Rogue River.
- For the benefit of Veresen Corporation, more than 150 acres of private land will be impacted using eminent domain (the power of a state or a national government to take private property for public use).
- The gas being transported will originate from the Rockies by fracking, one of the dirtiest, most expensive and dangerous extraction methods in use today.
- The gas will be exported for sale to other countries.
- If allowed to move forward, this project would become the largest emitter of carbon pollution in Oregon (*The Oregonian*, November 2014).

And I haven’t even mentioned the real and present danger of an increasingly hot planet—one that is a result of burning the very fossil fuels this project would promote. Isn’t it time we use our vast

expanses of imagination to paint a different future? As Berry points out, we need to imagine our place in the world without destroying it. As a species, we resist change because it’s unknown. But in this case, aren’t we willing to take a chance on the unknown, realizing that unless we do, the status quo will lead to disaster?

So, you ask, why are some Oregonians in favor of supporting a dirty energy project that would take private land and potentially endanger precious natural resources—all for the benefit of a foreign corporation? Well, the answer is money, of course. Veresen Corporation promises jobs. And there is no doubt that southern Oregon and Coos Bay in particular could use more family wage jobs. But is creating jobs today at the cost of our climate, our children’s future, and the very health of the planet worth the lack of effort it would take to imagine a different choice? And actually, as I delved a little deeper, I’ve learned it doesn’t take much effort or imagination.

For starters, each million dollars invested in solar will create 17 times more jobs than further spending on natural gas, according to a study by the US Department of Energy. More than 5,000 clean energy jobs have already been created in Oregon, and many times that are possible if we just make the commitment.

Applegaters are fortunate that this pipeline isn’t running through their valley or under their river or that landowners in Ruch or Williams aren’t being asked to give up their property. But these are no reasons to stay in the dark about this project. I invite everyone who reads this to learn more about the issues, and if you have concerns and/or agree it should not be approved, then make your voice be heard.

In my research I’ve found this website of *The Oregonian* to be particularly helpful: http://www.oregonlive.com/business/index.ssf/2015/01/scientists_say_public_safety_h.html#incart_story_package.

You can also go to www.roguekeeper.org and www.rogueclimate.org for more information and ways you can get involved.

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Happy Mother's Day!