

The Latest Word on the Watershed

by Shelly Majors

There are 800 acres of Clatsop State Forest directly east of town, which are relatively unknown to many Cannon Beach residents and visitors. This state land is one of the last remaining stretches of forest in the Cannon Beach area that is still accessible to the public. The 800 acres contribute to the quality of the city's water sources by bordering the city springs and containing part of the Elk Creek Watershed. As well as a source of drinking water for humans, Elk Creek supports sensitive populations of wild salmonid species.

In an effort to better consolidate their lands, the Department of Forestry in Astoria met informally last spring with Cavenham Forest Industries to discuss a possible exchange for the 800 acres. Several tracts of Cavenham land contiguous to other State Forests were identified for future consideration. There have been no official land exchange proposals or agreements with Cavenham. The Department plans to meet with Cavenham this fall after the two have further explored their options and priorities.

The 800 acres, referred by the Department as the Ecola tract, are part of several isolated tracts in the southwest corner of Clatsop County. The Department's "long term goal" is to exchange these tracts for land adjacent to larger, more efficient and easy to manage State Forests in the County. Assistant District Forester Bill Lecture further explained this goal in a letter regarding the Ecola tract. "These scattered tracts are not located in our identified priority working circles, are more costly to manage (ie. more property lines, access easement problems, more difficult logging problems, etc.) and therefore are not accomplishing our objective to generate permanent value to the state." He also noted that the "mandates and policy emphasize that 'it is desirable that lands acquired... shall be consolidated in areas wherever possible through exchanges of land. It is recognized that the management of state forest will be more economically feasible through such consolidation.'"

The legislations also mandate that the lands authorized to be acquired by the State Board of Forestry be "chiefly valuable for the production of forest crops, watershed protection and development, erosion control, grazing, recreation or forest administrative purposes." These are all part of the aggregate values that the Department must take into account when considering an exchange.

The July 20, 1993 preliminary appraisal of the Ecola tract estimates its worth is \$6,298,205.00. The worth of the timberland alone is \$6,291,305.00 which constitutes 731 acres (the other 69 acres are "non-production swamp, roads, etc."). This may not seem of real value when considering the going rate of an acre with mature timber is about \$10,000 dollars. Yet, 405 acres of the timber appraised contain pre-merchantable 26-40 year old trees. If left to mature it would seem that there is much future timber value in the 800 acres of the Ecola tract.

The assumption made from the appraisal is that the Department sees only the monetary worth of the land, based predominantly on timber. Not mentioned in the appraisal is the value of the watershed protection in the Ecola tract. The watershed must be included in the "non-production swamp area" that has little monetary value to the Department. Yet, watershed protection and development is considered in the legislative mandates when considering acquiring a piece of land. "The State Board of Forestry... may acquire... lands... chiefly valuable for the production of forest crops, watershed protection and development, erosion control, grazing, recreation or forest administrative purposes." These are all part of the aggregate values that the Department must take into account when considering an exchange. "Watershed protection and development" must have had important value to the State of Oregon at one time or else it would not have been listed.

The importance of the Ecola tract's watershed influence is immense to the city of Cannon Beach. The 800 acres border city springs containing Cannon Beach's primary water source. The tract is also part of the Elk Creek Watershed which is the city's reserve water source. The usage of the Elk Creek Watershed will increase with the growth of the town and its visitors.

Life is contingent upon clean water. Bottled water is an accepted part of people's lives in many areas of our country and state. This is mostly because watersheds have been misused and can no longer naturally protect and filter the water. Cannon Beach's water quality depends upon the health of its watershed. The monetary value of the watershed is felt by the residents and visitors who have to pay for their usage of the city's water, yet it is a resource beyond monetary value to our community.

The Elk Creek Watershed also contains sensitive populations of wild salmonid species. The American Fisheries Society listed the watershed as a potential reserve because it's a relatively intact, healthy watershed that can sustain the small populations of salmonids if precautions are taken. Elk Creek is one of the several streams in Clatsop County listed as vital Coho habitat in a recent petition sent to the National Marine Fisheries Service requesting Federal Endangered Species Act protection. The vulnerability of the stream is an issue that needs to be addressed with all ownerships containing the Elk Creek Watershed.

According to Bill Lecture, there are no scheduled

harvesting operations planned in the Ecola tract at this time. However, he did mention that the Department does plan to "generate timber revenue in the near future (ie. 1995 to 1999)."

Cavenham Forest Industries seems to be little interested in the Ecola tract at this time. Their interest in this land would be to make an addition to the company's tree farms in the area. Cavenham is the predominant owner of the Elk Creek watershed. They are currently harvesting and have future harvest plans in the watershed. They probably would not log in the Ecola tract for a couple of years. If the Department exchanged this land with Cavenham it would shut off the public access.

The Ecola tract appears to be the largest of the several isolated tracts in the southwest corner of the County. Why not try consolidating the smaller tracts in the area with the Ecola tract, thus keeping them in the southwest area? The Department could reprioritize their working areas while dealing with less property lines, possibly less access easement problems, therefore, most probably, making it less difficult to log. This would allow the residents in the southwest county to enjoy legally accessible forest land(s) in their area.

The watershed issues should be taken into account by the Department of Forestry, or any owner of the Ecola tract and Elk Creek Watershed. Let us not wait until it is too late for the fish, the health of our watershed and our drinking water. The Ecola tract should remain in the southwest corner of the county.

Steps need to be taken to make all this happen. Fellow citizens need your help, ideas, and support. The Department of Forestry, local, state and government officials need to be contacted. There is power in numbers and this is no exception. Some preliminary meetings have been held to discuss these issues. Information is being gathered in the midst of these busy summer months. When things (hopefully) slow down this fall, there will be more information at hand and time to focus.

For more information, suggestions, interest, etc., please contact:

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We hope to hear from you soon.



Headwaters

To protect and restore forest ecosystems

Headwaters Works for Sustainable Forests and Sustainable Communities

In the basement of the old National Guard Armory in downtown Ashland, a couple dozen local citizens sit around a long table discussing the latest management plan for the federal forests of the Pacific Northwest. A mixed group of women and men, young and old, city dwellers and residents of the woods they seek to protect, they analyze with uncommon expertise the varied details of the Clinton Administration plan for ending the logjam over forest management. From legal questions of compliance with federal laws, to scientific concern over the ecological impacts on local watersheds, to economic analysis of the financial aid offered displaced workers and struggling communities, those around the table scrutinize the President's proposal from every angle.

Such thoughtful and far-reaching discussions have become a common occurrence in the converted locker rooms and storage vaults of the retired armory basement since the group Headwaters moved in four years ago. A non-profit, grassroots organization, Headwaters traces its history back to the mid-1970s, when rural residents of southern Josephine County began to challenge Bureau of Land Management timber sales in their watersheds. From that humble beginning, where volunteers spent long hours digging through boxes of agency documents and hand-writing appeals of destructive timber sales, the organization has come a long way. Headwaters now has a staff of ten and a membership of approximately a thousand southwest Oregon residents. The staff members, including forest policy analysts, scientific researchers, an environmental lawyer, publications editor, administrator and numerous supporting personnel, along with an active board of directors and a solid core of volunteers, have become the principal watchdogs for the Rogue River National Forest, the Siskiyou National Forest, and the Medford District of the BLM.

Headwaters' relationship with these federal agencies has also gone through a dramatic transformation over the past two decades. From a primarily confrontational beginning, the group has moved into a more collaborative association with the Forest Service and BLM professionals who manage the public forests of southwest Oregon. Although they still challenge the legality of agency actions when necessary, and continue to lobby at all levels for changes in agency policies, Headwaters tries to work cooperatively with the federal land managers and scientists to develop a model for how the federal forests should be administered. These days it is not at all uncommon for a Forest Supervisor, a District Ranger, or other agency specialists to join the long meetings in the

armory basement. And Headwaters staff and members are regular participants in meetings at the Forest Service and BLM offices and fact-finding tours out in the woods.

As Headwaters has become more involved in forest management issues at higher levels -- analyzing Forest Plans and Resource Management Plans that apply across larger landscapes -- they have not lost touch with individual watersheds and local timber sales. Headwaters has assisted in the development and provides ongoing support to nearly twenty localized watershed groups throughout southwest Oregon, teaching others to monitor the forests and creeks in their own backyards much as the original Headwaters founders did twenty years ago. This network has greatly expanded the ability of local citizens to effectively participate in decisions about how the public forests of the area are managed.

The cooperative attitude espoused by Headwaters has led to a bold new effort in the Applegate River Watershed that is being watched closely as a potential model for further enhancing citizen involvement in federal forest management. The Applegate Partnership has brought environmentalists, timber industry representatives, community leaders and federal agency personnel into a collaborative effort to design a management plan for the entire 500,000 acre watershed, which includes parts of two national forests, BLM land, and both industrial and non-industrial private ownership. While the Partnership is still working on its first concrete projects, the fact that these disparate groups have been meeting regularly for nearly a year, and have unanimously adopted objectives that emphasize ecosystem health and promote natural diversity has caught the attention of people throughout the region and at the highest levels of government.

The fact that Headwaters has maintained its close ties to the people and communities of rural southwest Oregon has kept the group sensitive to the economic transition that is in part a result of their successes at protecting the public forests. The organization has helped spawn a new effort to address the need for the development of alternative, local economic opportunities. The Rogue Institute for Ecology and Economy, now in its third year, promotes the production and use of "certified sustainable forest products," and is encouraging the creation of secondary, value-added wood products industries in rural communities. Headwaters and RIEE are also currently collaborating to establish a "revolving loan fund," under the sponsorship of the success-

ful Cascadia Loan Fund of western Washington State, to provide investment capital for starting such new businesses and purchasing operating equipment.

Headwaters' successes in these many areas has propelled it into a somewhat unique position in the larger debate over the preservation and management of the national forests throughout the Pacific Northwest. The organization has become a major player in shaping conservation strategy within the regional and national environmental movements. During the past two winters, Headwaters hosted the largest gatherings of West Coast ancient forest activists ever held. Over 400 representatives of forest conservation groups from every part of Washington, Oregon and northern California -- and even from the national environmental offices in Washington, D.C. -- converged on the old Ashland armory to discuss strategy, brainstorm new ideas, and hone their skills in public education and political lobbying. These four-day conferences played a significant role in strengthening and unifying the Northwest conservation movement at a critical time, and the staff at Headwaters is already planning the third event for February 1994.

The future of our Pacific Northwest forests lies in the hands of many people throughout the region and across the nation. But there is no doubt that the group of dedicated activists in the basement of the old Ashland armory have had a significant impact. The Oregon Natural Resources Council recognized their special contributions by naming Headwaters "Conservation Organization of the Year" for 1988. And ONRC selected Headwaters' president Julie Kay Norman as "Conservationist of the Year" for 1992.

From the Halls of Congress and the White House to the remotest watersheds of southwest Oregon, Headwaters is recognized and respected for its commitment to protecting and restoring our precious ancient forest ecosystems.

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