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In 2012, under the Freedom of Information Act, Bark requested the results of the Forest Service's previous five years of best management practices monitoring. Bark's staff, expecting a mountain of documents, was surprised when it received monitoring reports on just four units in two timber sales, all contracted Interfor.

Three of those four reports showed best management practices were not followed properly.

Groce, the Forest Service ranger, said, "There are a whole host of monitoring practices and efforts that occur, but they are not necessarily consolidated."

Bell said this creates a lack of transparency in the agency's monitoring.

Krochta reminded the group of an incident two years ago, when an Estacada-based company, Jon Greenup Logging, failed to get required permission from the Forest Service before logging, nearby, in the rain. Wet conditions make soil especially susceptible to erosion and ruts.

Goodwyne said if she sees timber companies breaking the rules when she's out in the field, she notifies the Forest Service sale administrator overseeing the contract. But, she said, "we don't have enough sale administrators to go around."

The three sale administrators who work in Mount Hood National Forest oversee anywhere from one to six timber sales during logging season, spending two to three days a week out in the field.

"It's one of the major reasons we (Bark and the Forest Service) have differences of opinion. Because we don't have enough people to meet all those criteria that need to be met," Goodwyne said.

"We have all these people on the land, all these people on the trucks, all these people bringing logs to the landing, and you've got a sale administrator that's probably tied to one sale that's maybe 1,800 acres, and they've got to get to all these places."

Bell said that once it discovered the Forest Service didn't have the capacity to conduct thorough monitoring, Bark stepped in.

Since 2011, about 90 Bark volunteers have spent more than 1,000 hours conducting post-logging monitoring.

Bell said Bark has documented logging operators taking logs they weren't supposed to; running machines up slopes designated as too steep, increasing chances of erosion and accidents; and logging too close to riparian features.

But once a sale administrator signs off on a contract, the timber company is off the hook.

When loggers are caught breaking rules while the contract is still active, the Forest Service can shut them down for a few days, or terminate the contract. Fines are not issued, but the timber company may be charged for damages, such as a stumpage fee for scarred trees.

"We do have excellent operators, as well," Goodwyne said. "I can take you to places where there are no nicks and things are well cared for, but other operators, especially when you get new operators - wow. You have to be behind them like children."

**T**he trees in the unit of Jazz we visited were removed to bring in light. In some cases, Goodwyne prescribes thinning



PHOTO BY JOE GLODE

An old logging road, now overgrown, leads into the planned Grove Thin project. This road will be rebuilt to access this 69-acre section of forest destined for thinning.

when changes in composition - more snags or downed wood - or variance tree size and structure are needed for the forest's health.

Bark agreed these desired results from thinning are important, but Bell said it's proved that forests will get there naturally and damage caused by logging isn't worth it.

"In the Jazz Environmental Assessment, it says the likelihood of invasive species moving into the area is high," Bell said, "and the project still moves forward. And the roads create a disturbed area with light, which is what a lot of the invasives love."

Invasive species, such as bull thistle and in some areas, infamously suffocating English ivy, have taken root along logging roads, Bell said. The seeds travel in with loggers and the public, often hiding in wheel wells. For this reason, logging equipment is washed before coming into a new area, but the Forest Service admits those precautions aren't always effective.

Additionally, Bell said soil compacted from road building can take a long time to revegetate, and when a road and stream cross paths, sediment from the road pollutes the stream, which can affect the health and nature of the watershed and, in some cases, salmon spawning.

The Jazz Thin is located in the Clackamas Watershed, which feeds the Clackamas River - a drinking water source to more than 200,000 people in Clackamas County.

"I'm a firm believer in the ability of trees to self-manage," Bell said. "There were a lot of mistakes made by clear-cutting. I don't think the same agency that made the mistakes is the best one to trust in recalibrating that."

Bell said the disruption logging brings to the wilderness can often outweigh any benefits from restoration or timber sales. Especially in riparian reserves and critical habitat - which was where we were headed next.

**T**he Grove Thin is still in the bidding process, so logging won't start until 2016 or later. The Forest Service estimates the project will create or maintain about 116 jobs in the local economy - from logging and mills to road building and maintenance.

Bark did not object to the Grove Thin

outright but did object to several units where logging would take place in riparian reserves and critical habitat for old-growth-dependent species.

Also objecting to this sale was American Forest Resource Council, which represents logging interests. While Bark argued against heavy thinning in critical habitat, AFRC argued a greater volume of logging was needed to meet the Forest Service's restoration goals.

The Forest Service dropped 120 acres of spotted-owl habitat from heavy thinning to moderate thinning - a small victory for Bark.

We arrived at a 69-acre plot of the 1,756-acre Grove Thin, which is broken up into more than 100 isolated units. An overgrown logging road served as our pathway into the forest. The logging operator that wins the contract will rebuild it.

This patch of forest appeared more diverse than the stands of trees surrounding the clearing in Jazz we had just visited. Trees weren't as tightly packed together; there were more deciduous trees, and patches of light shone through in scattered openings. Vine maple was everywhere, serving as the understory.

While Jazz had only 9 acres of timber-emphasis land, Grove contains 192.

"It wouldn't be illegal to come in here and clear-cut," Bell said. "The Forest Service (in Mount Hood National Forest) isn't doing it right now, but it could be. And it is in other parts of Oregon. I know there are discussions within Mount Hood National Forest about doing it again."

What she's referring to is called "regeneration harvest," and Goodwyne agreed this method can equate to clear-cutting.

Notes from a June 9 Clackamas Stewardship Partners collaborative meeting indicate there are discussions about clear-cutting a 90-acre plot in the Upper Clackamas Watershed. That's an area about the size of 68 football fields.

Goodwyne said she couldn't prescribe regeneration harvest without good rationale.

"The area has to be ready for clear-cutting, and that means that these trees need to have culminated; they're not growing anymore. These aren't ready," she said, surveying the scenery. "These are still young, growing,

thriving stands."

There are 15 additional thinning projects - recent, current or planned - within the 138-square-mile expanse containing the Grove Thin, which encompasses approximately 70 square miles. Those projects account for more than 2,000 acres that will also be logged, and Bark is worried about the cumulative effects.

The Forest Service found the combination of projects will have a "relatively minor impact on the spotted owl." But Bark isn't convinced. In its objection, Bark said effects the Forest Service calls temporary are actually long term because if left alone, the forest would transform into habitat suitable for owl nesting, roosting and foraging over the next 50 to 60 years. Now, it's believed owls merely pass through this area.

But no thorough survey of the spotted owl has been conducted in the Mount Hood National Forest in more than 20 years.

"These are stark assumptions," according to Bark's objection, "and the Forest Service should be more upfront about their lack of data."

But Goodwyne said a Forest Service biologist surveys for spotted owls and other threatened species in areas where logging is planned.

In addition to being within critical habitat, Bark had several other reasons for objecting to logging in the grove we were hiking through.

For one, Krochta said, "this is an area Barkers have gone on numerous hikes, held trainings, and have a personal connection to how it is."

From an ecological standpoint, he said Bark was concerned because a third of the project area was also in riparian reserves.

"We thin in riparian reserves all the time," Goodwyne said, "and one of the reasons we do is because that's where some of our uplands lie, and that's where trees are thick. We're trying to open them up and trying to offer a little more light in there to get different species in."

Krochta said Bark values that sentiment, but it's against the rules.

"A lot of scientists that have worked on the Northwest Forest Plan, and in writing the ACS (Aquatic Conservation Study), say there's way too much logging in riparian reserves these days."

These guidelines, Krochta said, were "not written to allow commercial logging in riparian reserves," and, he added, there are other factors to consider that are either "equally important if not more important for the majority of species that use those aquatic areas."

Additionally, Bark points out that thinning in riparian reserves allows sunlight to warm the waters flowing through the watershed - and in Oregon, rising waterway temperatures were a sizeable concern this summer.

In this section of the Grove Thin, Unit 180, Krochta explained Bark didn't see a need for thinning because "there was enough structural diversity, natural gaps and plant diversity in areas."

Goodwyne said the woodland we were perusing would be moderately thinned, slightly lighter than the degree of thinning we had just seen at Jazz, although many parts of the Grove Thin will be more heavily thinned, with about 40 trees per acre left