

and subsequent cutting illegal.

"They're blatantly violating the law right now ... so this timber sale is currently being litigated against in the courtroom," says Josh Laughlin of the CWP.

"It's disappointing and puzzling when someone accuses us of illegally logging this timber sale," says Patti Rodgers, public affairs specialist for the Willamette National Forest. "We're not protecting every red tree vole nest ... we're not required to." According to Rodgers, the USFS must "protect habitat sufficient to maintain the persistence of the species," and believes that is just what they are doing.

Tree-sitting is what Laughlin describes as a "last ditch effort to hold off the logging" in what many consider to be a sacred stand of old-growth trees, some of which are upwards of 400 years old. A young woman protesting on the ground was arrested July 23 for "interfering with an agricultural operation."

According to Laughlin, some of the sitters have been at the Straw Devil sale for as long as six months, while others have been there only a few weeks or days. Most would not say who they are, or even reveal how many took posts in the trees. "That's just the kind of information that would be useful to the enemy, isn't it?"

After loggers quit working in Unit 2 for the day at around 12:30, they silently walked by demonstrators on the ground, reporters, and jeers from the sitters. Some expressed that protesting is "no way to make a living."

Forest Service staff were critical of the

tree-sitters. "Write your congressmen and senators. This is America. Challenge the system, but this isn't the way to do it. They get dangerous ... they wait until you leave to start dumping buckets of shit and piss on us," one unidentified official said.

A voice from Forest Road #5875 — from either a logger or an agency staffer — could be heard, saying "It always manages to get twisted around some way, so it's better to say nothin'."

Rodgers says dialogue has been difficult. "It's been my experience that [there's] no interest on the part of these folks to do that. They're in it to win."

Victory for enviros would be an end to old-growth and clearcut logging. "If you were to cross the landscape on the west side of the Cascade mountain range, we've got millions of acres that have been clearcut and converted into even-aged stands. And there is significant opportunity there to get the volume out and get out of the ongoing controversy that surrounds the continued process of old-growth logging," says Laughlin.

Rodgers admitted that the Forest Service has dramatically changed its logging practices throughout the past decade to move towards selective thinning, and says there are no new old-growth timber sites slated.

As of July 28, Unit 2 had been completely logged (with felling going on among the tree-sitters' platforms) and a road has been punched through the woods in preparation for logging Unit 8.

EW

Kelly O'Brien contributed to this report.

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