

Speak No Evil

DeFazio and Wyden keep mum on roadless logging plans.

Four years after the fire, Biscuit just keeps on burning.

The U.S. Forest Service recently announced plans to sell timber from roadless areas scorched by the 2002 Biscuit Fire in southwest Oregon — an unprecedented move that directly challenges the Clinton-era roadless rule. It also contradicts the Forest Service's promise to let states petition to permanently protect their own roadless areas.

Oregon is in the process of preparing such a petition, but it won't be ready until November — and by then, old-growth trees from 1,350 roadless acres bordering the Kalmiopsis Wilderness may already be reduced to two-by-fours.

Environmental groups are fuming, and Gov. Ted Kulongoski is hitting the roof. But two of Oregon's most progressive members of Congress, Rep. Peter DeFazio and Sen. Ron Wyden, are notably mum on the logging plans. Several local green groups see their silence as betrayal.

DeFazio has sponsored bills against roadless area logging in the past, and he made a failed attempt to amend a federal salvage logging bill, which recently passed through the House, to prohibit cutting in designated roadless areas. But neither DeFazio nor Wyden has explicitly asked the Forest Service to hold off on pending roadless area timber sales within the Biscuit burn area: Mike's Gulch, scheduled for June 9, and Blackberry, planned for later this summer. Both are late successional forests containing old-growth Douglas fir trees.

"If they make some sort of declaration after the auction on Mike's Gulch, it'll be kind of pointless," said Native Forest Council spokesman Josh Schlossberg, who has spearheaded efforts to pressure Wyden and DeFazio to take a strong stand against the roadless area timber sales.

The 2001 Roadless Area Protection Rule, crafted with input from 1.6 million Americans and implemented during Clinton's last days in office, prohibited logging in designated roadless areas in national forests. But in May 2005, with virtually no public feedback, the Bush administration replaced the 2001 rule with a new policy allowing roadless area logging — *except* in individual states that petition to maintain the Clinton-era protections. The Forest Service has given states until July 2007 to submit their petitions.

Oregon's petition will come too late to stop logging at Mike's Gulch and Blackberry. That the Forest Service is pushing ahead with those timber sales anyway seems to fly in the face of a written policy to hold off on roadless area logging while states prepare their petitions. "We are providing interim protection to roadless areas, pending the development of state-specific rules," wrote U.S. Agriculture Undersecretary Mark Rey in a Sept. 15, 2005

letter to *The New York Times*.

Kulongoski wants the Forest Service to keep its word. "I again ask the Forest Service to defer logging in the Biscuit roadless areas while I pursue my objective of permanently protecting the 1.9 million acres of roadless areas in Oregon," he wrote in a letter to USFS Regional Forester Linda Goodman in March.



EVAN CAMPBELL, SISKIYOU PROJECT

He also joins the governors of California, New Mexico and several other states in suing the feds over the 2005 repeal of the Clinton-era roadless rule.

So where's the gov's backup in Congress? According to Shannon Wilson of the Sierra Club, DeFazio's staff assured him they were "working on a letter" opposing the roadless area sales. Kulongoski's Natural Resources Advisor Jessica Hamilton was also under the impression that DeFazio's office would put out a letter supporting the governor's position. But as we go to press, that letter is still a rumor.

DeFazio's spokeswoman, Danielle Langone, deferred questions about DeFazio's stance on the roadless auctions to natural resources advisor David Dreher, who would not comment on the record. DeFazio would not speak with *EW* directly, but Langone said that he would release a statement in response. As we go to press, that statement has not materialized.

Wyden's spokesman, similarly, deferred comment and promised a return call that never came.

"Kulongoski has already laid the foundation for opposition to this egregious proposal," said Cascadia Wildlands Project Director Josh Laughlin. "Now we need strong leadership from the Oregon Democratic congressional delegation. As far as I can tell, [they] aren't doing a thing to stop logging roadless areas at Biscuit."

But greenies won't wait for DeFazio and Wyden. Cascadia and four other nonprofits have filed a lawsuit against the Forest Service, arguing that the agency must prepare another environmental impact statement to account for new studies about post-fire forest ecology before cutting more trees burned in the Biscuit. They've filed motions for injunctions to halt logging in the meantime. **EW**

The Save Our Wild Siskiyou Campaign plans to rally in front of DeFazio and Wyden's local offices at 7th and Charnelton at noon on Friday, June 9. That evening, CWP will hold a benefit, "Blues for Biscuit," from 8 pm to midnight at Cozmic Pizza (see p. 15).

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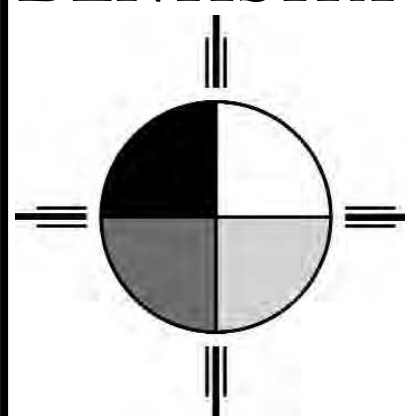


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