

founded, the Cascadia Wildlands Project, proposed a plan to triple logging in the Coast Range by thinning the second growth forest that are pretty much all that's left instead of logging the last of the old growth. That proposal would probably be law today if it weren't for the Bush administration.

The Bush administration's lovely parting gift to Oregon, the just released Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR), opens up the old-growth forests set aside for spotted owls in the Coast Range for logging — the few, scattered islands of old growth awash in a sea of clearcuts. The plan, says Curry County Commissioner Georgia Nowlin, “meets all requirements of the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act.”

Jim Frick, chairman of the Southern Oregon Resource Alliance, one of a dozen or so “grassroots groups” (with no members and funded exclusively by timber dollars) that's sprouted up to push the WOPR, says, “The Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act were put into the equation.”

These folks are reading from a small card handed to them by the timber industry hatchet men. They may believe their lines, for all I know.

The plan isn't legal, and it wasn't intended to be legal. Spotted owl populations continue to decline, the owl's habitat continues to decline and logging more of their habitat will lead populations to decline still further. Duh.

This from the Associated Press: “The Bush administration's plans for saving the northern spotted owl from extinction have flunked a peer review by scientists. Under a

Not a single forest I remember, not one, is still standing.



contract with the administration, the Society for Conservation Biology and the American Ornithologists' Union said the government did not consider all the best available science, a requirement of the Endangered Species Act, before making room for more logging in old-growth forests.”

Court injunctions against logging spotted owl habitat are so predictable, the papers can explain the legal arguments before the lawsuits even get filed.

I know the timber wars inside and out. Mostly, though, I know the Coast Range. A “vexation of the spirit,” that's what Ken Kesey said about it. Sometimes I think the place is a wound that's got no hope of healing.

The Bush plan may actually lead to some more old-growth logging, just enough to kill a few more spotted owls but not enough to bring a bit more prosperity to the people living there. I know the Coast Range. The WOPR was meant to fail, to whip the yahoo base of the Republican Party in this state into a frenzy just in time for '08. To bleed Barack a little bit, to remind Rudy who he works for.

Your last stop on the Coast Range tour is an upscale restaurant on K-Street in Washington, D.C., where a guy in a suit quietly pushes a check across the table. Sound too cynical? Another guy in a suit smiles and lifts it off the table, soundlessly. The conversation turns to something else. Welcome to the Coast Range.

The WOPR is open to public comment until November (at www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr/). It'll be raining by then. **EW**

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