 BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

Forest Stewardship

Is the BLM's WOPR just a distraction?

The Bureau of Land Management's Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR) has been the using up a lot of the time and effort of environmentalists from Eugene and around Oregon. Some local forest activists think it's a distraction from a more nefarious plan — logging under the guise of forest stewardship.

The WOPR's preferred alternative (Alternative 2) proposes a 700 percent increase in logging in Oregon's old-growth forests. The public comment period on the plan ends Jan. 11, and many environmentalists believe the plan will end up going into litigation.

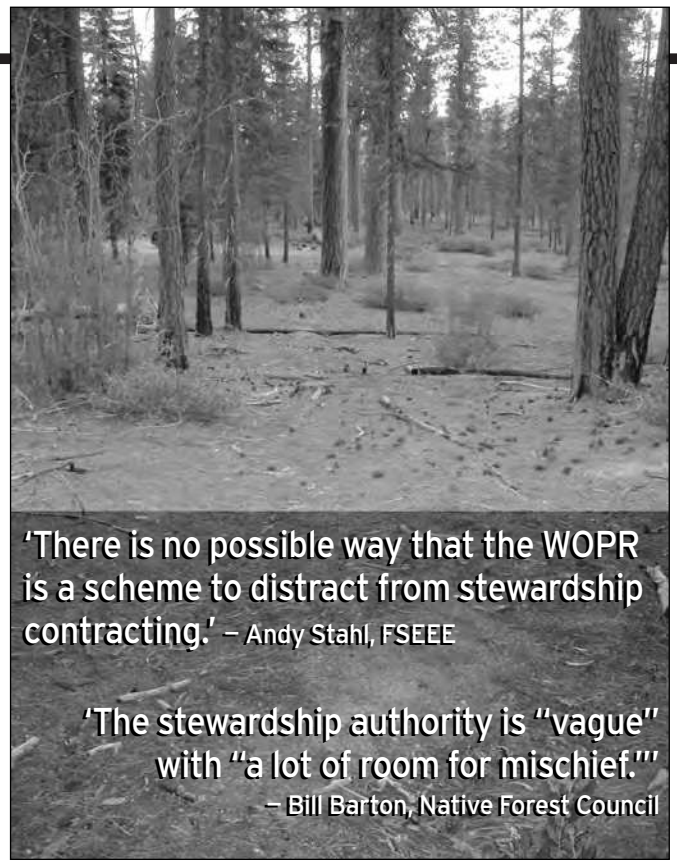
Tim Hermach, executive director of the Native Forest Council (NFC), says the WOPR is a "totally bogus plan" and the BLM is using "military tactics, designed not to win but to refocus." With all the focus on the WOPR, he says, environmentalists are not paying attention to stewardship contracting.

"Stewardship end result contracting" was created under the Clinton administration, says Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics Executive Director Andy Stahl. It's a plan in which land managers barter trees for "good works in the woods" — improvements to the land or watershed. For example, a contractor would thin trees from forestland and in exchange would maintain trails on that land or get rid of trails to restore water quality.

While Stahl agrees that there are problems with stewardship projects, he says, "There is no possible way that the WOPR is a scheme to distract from stewardship contracting."

Stewardship contracting was originally limited to Forest Service lands, but in 2003, it was expanded under the Bush administration to the BLM as well. The stewardship authority was expanded until 2013 and contracts can last as long as 10 years, says Bill Barton, director of field operations for the NFC.

There is no limit to the amount of land under a stewardship contract, says Barton. He cites the 3.3 million acre Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest of Montana, which has been proposed as a stewardship area by a coalition of forest industry and green groups. This gives them "complete control of a national forest," he says. If the WOPR goes through, BLM lands in Oregon could still become stewardship lands, he says, "and not one cent to the counties if stewardship goes through."


'There is no possible way that the WOPR is a scheme to distract from stewardship contracting.' – Andy Stahl, FSEEE

'The stewardship authority is "vague" with "a lot of room for mischief."' – Bill Barton, Native Forest Council

Unlike timber sale money on O&C lands, which gives 50 percent of gross timber revenues to O&C counties, any money earned under stewardship contracting goes back into the project or other stewardship projects.

Another of Barton's criticisms of stewardship contracting is that the stewardship authority is "vague," with "a lot of room for mischief."

Barton also says that there is "no accurate measure of the amount of wood taken from a forest under stewardship contracting," and "they don't scale the trees as they come out." If trees are not scaled (measured) Barton is concerned that there is no way of knowing if larger trees are being taken out, in addition to the smaller thinned trees.

Finally, Barton contends that although stewardship contracts "give the illusion of public involvement," the final say lies not in the community, but with regional agency directors.

Oregon currently has 26 Forest Service and four BLM stewardship projects, most of which involve some degree of thinning for fuels reduction to prevent forest fires or as an attempt to grow larger trees. Thinning is where the controversy about stewardship arises.

"Commercial thinning has the environmental community split," says Stahl. He divides the split into "jobs in the woods" people who see "social merit in having a logging industry and having communities like Sweet Home remain on the map" versus "zero cut" who don't want to see any logging at all. "Compounding the split," he says, "are Wyden and DeFazio who have declared themselves 'Thinning R Us.'"

Sen. Wyden made a call back in December to increase thinning on public lands, and Rep. DeFazio told the *News-Review* in Roseburg in December that he was trying to "garner support" for "an alternative approach based on thinning" and is working on legislation to get O&C counties 75 percent, rather than 50 percent of timber receipts.

Once the BLM has assessed public comments on the WOPR, it will release a "Proposed Resource Management Plan" and a final Environmental Impact Statement in September 2008. This will be followed by a 30-day "protest period."

Bill Barton and Tim Hermach will be speaking at the Eugene City Club at 11:50 am Friday, Jan. 11, in a talk entitled "Logging and Taxes: How Are We Affected?" EW

EUGENE WALDORF SCHOOL
Now accepting applications for preschool and kindergarten for the 2008-2009 school year!
Call for a tour or visit our website for our calendar of events!
1350 McLean Blvd., Eugene • 683-6951
www.eugenewaldorf.org

Folkways Clothing, Jewelry & Gifts
Meridian Building
18th & Willamette
431-3411
SALE!
Bring in this coupon for an additional 20% off one sale or non-sale item. VALID THRU 1/31/08
Does not apply to layaway pick-ups, customer special orders, consignment merchandise or prior purchases. May not be used with other coupons.

WE'LL PAY YOU TOP DOLLAR FOR YOUR USED CDs & DVDs
IF YOU WANT TO CLEAN OUT YOUR COLLECTION OUR BUYERS ARE PREPARED TO OFFER CASH OR EVEN MORE FOR IN-STORE CREDIT
We'll even travel to you if your collection is too large to bring in. call 683-6902 or email us cdworld@transedge.com

NEW YEAR = NEW LOW PRICES!
YOUR CHOICE OF ANY OF THESE AWESOME CDs ONLY... $9.99 EACH

Carlton Vanessa
Neko Case - Indie Store Exclusive
Bob Dylan
Feist
Mike Jones
Radiohead
Neil Young
Come in and get your January Coupon Book" that's filled with incredible values!
It Must Be January Coupon Book
The place to find it. cdworld West 11th & Seneca in Eugene • 541 683-6902 • gotocdworld.com
FREE
cdworld
Corner of West 11th & Seneca | 541 683-6902
www.gotocdworld.com
All this cool stuff and much more is on sale at CD World through January 27, 2008 so come on out or go online to see our amazing selection of music, movies, gifts and more!