

Culture of Corruption

Politics and money override forestry science

If clearcutting all trees more than 120 years old on federal land in Lane County between I-5 and the Cascades is your idea of good forestry, you might like BLM's proposed Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR). That's nearly all the older trees in the lower McKenzie, Mohawk, Fall Creek and Middle Fork Willamette basins.



What can they be thinking? You might well ask. BLM is accepting comments on the WOPR Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) until Jan. 11.

The WOPR proposes an array of highly questionable policies to replace the Northwest Forest Plan. (Triple the clearcuts without leaving any trees at all? More than two-thirds reduction in riparian buffers? Cutting 11,000 acres of Lane County old growth first and thinning younger stands later?)

The Forest Plan was created in 1994 as a scientifically sound compromise among dozens of top industry, academic and government scientists. Its basis was protecting the public waterways – the Aquatic Conservation Strategy – and an old growth ecological bellwether: northern spotted owls. Forest Plan timber harvest targets have never been hit, and the WOPR is the Bush administration's effort to up the timber cut.

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The puzzle becomes a bit clearer when you take a look at what else is going on over at the Department of the Interior, BLM's parent agency:

- Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior Julie Macdonald resigned April 30, the same day Sen. Ron Wyden called on Macdonald's boss Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorn to testify before Wyden's Senate committee on allegations of Macdonald's interference in scientific findings related to the Endangered Species Act.

- Dozens of denied listings are under review within the agency, including the recent downsizing of northern spotted owl reserves – which directly affects the huge increases in timber cuts planned under the WOPR.

- Macdonald, who help write a denial of a fish listing which directly affected her own northern California ranch, spent the last several months of her abbreviated tenure at Interior interviewing for lobbying jobs working for trade groups in the industries she was supposed to be regulating.

- It appears that there is a culture of corruption in Interior which places political interests over science. The WOPR appears to be an example of this culture at work. Wyden has successfully demanded an ethics investigation by Interior's inspector general. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has a separate investigation under way.

The WOPR's economic analysis was done by timber industry consultants from Boise, ignoring the work of highly respected Eugene economist Ed Whitelaw of EconW, who has long argued old-growth timber is more valuable to the local economy standing than turned into lumber.

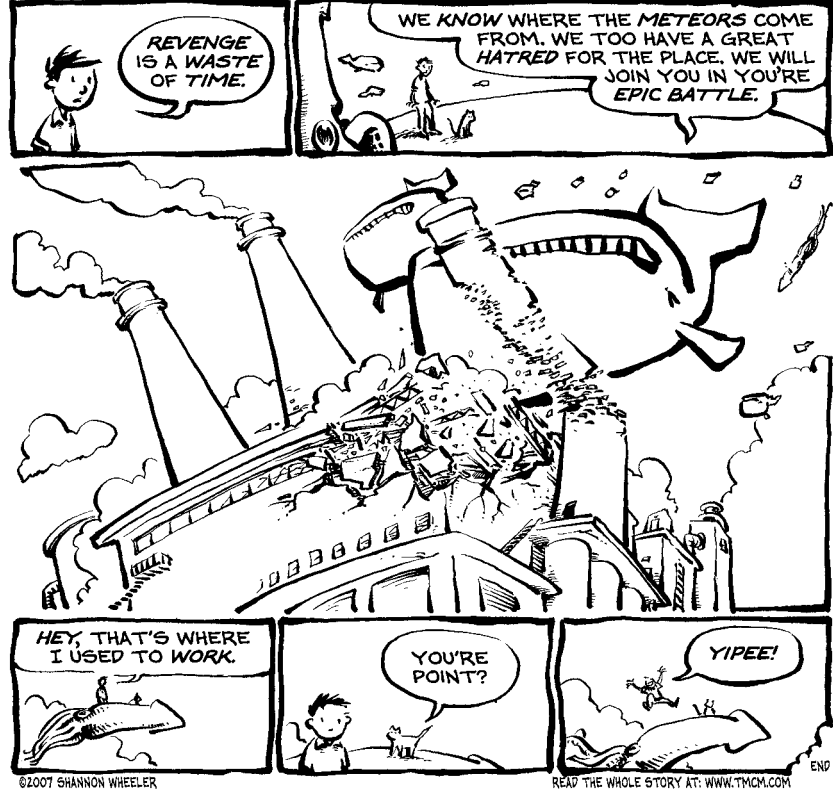
Promises that timber revenues from logging under the WOPR will provide much needed money for county government are hollow as the WOPR's flaws guarantee protracted lawsuits and could even result in a reduction in county timber revenue – but we can depend on the ecological damage WOPR would wreak.

Your comments can help. Just Google BLM and WOPR and make a quick comment on BLM's excellent website. Ask for scientific evidence why the environmental protections of the NW Forest Plan were discarded. Request that they address the WOPR's effect on forest fires, global warming and the survival of old-growth ecosystems. Demand that cumulative effects of WOPR policies on upper Willamette spring Chinook salmon be considered.

Here's a tip of the hat to Sen. Wyden and our long-suffering BLM footsoldiers who are trying to do the right thing.

Fergus Mclean is a Dexter forester working on creating the Jeffrey Mentzer Old Growth Park on BLM land 1/2

How to Be Happy (17 of 8) by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HYPOCRISY BEGINS AT HOME

During the hotly debated Measure 36 campaign, many well-intentioned moderate supporters of that measure assured me that they were not bigots. Nor were they interested in denying my partner and me fair legal protections enjoyed by married heterosexuals. Essentially, they had no issue with civil unions; it was "only" marriage to which they objected.

These well-intentioned moderates were reassured by the language used in "Yes on 36" literature targeting uncommitted voters. The pro-36 pamphlets and letters promised that this was not a matter of bigotry, nor did Measure 36 seek to deny equal protections.

Why am I not surprised in the hypocrisy of the outcry that arose from the conservative backers of Measure 36 when our Legislature took action to provide fair and equal legal protections to all Oregon citizens? And why is not surprising that a group from outside our state sought to challenge the legality of Oregon's initiative process? Aren't these largely social and political conservatives? Don't they constantly shout for "states rights"? Why would they appeal to a federal court to overturn the action of a state legislature? Maybe they only want to champion states rights and individual freedoms when such rights and freedoms align with their narrow-minded ethics? Hypocrisy? It begins at home.

Craig Willis
Eugene

SPARE NO CHANGE

I was stopped at a red light at 11th and Chambers when I noticed an unfortunate holding a sign which read "CHANGE NEEDED." I agreed in the broadest sense of the phrase possible.

Glenn Leonard
Eugene

MOVE IT TO THE WEB

Reading the past few months' worth of "Ask A Mexican!" "Savage Love" meth and sex ads letters, I've discovered that I might possibly be the only person in our fair community to not throw in his or her two

cents, so here goes:

I think "Savage Love," "Ask A Mexican!" and those controversial ads are sometimes very effective in achieving what they are trying to achieve, and sometimes not. Pretty much like everything else in your (or, honestly, ANY) newspaper or magazine. If you want to run them, I can't and won't stand in your way, and in fact, I say "more power to you."

But if I could make one suggestion to you — howabout we take all the letters to the editor debating the merits or horrors of the aforementioned ads and columns, publish them on your website only and then take all those column inches in your print edition and use them for more articles and interviews about local bands, artists, actors, activists and so on? I'd personally love more of your paper to be about, say, "What's Happening in Eugene" rather than "What's Happening in Eugene Weekly."

Wouldn't we all? Whaddayathink?

Russell Dyball
Eugene

CHAINSONG NEIGHBORHOOD

I have lived in the Whiteaker for several years, and I have heard more chainsaws in my neighborhood than I care to hear. The Public Works Department leaves signs on trees denoting their declining health and their potential hazard to the community, followed by their intention to remove said trees. The notice also states, that, "In recognition of the important value to the community of this tree, a replacement tree shall be planted."

You left this notice on a tree in the Whiteaker Community Garden three years ago, yet you did not replace the tree. In fact, when I replaced the tree for you (with an endangered chestnut variety that I fight to preserve) you dug it up. I suspect that your tree removal policy is based upon convenience rather than social responsibility.

Other examples are the former tree in front of High Street Cafe. Was that removal really necessary? Was there any public discourse on the topic? What gives you the right to remove a commodity in minutes that took decades to grow?