

news Briefs

Josh Laughlin of Cascadia Wildlands called it an “aggressive older-forest logging project cloaked as an experiment that has not even had a rudimentary environmental analysis done.”

The harvest of live trees was under 70 acres, and the logging would have resulted in less than a half mile of roads, which made it eligible for a “categorical exclusion” from an environmental analysis or environmental impact statement, according to the project’s decision memo from the Forest Service.

Laughlin said that although the proposal “skirted the rudimentary environmental analysis,” it had major implications for older forest habitat. Some of the proposed logging was in habitat suitable for northern spotted owls and some of the aggressive thinning, he said, was planned for riparian areas — areas near streams and other waterways.

“This is up in the headwaters of our municipal water supply,” said Laughlin. “We believe the Forest Service should safeguard all native forests where our drinking water originates.”

He said, “The agency should instead be spending limited taxpayer dollars restoring degraded forests not degrading remaining intact forests.”

The clearcuts, which the decision memo called “gap creation,” were included in the proposal because the area is a “high emphasis elk habitat” and the gaps would encourage elk foraging, the Forest Service memo argued. Oregon’s native elk are not threat-

ened or endangered, but they are popular with hunters.

Laughlin called the proposal a good project in the wrong place. — *Camilla Mortensen*

COUNTY SEEKS ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

Oil-covered birds and a nonstop spewing plume of crude in the Gulf of Mexico aren’t just an environmental disaster, they’re a reminder that communities like Lane County need to find alternative sources of energy and move away from dirty fossil fuels.

Lane County Commissioner Pete Sorenson says it’s not only about alternative energy, but also about conserving energy. The county has begun efforts to explore other solutions and increase energy efficiency.

The commissioners recently approved contracting with Renewable Funding, an administrative and financing service, to start a Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) bonds program that would allow commercial and residential property owners to install solar systems and energy efficiency upgrades with no upfront cost.

The PACE program, Sorenson says, is part of a collaborative design effort to build off Lane County’s work so far on energy solutions and encourage new efforts.

Sorenson recently joined the board of the Applied Solutions Coalition, group of counties and local governments — rural-to-midsized areas, similar to Lane County — looking to create local, integrated, carbon-reducing solutions to meet economic, climate and energy challenges. The group, Sorenson says, examines the problems unique to these areas and looks for tangible green energy solutions.

“We’re trying to figure out a way to really build projects that will deliver good wages and are either an energy reduction facility or alternative energy production facility,” he says.

“We hear the word infrastructure, kind of a made up word that political people use,” Sorenson says. “This is about building superstructure.” The coalition is looking at innovative approaches to building design and at projects for retrofitting, energy and water efficiency, renewable energy, land use and transportation.

In July, Lane County will host a meeting, a “Laboratory to Marketplace Workshop,” that will deal with what Sorenson calls the heart of the problem — the finances. The meeting will be aimed “at the fiscal side of environmental policy. This is all about educating the finance community,” he says.

“This effort is pointedly starting out not as a climate change organization. That underlies the work for sure, but prosperity is broader than that, and what we’re hoping to do is bring this to a much wider audience and build for societal change,” Sorenson says.



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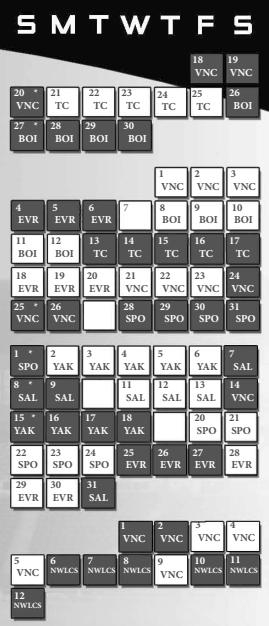
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