

GOOSED *A commentary on the Goose Timber Sale* BY ROY KEENE

The Goose Timber Sale near McKenzie Bridge is a large Forest Service logging operation posed as a beneficial project for the forest and the people. But local people aren't buying the sales pitch. They say this giant timber sale will, in truth, be as bad for the forest as it will for them.

Since Bush's 2003 Healthy Forest Initiative, federal logging has morphed from a straightforward "get the cut out" to a sideways approach of "improving" the forest by logging it. This new, improved logging, called by buzzwords like "restoration," "thinning" or "fuel reduction," still focuses on removing older, high-value timber much like the old logging.

Fuzzy names and science didn't fool the citizens of McKenzie Bridge. They chastised the Forest Service for failing to adequately inform them, dug into the Environmental Assessment, got up to speed with the issues and began looking intelligently at sale units.

Apart from broadcast burning in the wake of historic logging, there's little evidence in Goose of the intense crown fires the Forest Service uses as justification for "heavy thinning." Heavy thinning creates open-canopied, dried-out, slash and brush-filled residual stands, which are typically more flammable after logging. Given that logging itself is also a major cause of wildfire ignition, the community wonders how will logging reduce fire risk?

The reality disconnect of this 38-million-board-foot timber grab reducing wildfire bothers many forest-savvy locals as much as the coming war zone. McKenzie Bridge residents don't look forward to day-long droning of chainsaws, the roar of jet helicopters, loaded trucks rumbling by in swirling dust or the increase in wildfire danger from summer logging operations.

Besides devaluing this rural community's life quality, Goose will devalue the forest and significantly undervalue the public's high-quality timber. A similar sale, the Ten Re-Offer



HANGING OUT IN THE GOOSE PHOTO BY ROY KEENE

was ignominiously awarded for \$7.60 a ton ... 10 percent of real market value. This undervaluing partially reflects helicopter yarding, so expensive and wasteful that we end up paying for valuable trees to be removed from our forest.

There are more bad eggs from the Goose, but also a few ways to honestly buffer McKenzie River residents from seldom-seen forest fires while preserving forest capital.

Instead of logging large trees from distant upland slopes, remove small trees and excess vegetation around residences and thin forest understories along roads. Contract smaller, less-mechanized, but equally effective fuel reduction projects locally. Quit subsidizing distant mega-mills with

huge helicopter and skyline logging operations at a loss to the public. Instead, redirect these subsidies toward activities like putting steel roofing on vulnerable community buildings and creating ponds for wildlife that would serve simultaneously as water points for future fire fighting.

The Goose Timber Sale does one thing really well. It highlights the inherent dishonesty, inequity and wastefulness of the archaic federal timber sale program. As one citizen said, "It looks as if you're going to turn me into a 67-year-old tree sitter with this Goose Project. Bad news for us all!" *ew*

For more on community effort to stop the Goose Timber Sale, go to www.savemckenziebridge.com



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