

Timber: Some of the trees in the sale are more than 120 years old

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North Coast State Forest Coalition, authored by coordinator Chris Smith and Trygve Steen, a professor of environmental science at Portland State University. "These stages of ecological succession are exceedingly rare on (Board of Forestry) lands on Oregon's North Coast and provide important conservation benefits."

Smith said the Homesteader timber sale is one of the first the coalition has ever opposed. The coalition usually advocates for conservation at a higher level, he said, and trusts the management process stemming from those decisions. The coalition gathered more than 1,600 comments against the Homesteader timber sale, part of which it contends is valuable potential habitat for the endangered marbled murrelet, whose presence has nixed many a logging operation on the West Coast, along with the northern spotted owl.

Years of work go into deciding a timber sale. The forestry department surveyed between 2012 and 2014 for endangered species in the Homesteader area. Williams and Goody said there were no marbled murrelet found.

"We have surveyed this area for 17 years without seeing a marbled murrelet," Goody said, adding no spotted owls have been sighted either.

The report says the timber sales in Homesteaders would also hurt nearby property values on the Nehalem River, and that there are less ecologically valuable stands nearby that could be substituted.

Many different biologists and wildlife experts with the forestry department and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife played a part in deciding the terrestrial anchors, Goody wrote in response to the coalition's study. "Since there are many mature forest stands



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Area 2 of the proposed Homesteader timber sale.

on the Astoria district, some are necessary to contribute towards meeting economic mandates required by state law."

What is old growth?

The coalition counted some of the trees in the Homesteader sale at more than 120 years old. As only 0.1 percent of state forests are old growth, the coalition's report says, the older trees in Homesteader should be spared. And the older trees, the report adds, are too large in diameter and full of loose knots from old branches to be optimal timber.

Williams said the trees are at least 114 years old, whereas the department's forest management plan determines old growth at 175- to 200-year-old trees on land that hasn't been managed for timber. Homesteader, he added, was one of the earlier tracts around Jewell managed for timber.

"While these trees do not meet the (forest management practices) definition of old-growth we will evaluate and look for opportunities to retain many of these older trees as scattered green trees or in clumps throughout the sale areas to provide a larger landscape



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Dan Goody looks for a springboard notch in a Douglas Fir that Goody estimates was cut down in the 1940s. Goody said that studying these older trees is important because it helps them determine what grows naturally in the forest and how to best approach forestry efforts.

perspective," Goody wrote in his response to the coalition. "The Astoria district contains approximately 14,000 acres of stands of trees 80 years old and older. The majority of these stands (63 percent) are designated for wildlife and conservation values."

The forestry department now prepares the various proposed timber sales, cruising to determine the amount of timber and readying the infrastructure for logging.

Balance

While their district

shoots for timber harvests of 74 million board feet a year, Goody's and Williams' department follows the greatest permanent value rule, which sets a balance of revenue, recreation and conservation.

"You're almost a social manager walking the fine line," Williams said.

One of the great things about the state forest, Goody said, is it's open to everyone wanting to come recreate.

Williams oversees the recreation activities of the forestry department, which includes about 20 miles of



Submitted Photo

Conservationists believe the large, old trees in these areas are of special significance.



Submitted Photo

Members of the North Coast State Forest Coalition and a professor of environmental science from Portland State University contend that older trees in the Oregon Department of Forestry's Homesteader area would make low-quality logs because of the old branches causing loose knots throughout, and that they would be better left standing for habitat conservation.

trails; even more off-road vehicle tracks in places like Nicolai Mountain; several campgrounds; horse trails; archery; hunting; and the

Astoria Demonstration Forest behind the forestry department's office, showing forest management practices on a smaller scale.

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