

MILLS: Small operations getting higher prices

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It's not likely the public ever will know exactly what impact the Dec. 31 conclusion of a contract that Hancock Timber – the largest private landowner in Wallowa County and one of the largest timber-producing companies in the world – and Boise Cascade has had on BC's need to pay higher prices for its logs, but not having a guaranteed cut coming off of the 148,000 acres of timberland Hancock Timber owns in northern Wallowa County is likely a factor.

Both Boise Cascade and Hancock Timber say they are maintaining an important working relationship.

But suddenly, says Wallowa County Commissioner Mike Hayward, Boise Cascade is having to "scramble" to supply enough logs to keep its three lumber mills, one plywood mill, and one particle-board mill – located in Elgin, La Grande, and Pilot Rock – supplied with wood.

The finale of that guaran-

teed wood supply from Wallowa County land owned by Hancock Timber could be one factor, and yet two additional factors suddenly are leveling the playing field and giving smaller logging operations, like Tanzey Forest Improvement, higher prices for their product and increased hope for their businesses.

In 2014, a sawmill in Clarkston, Wash., operated by Bennett Lumber Products – seeing that the lumber market was coming back – re-opened its doors, and across the Snake River in Lewiston, Idaho, a large sawmill owned by Idaho Forest Group opened up a new high-technology manufacturing line that greatly expanded its demand for logs.

Hancock Timber Regional Manager Joe Justice, although by company policy declin-



Hayward

ing to report how much Hancock Timber is availing itself of these two new log buyers, said, "We are pleased to see Bennett Lumber Products and Idaho Forest Group increasing production. We have observed a strengthening in the log markets recently and believe it may be indicative of a further strengthening economy."

Well versed on the topic of timber in Wallowa County, Hayward is of the opinion Boise Cascade soon will need a significantly larger supply of logs off of federal land to keep its five mills in this area running.

And yet another burr in Boise Cascade's side arose Dec. 9 when, in response to an appeal lodged by Legal Wilderness Defenders and the Hells Canyon Preservation Council (HCPC), two timber sales BC had purchased on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in Baker County amounting to 15 million board feet of timber was blocked by the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Buck Fullerton, wood procurement manager for Boise Cascade now is asking, "Where do we get that volume for next year?" Fullerton says the court decision is blocking about 3,400 truckloads of logs that Boise Cascade had been counting on.

According to Veronica Warnock, conservation director for the HCPC, a basis of their appeal was that the Forest Service, which had prepared documentation for what amounted to five Snow Basin timber sales north of Halfway totaling about 38 million board feet of timber, did not comply with the forest plan that's been in effect since 1990. "They violated procedural law" in how they amended the forest plan, she said.

The Online Environmental Law Reporter, in summing up the Ninth Circuit's reversal of a lower court decision, said the merit to the appellants'

argument was in the Environmental Impact Statement's discussion of elk habitat.

Tanzeley, age 63, says for the first time in six years his crew has work lined up throughout the upcoming year, and now a business recently ready to close its doors will survive into the hands of two sons and a grandson. With about a dozen clients ranging in property ownership between 300 and 4,000 acres, Tanzey Forest Improvement will continue harvesting timber the old-fashioned way by selectively harvesting with, says Tanzey, an eye toward improving the ecosystem.

Hayward says the new tilt of the supply and demand system in Wallowa County is generating far-reaching implications. Simply stated, in the timber industry, competition brings the price up. And for the timber industry in Wallowa County, which has no sawmills, that's a good thing.

Wheat growers group offers scholarships

Oregon Wheat Foundation offers up to 12 scholarships for high school seniors whose families have Oregon Wheat Growers League membership, students who work part-time for grower members, or family members employed by OWGL.

Scholarship requirements: write an essay on any wheat industry topic and summary of the student's school and community involvement.

One \$1,000 award available to applicants from each qualifying county, including Wallowa County. Three awards are available between Willamette Valley and Central Oregon counties.

Applications are available from the OWGL website, www.owgl.org. Or contact Marilyn Braggh, mbraggh@owgl.org. Application postmark deadline: Feb. 1.

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