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RMPs for Western Oregon
Bureau of Land Management
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The following are the comments from Umpqua Watersheds, Inc. (UW) on the Draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement.

Introduction

The Umpqua Watersheds, Inc. (UW) Board of Directors, representing its diverse, active and interested membership, submitted scoping comments to the BLM RMP Planners, dated March 28, 2014. (Copy included with this.) The UW Board began and ended those comments by offering the following: *“The measure of management success on public forest lands must be the number of acres restored to high ecological function rather than the quantity of board feet extracted therefrom.”* (That we have substituted *“must”* in these comments for the original *“should”* is an indication of how important we believe BLM's long term planning process is, in Western Oregon, to the maintenance, restoration and very survival of the natural systems all living creatures depend upon.)

Indeed, UW believes this to be a most appropriate planning and activity metric for Federal forest management agencies to keep before them as they attempt to mitigate the grave and pervasive environmental insults imposed upon our forested landscapes in past decades. Further, UW has the temerity to offer it as a systemic antidote to the widespread watershed degradation currently practiced on adjoining private industrial timberlands, under aegis of the retrograde Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFP). Likewise, we believe that this, or a similar restorative imperative, were it to be adopted and adhered to, would prove to be a critical component of any prophylactic measures needed to address the several serious environmental challenges before us, in this, the twenty-first century. Now more than ever, such an overarching conservation/restoration ethic is essential if our beleaguered watersheds, their forests, streams and rivers and the denizens that once so numerously graced and benefitted from them, are to withstand the manifold impacts of accelerating climate change along with all of its palpable effects, predicted as well as unknown, and the considerable consequences of those effects¹.

Historical Background

In UW's opinion, the most noteworthy historical fact of the period between 1962 and 1990 relating to management of the 22 million odd acres of forest lands in the planning area under consideration in the d.e.i.s. is this: with limited exceptions (those reflecting national and regional economic downturns), the BLM, Forest Service, private industry, the state, tribes and others clear cut primary old growth and mature forest, with abandon, from millions of acres in Western Oregon. Total extraction levels ranged from annual highs of nearly eight billion board feet in the early '60s to some six and one half billion board feet by 1990. BLM's share of what, from hindsight, amounted to a vast strip mining of the concentrated wealth of centuries, ranged from a high of about one and a half billion board feet in 1964

¹ d.e.i.s., Vol 1, pg. xxviii: *“Climate change provides uncertainty that reserves will function as intended and that planned timber harvest levels can be attained, with the uncertainty increasing over time.”*

to a low, in the recession year 1984 of nearly one half billion board, thereafter returning to a high of nearly one and a half billion board feet, in 1989.

We would like to assume that BLM's RMP planning team is as aware as UW of the many negative consequences imposed upon our watersheds, environmentally speaking, by its participation in this decades long "great falling". The long and painful cries, as it were, emanating from our landscapes and their ancient natural systems, so shamefully manifested in the now widely recognized precipitous decline of species and their habitats, led to an accompanying outcry from an alarmed and aroused citizenry. This environmental awakening of individuals and groups to the dire consequences of such huge and seemingly heedless resource extraction levels from our precious watersheds led to political action. This energy, in turn, helped to produce the land mark Northwest Forest Plan. Designed to deliver desired conservation/restoration outcomes over the course of fifty or more years, it has had the initial effect, among other positives, of halting the wholesale liquidation of late seral forest stands and related aquatic habitat in its first twenty years.

At present, UW notes the frequent citation of the sustained² yield harvest provision of the 1937 O & C Act by agencies and advocates of greatly increased extraction from the O & C and other holdings managed by the BLM. We also note the responsibility that nearly eighty year old legislation imposed upon the BLM, from the day of its enactment and first implementation, to protect watersheds and regulate stream flow. It is UW's studied opinion that, for decades, the BLM willfully violated these latter two critical responsibilities by means of its ill-considered clear cut over harvest of primary forest on lands under its management authority. This negligence contributed significantly to the resultant alarming decline of benchmark species, both aquatic and terrestrial, that flowed from the vast habitat destruction the agency so deliberately and methodically participated in.

UW strongly asserts that, because of this well known record of past mismanagement, the BLM is ethically and legally required to direct its planning and action energies to the conservation of what intact habitats that, despite all odds, remain within its jurisdiction. Further, it is our firm position that the BLM must apply those same energies to the vast restoration effort required to return these lands to something approaching that state of high ecological function, which obtained so widely across the planning area in the centuries before either industry or government agency applied the shortsighted and pernicious "sustained yield" clear cut/monoculture/herbicide/fiber farm management paradigm to so much of the public inheritance that lay within their respective purviews.

Matters Relating To Purpose and Need Requirement To Provide Logs To Domestic Mills

As stated above, it is UW's considered view that the BLM greatly overemphasized its obligation to supply timber, from public lands to private enterprises, via the sustained yield clear cut method, to the subsequent and severe detriment of watershed function and stream flow, ecologically speaking. Proof of this assertion is incontrovertibly evidenced by the lamentable condition of so many of our river systems. It is evidenced by the amount and extent of species that have been reduced in numbers and variety and/or find themselves at risk of extirpation due to habitat loss. It is evidenced, at present, by the tremendous diminution of primary old growth/mature forest habitat, as compared to historical acreage. The timber volumes available for current and, to a considerable extent, for future extraction, so as to satisfy the perceived sustained yield requirement of the O & C Act have already, thereby, been grossly over cut and sold to private enterprises in prior decades. In this regard, and as scripture has so

² Please note the critical difference in meaning between the two words: "sustained" and "sustainable."

aply stated: “*The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children, unto the seventh generation.*” (In humility, we cannot characterize the resource dilemma Western Oregon is today faced with any better, nor with greater clarity or more forcefully, than how those prophetic and most fell words have predicted the dire consequences that inevitably devolve from repeated ill-considered actions.) Given the hard facts of this resource extraction history, the hue and cry raised by industry and some in local, state and national government for continued and even increased implementation of sustained yield management sounds hollow as it echoes, clear cut to clear cut, across our beleaguered watersheds.

Raw Log Exports from Oregon Ports

UW notes the stated need of the BLM to supply domestic mills with raw material to sustain those enterprises. At the same time, we also note the vast quantities of unprocessed logs harvested from private holdings in Western Oregon and exported over seas. For example, in the year 2013, some 662mmbf, or 16% of the total Oregon timber harvest was exported as raw logs to the Pacific Rim.³ In the year 2012, 84,643,000 bf of various softwood species was exported to Communist China, from Coos Bay, alone!⁴ To make matters worse, an entity of the Coquille Tribe, on the tribal website, recently announced the dispatch of the first ship load of privately sourced, unprocessed logs from its dock, in Coos Bay. The tribal brokerage estimated roughly 1,000 log truck loads were required to fully lade this vessel. If their estimate is correct, and allowing roughly 6,000 bf/truck load, that one ship alone carried some 6mmbf of unprocessed logs, and they expect to send many more such shiploads of raw logs across the Pacific Ocean in the years to come.

How then to explain the advertised pressing and unfilled need, expressed by some domestic enterprises, for logs sourced from public lands, when so many hundreds of millions of board feet are harvested in Oregon and exported to our commercial competitors, every year? Does the BLM propose to auction lower priced logs to businesses that are unable to compete for logs on the free world market; this discount offered as a kind of subsidy granted one aspect of the private sector by the public? While we hope not, facts on the ground certainly suggest that the BLM has done so on a grand scale in the past and will do so again, if society and corrupt governance permits it.

Exported Jobs As A Function of Unprocessed Log Exports From Coos Bay

Alternative	Jobs Mid-point First decade estimated by d.e.i.s. Table 2-11	Jobs Exported From Coos Bay in 2012 In the Form of Unprocessed Logs ⁵	Jobs Exported from Coos Bay in 2012 Expressed as a Percentage of Total Jobs Created Under Each Alternative
Current	7403	3264	44%
No Action	10,298	3333	32%
A	7992	3061	38%
B	9230	3536	38%
C	12419	2290	18%

3 Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Montana; Simmons, Scudder, Moragan, et al., 6/15

4 USDA, Pacific Northwest Research Station, Production, Prices, Employment, and Trade, All Quarters, 2012, Xiaoping Zhou, December 2013

5 From d.e.i.s. Table 2-11, ratio between asq and jobs created for ea. alternative proportionate to the volume exported from Coos Bay in 2012.

D	6915	3522	51%
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The above table, using statistics derived from sources identified in the footnotes to these comments and from the d.e.i.s., itself, illustrates the ambiguous nature of that portion of the purpose and need section of the d.e.i.s. that identifies the necessity of supplying logs to domestic mills in order to generate employment. While we realize there may not exist a precise correspondence between the statistics presented in the above table, they are certainly indicative (if the analysis behind Table 2-11 of the Draft RMP/d.e.i.s. is to be believed) of the actual relationship between jobs, vis a vis log exports, and the jobs potentially to be realized under each alternative. Clearly, there has been and still exists a surfeit of hundreds of millions of board feet of raw logs, an available resource that would easily be able to satisfy, in part or in whole, those domestic manufacturing needs. Nowhere in the 1937 O & C Act, that UW has seen, is provision made for subsidies to private enterprises, which find themselves unable to compete for obviously available resources on the vaunted free global market.

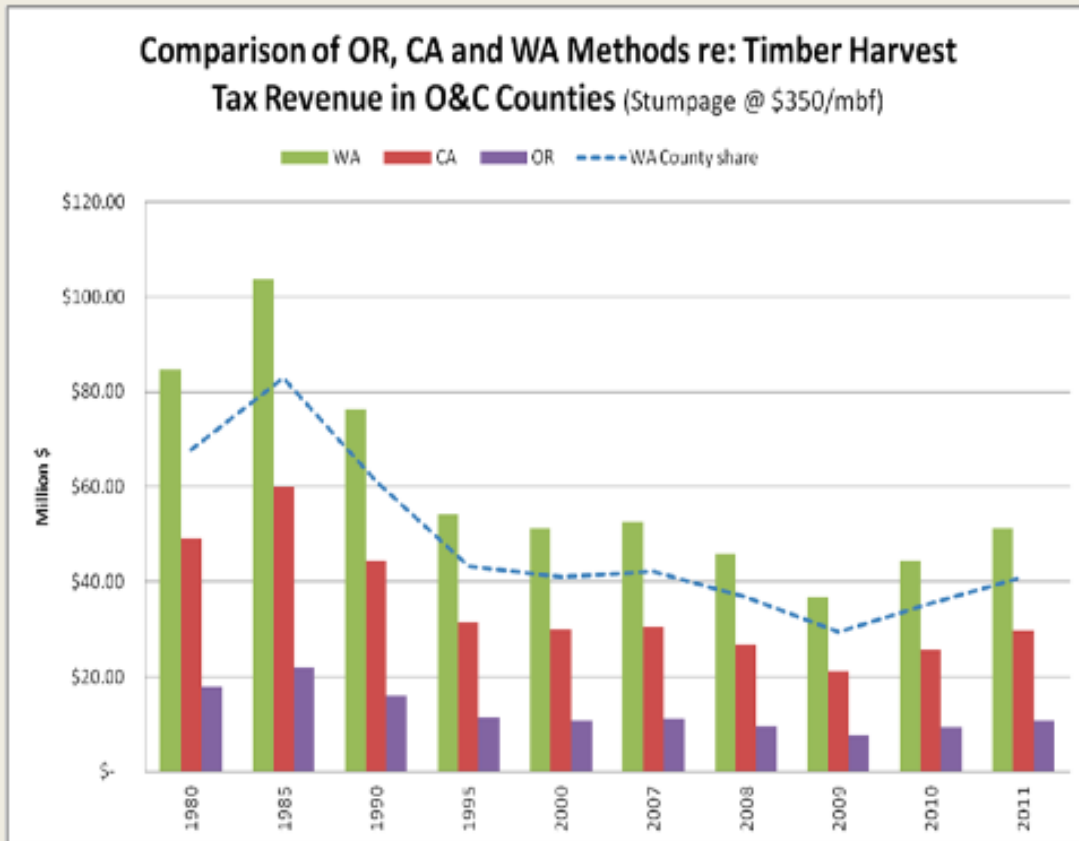
To reiterate: the requirement to supply a sustained yield of timber to domestic mills has been grossly overemphasized in past decades, much to the detriment of the watershed stewardship obligations specified in the 1937 O & C Act. Therefore, at present and for the foreseeable future, that obligation must be considered to have been met. Further, there clearly exists an abundance of logs available to domestic manufacturing enterprises. Thus UW feels well justified in asserting that the BLM need not, nor should it, impose a further and unnecessary extractive burden on what is obviously an already badly degraded checkerboard landscape, ecologically speaking.

Relating To the Need For the BLM To Generate Revenues For O&C County Governments By Means of Increased Timber Extraction From Public Lands

UW is aware of the taxes currently imposed (or not) upon industrial log harvests (i.e., upon private concerns owning 5,000 or more acres) in Oregon, as compared to past decades and to timber harvest taxes imposed by neighboring states. By way of illustration, we offer the graph below, sourced by Economist, Mr. Erni Niemi from the Oregon Department of Forestry (See pg. 5). It well illustrates the “sweet heart” deal long granted to the industrial timber industry by a sympathetic Oregon government, much to the detriment of state and local revenues.

From this, UW is convinced that claimed county and other Oregon government revenue shortfalls might reasonably be overcome, to a significant degree, by a return to the harvest tax levels in place in Oregon as recently as the late 1990's, when approximately forty million dollars were delivered to the Oregon Department of Revenue by taxes levied on industrial timber harvests. Immediately following when this severance tax revenue stream was legislatively ended it was hardly replaced by county ad valorem property taxes, which, by comparison, yielded less than three million dollars in total, statewide and less than four million dollars in subsequent years.

Oregon's Industry Avoids Timber Harvest Taxes



Oregon Department of Forestry

Reference is made, ad nauseum, to the 1937 O & C Act and its outdated provisions. Interestingly, an O&C task force commissioned by former Governor, Kitzhaber, among other findings, concluded that there existed a tremendous, even historic imbalance in the revenue demands made upon O&C forest lands, as opposed to those made upon comparable or better quality private, industrial forest lands.⁶

We suggest BLM planners examine the history of Oregon timber taxes for themselves. Look, for example, at the Oregon Forest Rules for the year 1947, wherein a yield tax of 12.5% was imposed upon reforestation timber holdings, immediately prior to harvest. If this same tax had been imposed upon the Oregon private industrial timber harvest for the year 2012, a considerable amount of revenue would have been made available to all levels of government in Oregon. The Oregon Department of Forestry reports that private industrial harvest for 2012 was 2,555,495mbf.⁷ Using a median stumpage price of \$300/mbf, taxed at 12.5%, would have yielded roughly \$95,831,062 in revenue to the state as compared to the roughly \$4,000,000 in ad valorem taxes collected by counties on that same industrial timber land, in 2012. The reported raw log export total from Oregon in 2013, cited above, taxed at the 1947 rate of 12.5% would have generated approximately \$24,825,000! That 1947 yield tax, rate levied upon logs exported in 2012, from Coos Bay alone, would have generated roughly \$3,174,113!

Having rescinded the yield, severance and privilege type taxes, the Oregon Legislature has it well within its authority to reinstate them. After all, many of the identical industrial timber entities currently operating in Oregon already pay similar taxes in neighboring states and manage to turn a respectable profit, thank you. Further, a reinstated severance or yield tax levied on private industrial timber lands (i.e., >5,000 acres) could conceivably be structured so that, at harvest, forest land owners delivering logs to domestic mills would be granted a partial exemption to the severance or yield tax. This would help to eliminate any price differential currently offered those owners by log exporters. (A differential that might not exist were the BLM, U.S.F.S., ODF et al to price logs from public lands at levels comparable to those being paid for privately sourced, exported Oregon logs.)

Much as with the assumed need to supply raw materials to domestic enterprises, the stated obligation to provide revenues to Oregon counties by means of increased harvest of BLM administered forest lands is, at present, a politically created necessity and definitely not one arising from a dearth of actual potential revenue sources; sources very much available, given the requisite political will, in the real world today. The effected O&C counties enjoyed the overly generous revenues obtained from the gross over harvest of primary old growth and mature forest for several decades. Rather than insisting on increased revenues derived from a renewal of ecologically unwarranted harvest activities on those same put-upon public lands, while at the same time lobbying the Oregon Congressional Delegation to pressure federal forest management agencies to accede to these unjustified demands, county

⁶ Compiled by Andy Kerr, the Larch Company, 12/13: *"The O&C lands were once in private ownership, and the private owners paid local property taxes. In lieu of paying taxes, Congress agreed to give the O&C counties 75% of gross timber receipts. This may have been a reasonable approach in 1937, but over time it resulted in a tremendous windfall to the counties—at the expense of federal taxpayers—as old-growth forest fell to the chainsaw in the 1950s through 1980s. This harmed rivers, streams, fish and wildlife and created a culture of dependency in some county governments. According to the Governor's O&C Task Force, if the O&C lands were still in private ownership and taxed as other private timberlands, the 18 O&C counties would receive a total of \$6,708,000 per year (Tuchmann, E. Thomas, and Chad T. Davis, 2013, O&C Lands Report: Prepared for Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, Table B-10). The O&C counties are demanding more than 16 times that amount."*

⁷ Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Montana; Timber Harvest For Oregon

commissioners, et al. should approach the Oregon Legislative and Executive branches of state government and insist that accustomed levels of timber harvest taxation be reimposed upon the voluminous private industrial timber harvests, in Oregon. Optionally, and as mentioned above, the Oregon Legislature has, well within its purview, the authority to structure such a renewed revenue stream so as to stanch the ongoing hemorrhage of raw logs from Oregon to foreign mills, at a time when some domestic mills clamor for a share of those very logs.

Admittedly, these particular tax issues are the province of the elected government of the state of Oregon and are not within the administrative or constitutional purview of the Federal Government or its agencies. However, the prominent citation of this revenue requirement in the purpose and need section of the d.e.i.s., and, indeed, as repeated in the purpose and need sections of countless other BLM management proposals at the district level, makes them an absolutely legitimate and most germane subject for discussion, when commenting upon the purpose and need portions of this d.e.i.s.

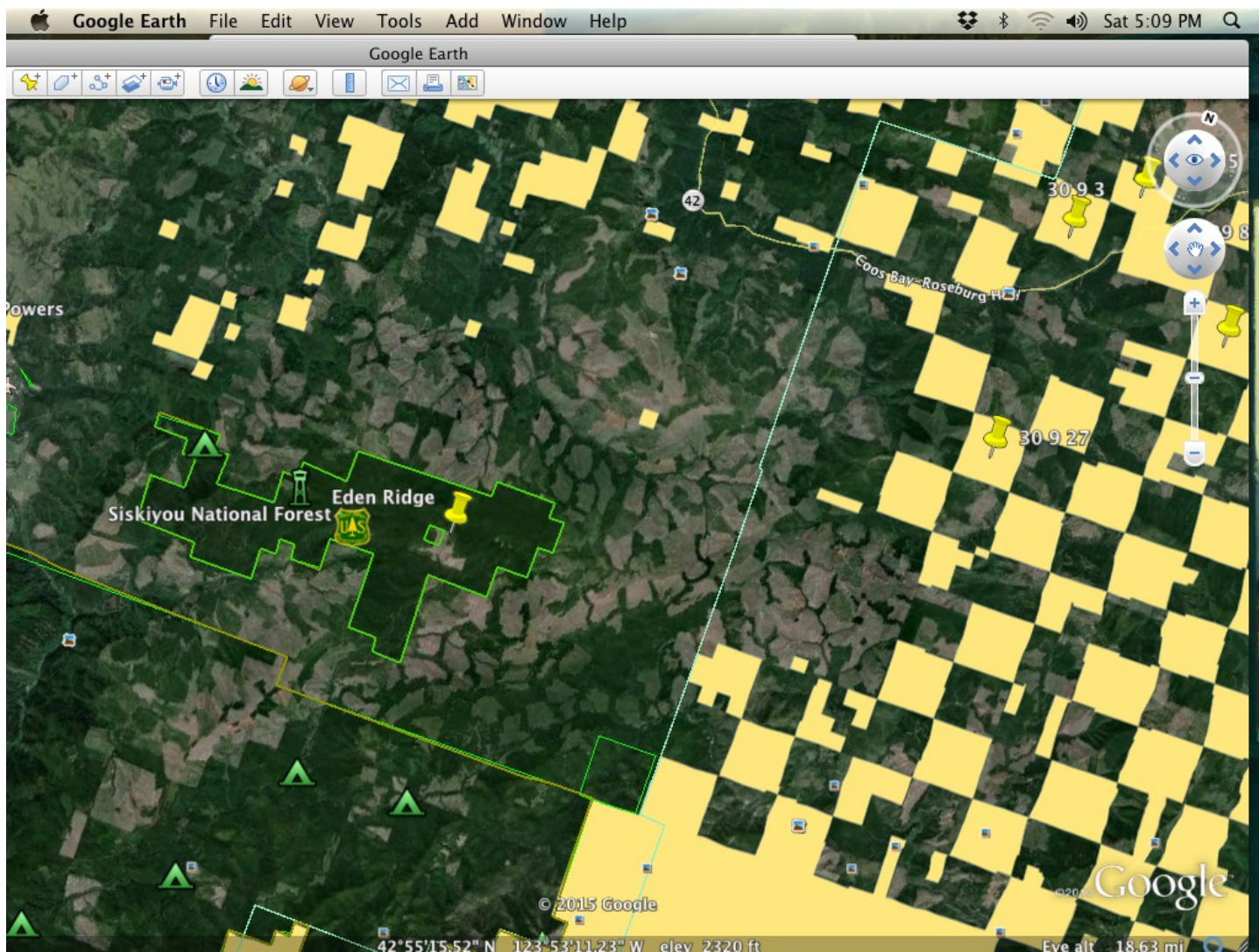
Thus, the Umpqua Watersheds Board of Directors, speaking on behalf of its membership, insists that the RMP planning team take these pertinent and contextual harvest history and resource and revenue facts into full and serious consideration when finalizing the planning document. It is our studied opinion that to continue to use the outdated provisions of the historically misapplied O&C Act as an excuse to further plunder those vast portions of the planning area, which have already and for decades, been much abused by the gross over harvest of primary forest, would rise (or sink) to the level of ethical and legal violations of the public trust.

Terrestrial Context of BLM Holdings In the Checkerboard

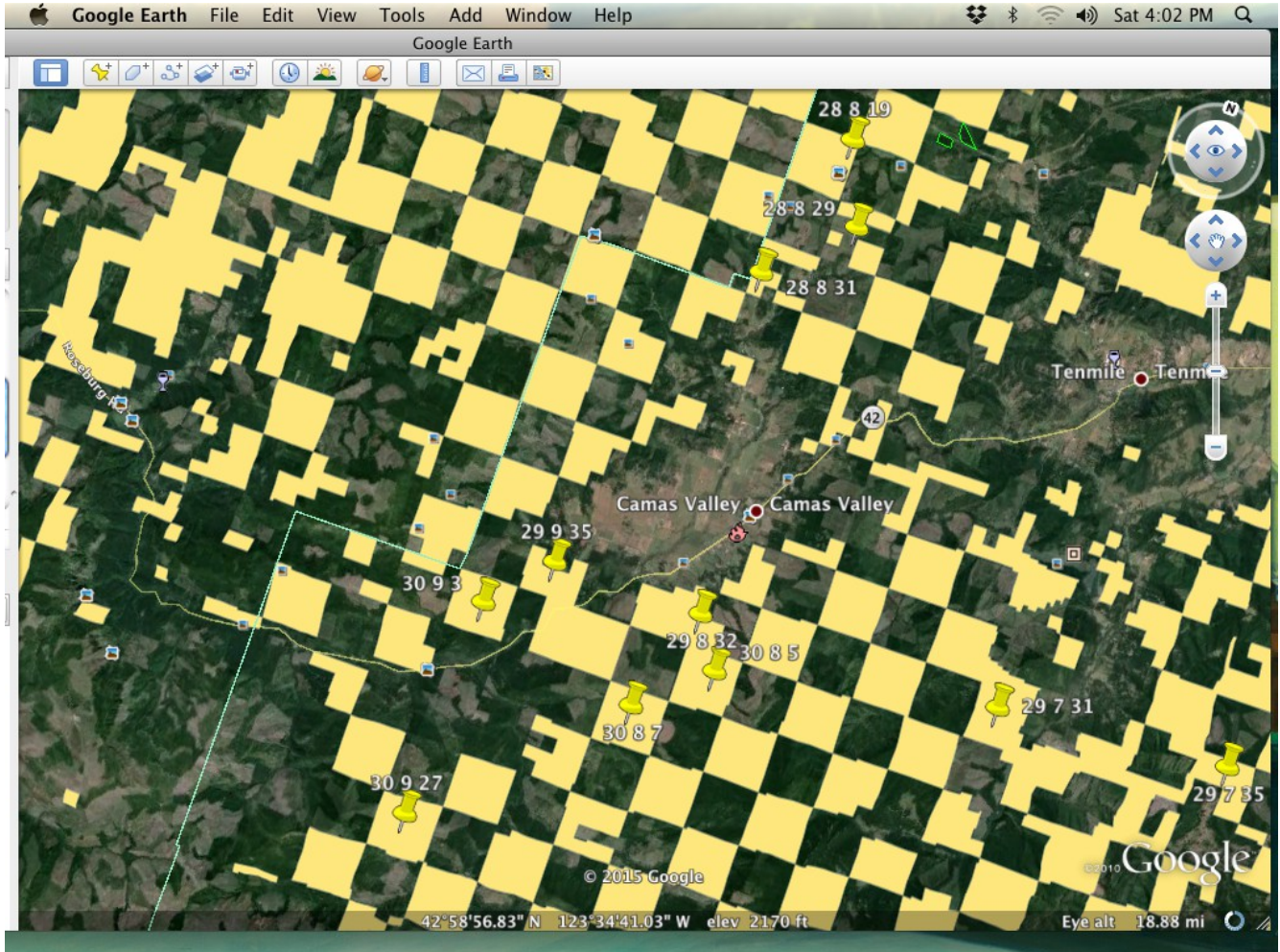
A cursory perusal of Google Earth files for Western Oregon seems to us a useful place to begin examining the overall sylvan condition of a good deal of the twenty-two million acre planning area, herein under consideration. UW feels that this remarkable medium is an excellent way for the concerned citizen, of average intelligence and education and possessed of decent eyesight (or, lacking that sensory attribute, a good pair of spectacles) and access to a computer, to inform him or herself as to current on-the-ground ecologically negative impacts the vaunted sustained yield management paradigm has had on these watersheds.

Touring the O&C checkerboard, via Google Earth, from about latitude 42° 30' N to about 45° 30' N, bounded by about longitude 122° or 123° W reveals a landscape littered with countless recent clear cuts and young monoculture plantations on many, many of the privately held sections that directly adjoin lands administered by the BLM. This, then, is the “high altitude” context within which Federal Forest management agencies must function. This is the beleaguered landscape upon which the BLM will impose the latest iteration of its Resource Management Plan. These are the put-upon and severely degraded watersheds, already sporting a surfeit of large openings in a once densely forested canopy, wherein the BLM alternatives contained in the d.e.i.s. (aka WOPRjr.) propose introducing still more large openings! Without the intervening filter of arcane labels and the artificial political representations of paper maps, Google Earth spreads this abused landscape before us on our device screens (airborne as it were) and panoramically reveals them to our dispirited and increasingly alarmed and angry gaze.

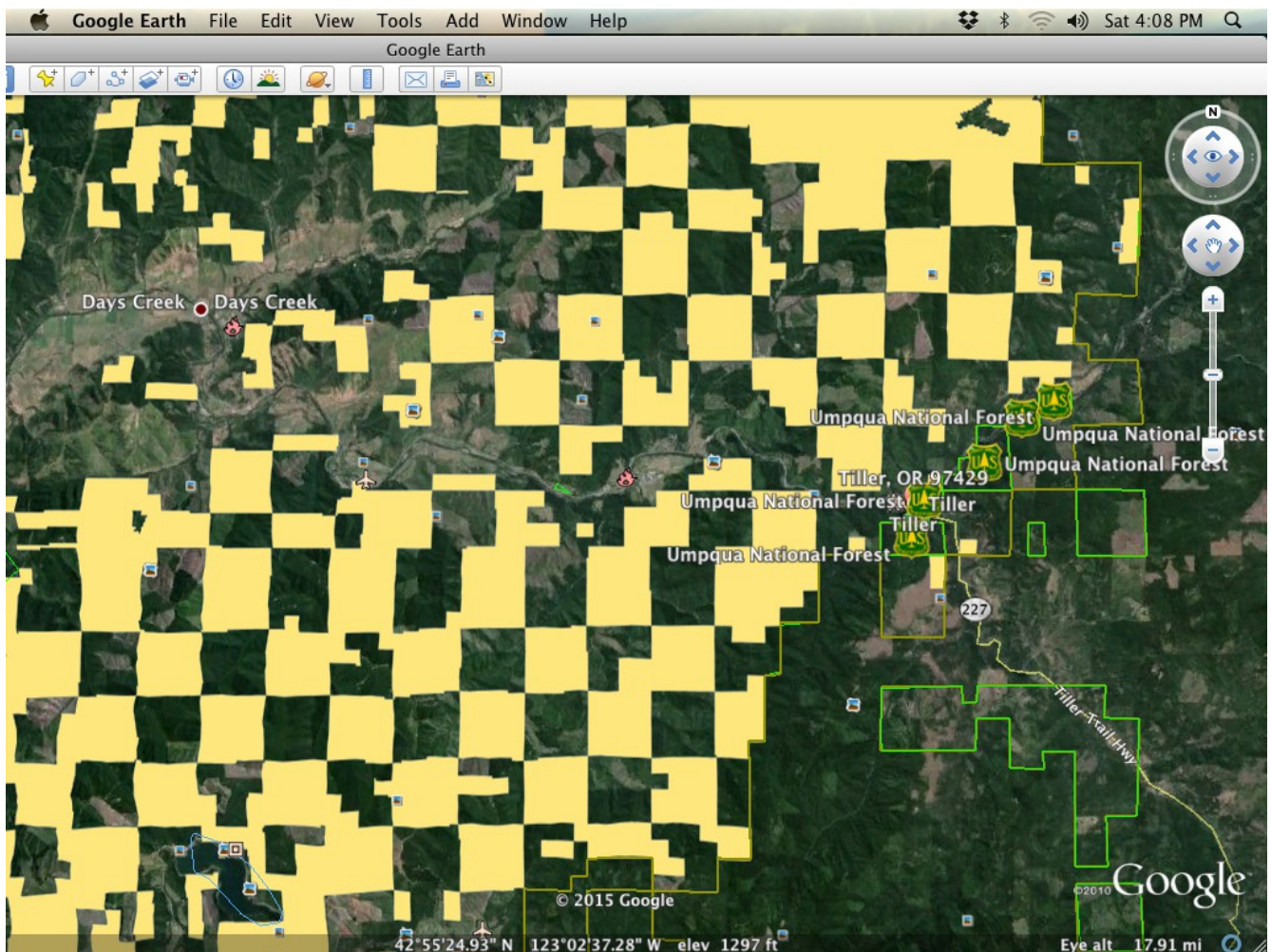
Of particular interest to a number of the members of Umpqua Watersheds is that portion of the checkerboard from about 42° 50' N to about 43° 20' N, and from roughly 124° 06' W to 123° 30' W. Still carried by Google Earth, interested citizens can look down on the lands surrounding Eden Ridge, a six thousand odd acre island administered by the Rogue/Siskiyou N.F. Here, not far from the nearest BLM lands and spreading like a cancer among those BLM holdings, whole sections have been “slicked off,” one 640 acre township following fast on another, save for pitifully narrow retention strips separating individual clear cuts. (Much of this acreage is owned by the Plum Creek Real Estate Investment Trust, who do not operate any manufacturing facilities in the region. Thus, it does not require an overactive imagination to picture tens of thousands of the logs clear cut from these slopes awaiting shipment to Communist China, from the docks at Coos Bay.)



Find Camas Valley (c.43° 02' N, 123° 40' W). Make a 360° circuit of this alpine vale to observe the lamentable condition of its surrounding watersheds. This is another locale wherein the d.e.i.s. alternatives propose various management options that would, if adopted, introduce still more numerous large openings in a landscape pocked with them now. [In fact, the Roseburg District is actively planning some 800+ acres of regen. (aka clear cut) harvest, under aegis of the 1995 ROD! Some of the proposed clear cuts in this project connect directly with existing recent clear cuts on neighboring private lands.]



Indeed, much similarly abused checkerboard terrain may be found by “flying” Google Earth from Canyonville, on I 5 in Douglas County, East to Tiller. In fact, look in almost any portion of the planning area one chooses and it is plain to see that watershed destruction abounds and continues apace.



With this context in mind, UW asks the BLM how introducing still more clear cut openings into the checkerboard, often directly adjoining already existing private land clear cuts, does not constitute an unacceptable negative cumulative impact, such as NEPA requires forest management agencies to acknowledge and avoid? For our part, UW insists that such actions do violate NEPA and other guiding regulations and, therefore, must not be implemented at this time.

Aquatic Context of BLM Holdings In the Checkerboard

Under each of the Action Alternatives, the BLM proposes diminishing a significant portion of the riparian buffers established by the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) of the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP). Alarming, the d.e.i.s. proposes tossing the ACS aside along with the well established and much needed protections afforded by the “Key Watersheds” paradigm. BLM riparian planners cite questionable modeling they claim validates each of these precipitous abandonments of the current ACS

protocols, an abandonment that relinquishes a significant portion of the safety margins⁸ built into the current ACS buffers; margins designed, in part, to help mitigate potential disturbances, such as climate change, whose accelerating and worsening impacts were not clearly foreseen at the time the NFP and its associated ACS were conceived and begun to be implemented. The experts we have talked to and the literature we have consulted, on the contrary, provide compelling scientific evidence that the existing ACS riparian reserves need to be strengthened, not weakened!⁹

If NMFS, BLM fisheries biologists, et al. feel that the “no touch” zones currently in effect (e.g., 25' or 35') as part of both one and two site height potential riparian buffers is insufficient, then, by all means, let these “no touch” buffers be expanded to the width deemed necessary. Further, we understand that certain Oregon BLM districts have taken a rather cavalier attitude when proposing and implementing purported restoration improvements, within riparian reserves, by means of thinning. UW understands and appreciates the harm that has been shown to occur from the introduction of even temporary roads into these reserves to facilitate such unjustified operations. Rather than contemplating more such entries, let these current, misguided management activities end. We have the temerity to recommend the paper: Forest Thinning In Pacific Northwest Riparian Areas: Rationale, Risks and Policy Calibration¹⁰ (included with these comments) as a useful guide and possible corrective for BLM districts planning restoration entries into riparian reserves.

Surely, in this extraordinary drought year of 2015, BLM riparian planners are well able to discern the unexpected negative impacts low flows and high temperatures have on streams and their denizens? Narrowing and thinning existing riparian reserves can only allow more sun light and drying winds to penetrate these critical regions, affecting both surface and subsurface flows. Again, given the deplorable management history on public lands, alluded to at the beginning of these comments; given the barbaric, even cancerous spread of clear cut logging with its miserable to nonexistent riparian “protections,” toxic, aerially applied chemical inputs and ever expanding road networks clawed into the land across the checkerboard, why would any agency scientist or manager even consider such unwarranted and dangerous attacks on a strategy that, pre-drought, appeared to be assisting in the recovery of some fish runs?

To our mind, there is only one probable answer to the question posed above: the BLM is again being unduly pressured by certain politicians at the county, state and federal levels, and by representatives of the industrial timber industry, to disregard the best science (along with the graphic evidence of its own eyes, so to speak, and against the advice of a number of its own and many other credible federal, state and independent science professionals) and do all in its power to facilitate a renewed push to “get the cut out!” If this is indeed the case, then it is certainly a shameful legacy, which these BLM personnel will be leaving behind at retirement to mark the paths of their professional careers!

Again, this ill-advised attack on the ACS appears to ignore the lamentable to non-existent post-harvest riparian buffers extant on adjoining private industrial timberlands, within the checkerboard. Under aegis of the long outdated Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFPA), adjoining intermittent headwater streams on private holdings go completely unbuffered following clear cut harvest. Under aegis of the

8 d.e.i.s., Vol. 3, pg. 1106 “*Since many of the sources used to estimate carbon do not include measures of uncertainty, variance, or error, the level of uncertainty is not known, but likely large and could well exceed 50 percent. As such, the potential error in the estimate for any one alternative likely exceeds the amount of variance between the alternatives.*”

9 Frissell, Baker, DellaSala, et al: Conservation of Aquatic and Fishery Resources In the Pacific Northwest

10 Frissell, Scurlock, Crispen, 2011

OFPA, almost every adjoining perennial, non-fish bearing stream is left open to the elements following clear cut harvest on private holdings. Indeed, and as BLM planners well know (or most certainly should), the Oregon Department of Forestry's Forest Practices Act has been deemed, by Federal agencies, to be in violation of Clean Water Act standards, for years. And while it is true that the Oregon Board of Forestry has been deliberating improvements to the OFPA riparian protections, after years of discussion, nothing has changed. (If reports from credible participants in these deliberations are to be believed, there is the strong possibility that not much will.) This condition contributes mightily to degradation of the same streams where they flow into or from public lands administered by the BLM.¹¹

At this juncture in the lamentable history of forest management in Western Oregon, with all of the well documented and obvious harm it has visited upon our once abundant native anadromous fish stocks, it is UW's firm opinion that the BLM must not reduce its riparian protections, as delineated by the Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan. Rather, it must enhance them. If the listed Coastal Coho Salmon and other impacted fish species are to be preserved and restored, the ACS must be preserved and strengthened, region-wide. Likewise, the Key Watersheds designation must be preserved and expanded. (In the meantime, aberrant BLM districts must cease their high-handed entries into these ACS riparian reserves and work to mitigate past entries without further specious use of the term "restoration" as a cover for extraction for extraction's sake.)

Concerning the Affected Environment In the Planning Area and Environmental Consequences of the Various Alternatives Under WOPRjr.

Using the BLM's own definition, the planning area herein under consideration is the "...entire 22 million acres of land within the geographic boundary of this planning effort regardless of jurisdiction, ..." ¹² By reasonable inference, UW is thus informed that the d.e.i.s. planning team is well aware (or certainly should be), of the severely degraded condition of much of the planning area, within which lies the 2.5 million acres of the "...'decision area'..." managed by the BLM. As previously observed, a significant portion of that degradation has been inflicted upon the "decision area" by the BLM, itself. Also, as stated above, the barbaric and extensive clear cutting of adjoining private "forest" lands within the planning area continues, with abandon. UW maintains, without reservation, that with this specific knowledge comes the critical responsibility of the BLM to manage its lands, now and in the foreseeable future, so as to ameliorate, insofar as it is able, the many negative ecological impacts of past and current harvest activities across the planning area, "...regardless of jurisdiction...". The BLM must not exacerbate this deplorable environmental landscape-wide condition by the creation of still more large clear cut openings, along with all of their ancillary landings, road constructions, etc.

Soil Resources

UW notes that the management alternatives included in the d.e.i.s. "...would increase the acreage of detrimental soil disturbance from timber harvest, road construction, and fuels treatments by 13 to 30 percent of current amounts during the first decade."¹³ While it promises, in the same breath, to manage these predicted negative management impacts, the BLM obviously intends to ignore the contextual problems related to sedimentation, herbicide trespass, increased runoff over exposed soils, etc. that are the conditions of adjoining, private, clear cut lands across the checkerboard. This contextual condition

11 Chris Frissell, Phd.: Sediment Concerns In Headwater Streams on State and Private Forests in the Pacific Northwest: A Brief Review of Directly Pertinent Science

12 d.e.i.s., Vol 1, pg. xxviii

13 d.e.i.s., Vol 1, pg. xxx

on private industrial timber lands, so ubiquitous in Western Oregon, so long in need of redress while so lacking in reform, imposes, de facto, a limit on what the BLM can and should do, management-wise, on the neighboring public lands it administers, in trust, for all of the citizens of the United States. To add its own new large opening regimen to this clear cut landscape adds insult to injury. Worse yet, it defies logic to add still more miles of new road construction to the incredible spider web already extant on public and private lands, in the planning area. Further, UW recalls the BLM's attention to the above-mentioned 303d listing, under the Clean Water Act, of so many of the rivers and their tributaries in the planning area. By law, these streams may not, at present, be further degraded by adverse management activities.

Hydrology

Concerning the d.e.i.s., as its proposed alternatives relate to water quality in general: under the No Action Alternative, “...less than 0.5 percent of all perennial and fish-bearing reaches in the decision area would currently be susceptible to shade reductions that could affect stream temperature if the BLM applies thinning in the outer zone of the Riparian Reserves. Under Alternative B and C, approximately 5 percent of all perennial and fish-bearing reaches in the decision area would currently be susceptible to shade reductions that could affect stream temperatures if the BLM applies thinning in the outer zone of the Riparian Reserves.”¹⁴ Given the impaired nature of so many of our rivers,¹⁵ no increase in temperature originating with deliberate BLM actions can be tolerated, let alone the predicted 5% the d.e.i.s. identifies as a result of adopting either of the alternatives B or C, as stated above. Again, UW recalls the BLM's attention to the above-mentioned 303d listing, under the Clean Water Act, of so many of the rivers and their tributaries in the planning area. By law, these streams may not, at present, be further degraded by adverse management activities.

Forest Management

Variable Retention Harvest (VRH), Uneven Age Timber Area (UTA), Owl Habitat Timber Area (OHTA), Low Intensity Timber Area (LITA) all might have been useful designations; even, within reason, environmentally acceptable management techniques had they been creatively applied decades ago, when so much primary late seral/mature forest graced and benefitted the planning area and its denizens, human and otherwise. In light of the greatly degraded condition of the planing area, UW sees them as being of markedly less value, and even harmful in many instances, today. On the other hand such extraction designations as: Moderate Intensity Timber Area (MITA), High Intensity Timber Area (HITA) as, indeed, the very type of Regeneration Harvests initially envisioned under the NFP, are largely out of the question as management paradigms, environmentally speaking, if past BLM bad practices are to be accounted for and current and past egregious private land practices, and climate change, etc. effectively mitigated.

We have seen statements asserting that the volume of regeneration (i.e., clear cut) harvests, as initially proposed under aegis of the NFP, have not occurred on public forest lands and that, as a result, they must now, in one form or another, be emphasized going forward. This ignores the historic and current management paradigms implemented across the planning area and discussed earlier in these comments.

In the same vein, turn and turn about: assumed by the NFP but never realized, in any meaningful way, is the critical contribution to habitat restoration and species maintenance and recovery to be made by

14 d.e.i.s., Vol. 1, pg. xxix

15 i.e., such rivers as the entire Coquille, the Coos, the South Umpqua, etc. are currently identified as 303d impaired under the Clean Water Act for temperature, bacterial loads, et al.

the private industrial timber sector within the planning area. Whether in reference to terrestrial or aquatic contributions to this restoration effort, what our watersheds have actually been subjected to by the industrial timber industry, instead, are accelerating clear cuts spread in broad swaths across these same watersheds; clear cuts that leave scant to nonexistent riparian buffers or other habitat retention zones in their wakes! Thus, UW feels that it is not using too strong a metaphor to liken this contextual condition to an aggressive melanoma. A fell disease, as it were, afflicting the planning area's surface, which, proceeding untreated on private lands and proposed for reintroduction on slowly recovering public lands, metastasizes deeply and directly into the very hearts of our watersheds!

In the public interest, and rather than citing the lack of public land regeneration harvest, so far conducted under aegis of the NFP, let the regional BLM, in its assessment and planning documents, decry the shameful and continuing mistreatment of our common watersheds by private land applications of the most retrograde Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFPA), and adapt its long term management plans accordingly. Rather than acquiescing to NSO extirpation in the Oregon Coast Range, let the regional BLM and every District announce this ongoing private land clear cut condition in the media as being a major impediment to habitat and species maintenance and restoration on the public lands it administers. Rather than offering extraction levels like those proposed in the various alternatives, especially in Alternative C, let the regional BLM make it widely known that the activities of Oregon's private timber industry are, likewise, an impediment to the BLM achieving realistic harvest levels; i.e., targets which do not further degrade our already degraded watersheds. Rather than remaining silent on this and related issues, let the regional BLM communicate this on-going and deplorable private land habitat destruction in the planning area to its Executive Branch superiors in the nation's capitol, and to the Congress. Rather than tossing aside key provisions of the NFP and, thereby, divorcing itself from that plan's tri-state emphasis area, let the regional BLM raise the alarm and insist on forgoing the outdated and harmful aspects of the NFP (e.g., clear cut harvest and unrealistic ASQ levels) and strengthening and expanding those aspects better suited to meeting current environmental challenges (e.g., maintenance and enhancement of current ACS riparian buffers).

After all, the outdated, abused and no longer appropriate sustained yield provision of the 1937 O&C Act notwithstanding, the forest lands managed by the BLM in the decision area, as elsewhere, are not the fiefdom of the Oregon industrial timber industry nor of the affected O&C counties. Indeed, they remain part of the sylvan inheritance of all of the people of the United States, who are, in fact, the true and final title holders of these same put-upon public lands.

Northern Spotted Owl

The potential (and as UW feels, the impending) Endangered Species Act (ESA) up-listing of the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) from threatened to endangered status strongly argues against the creation of more large openings, reductions of riparian reserves, etc. in this already fragmented, widely clear cut landscape. For d.e.i.s. planners to cite competition from the Barred Owl¹⁶, without reference to the vast, long standing and continuing habitat destruction in the planning area, especially across the Coast Range, is disingenuous at best. Yes, there certainly exist competitive pressures on the NSO from its "cousin", the Barred Owl. However, this competitive pressure would, almost certainly, be manageable in a landscape existing at a high-functioning ecological level.

¹⁶ d.e.i.s., Vol 1, pg. xxxi *"The northern spotted owl population is under severe biological stress in much of western Oregon and has an even chance of being extirpated from the Coast Range within 35 years. This population risk is predominately due to competitive interactions between northern spotted owls and barred owls."*

Mark it well: historic, ongoing and widespread habitat destruction is the root cause of the endangerment of the NSO. This premise is as inarguable as it is certain. For the authors of the d.e.i.s. to throw up their hands, so to speak, and declare that “...*the BLM has no opportunity through habitat management in the Coast Range to reduce risks to the northern spotted owl during the next 50 years...*”¹⁷ goes beyond cavalier and enters the realm of the outrageous! For the BLM to begin its planning effort, as it bears upon the NSO, from such a defeatist position is completely unacceptable and might well, were it adhered to and acted upon, be worthy of resort to the judiciary. Under the strictures of the ESA, as well as ethically speaking, the BLM is not empowered to arrive at such a foregone conclusion. Rather, it must compose its long and short term plans and conduct its subsequent management activities so as to preclude the extirpation of the NSO (or of any other threatened, endangered or unnaturally diminished species, listed or not). UW insists that, in its planning documents, the BLM must assume the NSO's, MAMU's, Coastal Coho Salmon's et al.'s ultimate recovery across the decision area, if not the entire planning area. Not to do so belies, de facto, the credibility of environmental effects claims the BLM makes for various of the alternatives of the d.e.i.s. To repeat, extirpation of the NSO or any other species is not a foregone conclusion and must not be an influencing factor in development of a new RMP nor of any other management plan or activity, region-wide nor on any individual BLM district under any ROD.

Marbled Murrelet

*“All alternatives would result in an increase in the amount of marbled murrelet high-quality nesting habitat and total nesting habitat in 50 years. Alternatives A, B and C would result in the loss of 96, 12, and 210 future marbled murrelet sites, respectively, as a result of timber harvest in the Harvest Land Base in the absence of surveys.”*¹⁸ Much as with the NSO, historic, ongoing and widespread habitat destruction is the root cause of the endangerment of the Marbled Murrelet.

By direct observation, UW notes that the survival requirements of the Marbled Murrelet (mamu) are given short shrift by most private industrial clear cutters within the planning area. Given past mismanagement through over harvest of mamu habitat across the planning area, public and private; and given the ongoing lack of mamu habitat restoration of almost any kind by the private sector, for the authors of the d.e.i.s. to then announce a hopeful outcome for this threatened sea bird, under all of its proposed alternatives, in fifty years, certainly strikes UW as cavalier. In many places, the mamu may not have the luxury of that fifty years: its very survival as a viable species is presently at stake! In light of the existential struggle past and current management blunders, public and private, have led this remarkable creature to now experience, for BLM planners to then boldly announce the predicted loss of 96, 12 and 210 future mamu sites under Alternatives A, B and C, respectively, richly deserves the description, outrageous! In UW's opinion, it is a non-starter if ever there was one.

The NFP, to achieve all of its promised restoration goals, must at least be accorded that same fifty years as a portion of the long term period its framers intended it to function and produce palpable and lasting results within. If the qualified scientists of the consulting oversight agencies (USFWS, NMFS, etc.) have truly condoned the risky bets on species extirpation, which the d.e.i.s. authors have written into the alternatives in exchange for claimed short term monetary gain to limited civic and economic sectors through unwarranted extraction, then it is only with difficulty that UW can refrain, however reluctantly, from assuming that the assigned (and primary) oversight duties of these vital agencies have been co-

17 d.e.i.s., Vol 1, pp. xxxi, xxxii

18 d.e.i.s., Vol 1, pg. xxxii

opted and, to some degree, corrupted by political and corporate influence. The sacred public trust conferred upon the BLM to manage the forest lands in the decision area for the benefit of all of the citizens of the United States must prevent it from acceding to similar corrupting influences in its planning efforts.

Socioeconomics

Borrowing from the d.e.i.s.: “*BLM-administered lands provide a wide variety of market and non-market goods and services to the planning area such as timber, recreation, carbon storage, minerals, and source water protection.*”¹⁹ UW notes with interest how the dollar amounts estimated for recreation and carbon storage under all alternatives (save for carbon storage under Alternative C), if put together, dwarf the estimated receipts from timber harvest under Alternative C by some two and one half times! We can only wonder what amounts recreation and carbon sequestration would produce if a truly restorative proposal were offered that severely limited timber extraction, along with all of its concomitant negative impacts on both of these critical areas.

Relating specifically to the actual value of carbon sequestration, BLM planners need to recall the accelerating pace of climate change and all of the costs that responsible planners must assign to this anthropocentric phenomenon and, subsequently, mitigate for. Like it or not, carbon sequestration has become a keystone issue as regards the very survival not only of human civilization on this earth, but quite possibly, of human life itself.

Surely “sustained yield” dollars are not, per se, more valuable than the dollars represented by restored watersheds with all of their priceless ecosystem services fully functioning? And what of the irrefutable, existential value to all inhabitants of the planning area, human and otherwise, inherent in true “source water protection”? Please recall the injunction made by the 1937 O&C Act to protect watersheds and regulate stream flows. As previously explained, the sustained yield provision of the act was, historically, grossly overemphasized to the obvious detriment of watersheds and their streams and rivers. At present, this unfortunate history must be acknowledged by the BLM and recompense made. To wit: extraction has had its day on the decision area and it is now long past the time when restoration, real landscape-wide restoration, had its rightful and much needed chance, as well.

Climate Change

From the paragraph relating to climate change on page xxvii, Volume 1 of the d.e.i.s., UW learns, in brief, that while carbon storage would increase under all alternatives, greenhouse gas emissions associated with BLM-administered lands would also increase under all alternatives. Further uncertainty concerning the integrity of reserves and harvest levels is then expressed thus: “*Climate change provides uncertainty that reserves will function as intended and that planned harvest levels can be attained, with the uncertainty increasing over time.*” UW believes that this uncertainty, in part, reflects the lack of a comprehensive climate strategy, vis a vis carbon storage as it relates to forest management, in both Forest Service and BLM planning documents.

While the d.e.i.s. references climate change, it has not formulated its alternative proposals as though it's authors fully acknowledge the many dangerous effects of such anthropocentric climate change. Rather, at least in part, it seems to us that the BLM seeks to camouflage the proposed actions by citing ambiguities. In our judgment, this unfortunate attitude reflects the lack of a comprehensive climate

19 d.e.i.s., Vol 1, pg. xxx

strategy, vis a vis carbon storage as it relates to forest management, in this and other BLM planning documents. By way of responsible citizenship, UW has the temerity to offer the regional planning team the following. As a member of the Federal Forest Carbon Coalition (FFCC), Umpqua Watersheds is pleased to share the document, Federal Forest Carbon Report Card with the BLM planning team (copy included with these comments). We quote the following from the introduction to that clearly written, informative and well documented critique and guide: *“Federal forests can and must play an important role in responding to the imperative of reducing atmospheric concentrations of carbon emissions. However, research by the Federal Forest Carbon Coalition, a national consortium of organizations concerned about the management of forest carbon, found that the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and other federal forest management agencies lack clear policy and field direction about how to manage forest carbon. Furthermore, optimizing carbon storage is not an explicit decision criterion. As a result, most planning processes, Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements, and on the ground projects fail to adequately consider the impacts of forest management on the Earth's climate.”* UW fully subscribes to the above-quoted views of the FFCC and to the carbon check list, a part of that thoughtful document, we also include, as being a most useful primer, should it be responsibly and assiduously applied by the BLM in planning and implementing its current and future management actions.

In perusing the modeling d.e.i.s. authors used in determining various carbon levels relating to BLM managed forests²⁰, UW notes the explanations regarding carbon storage in wood products, in unmolested forest (We very much like the descriptive, “unmolested.”), in soil, et al. We offer the following, excerpted from the conclusions section of the paper Wood Products and Carbon Storage, written by Ann Ingerson and sponsored by the Wilderness Society (copy included with these comments): *“Setting public goals for forests will require weighing the advantages of accumulating more carbon in forests versus the advantages of accumulating it in furniture, homes, and landfills or burning to generate energy. In most cases, boosting forest carbon stores will create stable, self-sustaining carbon reserves at no fossil-fuel emissions cost. Protecting and enhancing forest carbon reserves can also help maintain undisturbed, late-successional forests that are currently rare across the landscape. These forests could provide a refuge for species stressed by a changing climate and provide valuable lessons about how natural systems adapt to new conditions. In contrast, carbon storage in wood products and landfills depends upon continuing fossil fuel use and requires space for housing and landfills that displace carbon-fixing vegetation”*.²¹ Of course, this is not to say there are no benefits to be had from ecologically sensitive timber harvests. Rather, we feel it speaks to the need for such limited harvests, as all other BLM management activities, to be planned and conducted so as to *“...adequately consider the impacts of forest management on the Earth's climate.”*

Given how the effects of climate change are, by all credible accounts, accelerating, such consideration has long since assumed an existential importance. In every category addressed by this d.e.i.s., from wildlife, to silvaculture, to fisheries, to stream flow and to water source protection (read: watershed protection) and to the socioeconomic sphere, etc., climate change must be kept at the forefront of planning efforts. The retrograde opinions of naysayers notwithstanding, federal management agencies have been tasked by the Executive Branch with taking an active lead in limiting green house gas (GHG) emissions as well as its complementary consideration, carbon sequestration. This critical and overarching condition (looming is not too strong a word) rather than a mechanistic adherence to the vaunted but discredited “sustained yield” paradigm must be a management mantra of the BLM and,

20 d.e.i.s., Vol. 3, pp. 1103-1106

21 Ann Ingerson pg.37 Wood Products and Carbon Storage, 2009

indeed, of all forest management agencies going forward.

Further, UW notes in the same section of Volume 3, under the Sources of Uncertainty in Carbon Estimates, the statement, among others: *“Since many of the sources used to estimate carbon do not include measures of uncertainty, variance, or error, the level of uncertainty is not known, but is likely large and could well exceed 50 percent. As such, the potential error in the estimate for any one alternative likely exceeds the amount of variance between the alternatives.”* With this disclaimer, the d.e.i.s. authors argue forcefully, whether they are aware of it or not, for the value of maintaining the necessary provisions of the NFP, including the full width ACS riparian and late successional reserves, etc. included within that plan amendment. Indeed, given the looming, planet-wide threat of increasing climate change, with all of its acknowledged uncertainties, the reserve provisions of the NFP beg to be strengthened and expanded in every sector, not reduced or eliminated. After all, it is highly unlikely that the potential for erroneous estimates, quoted above, will prove to be the only erroneous management assumption made in the face of runaway climate change. Oregon, the Northwest, this nation, as indeed, the entire world and all of its inhabitants, human and otherwise, are sure to need and be ultimately grateful for every plan and management action that limits increasing GHG emissions while simultaneously enhancing carbon sequestration. The time for debate and speculation is over. Concerning anthropocentric climate change, the pertinent science is most certainly settled and has been acknowledged and referenced by governments around the world, including our own. It is time for active, courageous leadership from the BLM, et al and not simply rote acquiescence to political and corporate pressure. The continued existence of our societies; the happiness and prosperity of our progeny cry out for such leadership. Retrograde plans and actions will most likely work against those basic and existential best interests and must not be considered.

Summary

It was Umpqua Watersheds, Inc.'s sincere intention, via these comments, to establish (or recall to memory, as the case may be) the actual management history of the Planning Area addressed by this d.e.i.s. We believe that, in the general terms befitting discussion of such a vast landscape, as well as in particular examples, these comments have done so.²² We have also established, as we believe, the true and actual socio/economic context within which the d.e.i.s. mistakenly calls for increased extraction and, thereby, for the currently inappropriate generation of revenues for local government.²³ Both verbally and graphically, UW feels that it has outlined adequately, and accurately described the actual contextual condition of the lands that constitute the Planning Area, and with which this d.e.i.s. concerns itself.²⁴

UW has stated its strongly held positions regarding environmental particulars addressed in the d.e.i.s.,²⁵ including potential impacts to soils, hydrology, endangered species, climate change, recreation, et al. flowing from the possible implementation of forest management models presented by the various alternatives of that document.

22 See UW Comments on the d.e.i.s., pp. 1 & 2

23 See UW Comments on the d.e.i.s., pp. 4 — 7

24 See UW Comments on the d.e.i.s., pp. 7—10

25 See UW Comments on the d.e.i.s., pp. 12—18

Conclusions and Recommendations

Thus, it is our studied opinion that the BLM RMP not include any of the offered alternatives, as presently constituted, including the so-called “No-Action” alternative.

With that opinion in mind, UW insists that the BLM not abandon, whether in part or whole, its more than twenty year participation in the region-wide Northwest Forest Plan. Rather, we urge the BLM's regional planners to fully consider the above-outlined landscape, extraction and revenue contexts, both historic and current. Having done so in good faith, we believe that the BLM will instead choose to drop those outdated and scientifically discredited harvest models that will result in still more large openings on the landscapes of the already afflicted twenty-two million or so acres that constitute this planning area. In their place, it must choose those harvest methods that, while producing merchantable logs, will, first and foremost, serve to move stands in the direction of true restoration. Having assessed, as we suggest it must: the actual condition of these landscapes, the deteriorating condition of listed species, and accelerating anthropocentric climate change, the BLM will join with the United States Forest Service in strengthening and enhancing the aquatic and terrestrial protections of the Northwest Forest Plan and not weaken or, worse yet, abandon them (e.g., reduced riparian buffers, eliminating key watersheds, etc.). On the other hand, considering the dire background conditions that have arisen and/or become still more apparent in the intervening twenty odd years since the adoption of the NFP, the BLM's management responsibilities to the broader public interest suggest that BLM planners eliminate consideration of regeneration (aka clear cut) harvest and its variants going forward.

It seems more than obvious to Umpqua Watersheds and it's active and concerned membership that, given present environmental and climatic conditions (with the threats of still greater hazards yet to come), the BLM must maintain and strengthen its cooperation with the United States Forest Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and the concerned scientific community and citizens of the nation. It must not walk away from the Northwest Forest Plan and try to “go it alone,” so to speak. The BLM must not accede to the misplaced and out of turn pressures of the industrial timber industry and its enablers in local, state and national government to reverse course, renew socially and ecologically discredited and unacceptable retrograde management practices. The BLM must not attempt to return these public lands to the unfortunate status of resource bank for the specific monetary benefit of select industries and certain (and geographically limited) political jurisdictions.

In the public interest, in the interest of responsible management and good governance, Umpqua Watersheds Board of Directors, on behalf of its active and concerned membership, suggests that regional BLM planners wipe the slate clean, as it were, and begin anew their long term planning efforts for Western Oregon. But, this time, develop a regional plan using the metric with which we began these comments, or some like-minded guiding principle of its choosing: *“The measure of management success on public forest lands must be the number of acres restored to high ecological function rather than the quantity of board feet extracted therefrom.”* While to attempt such a new beginning might, at first glance, seem retrograde and expensive, in its own right, we are convinced that for the regional BLM to shoulder its way forward with any of the alternatives presently offered in the d.e.i.s. would be to invite protest and litigation that would, in the end, likely result in even greater delays; procedural obstacles that would unduly and dangerously delay the daunting but achievable restoration goals our historically and currently put-upon landscapes and their watersheds so desperately require. UW asks regional BLM planners to truly take the long view in their efforts and not accede to the fleeting short term pressures of the industrial timber industry and its co-opted political enablers.

After all, and in the end, what good are logging, manufacturing or careers of any and every kind if we no longer have functioning watersheds or, indeed, a livable planet upon which to pursue those endeavors? What society and its attendant civilization has long persisted, at a high level, having once fecklessly and dangerously degraded its precious and indispensable watersheds? Or worse yet, having finally acknowledged such debilitated landscapes, then rather than attending to their responsible and effective restoration, what society has persisted in degrading those same watersheds, and continued to prosper? None that we know of, none at all.

Sincerely,

Joseph Patrick Quinn
Conservation Chair, Umpqua Watersheds, Inc.