

Press Release

Tuesday, July 16, 2002

For Immediate Release

### **Community and Environmental Groups File Lawsuit Demanding Forest Service Withdraw Controversial Mount Hood Timber Sale**

A coalition of environmental and citizens groups led by Bark has filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court, District of Oregon, demanding the Mt. Hood National Forest withdraw the Polallie-Cooper timber sale. Oregon Natural Resources Council, the Friends of Mt. Hood, the Oregon Wildlife Federation, the Hood River Valley Residents Committee, the Mazamas and the Friends of Tilly Jane are co-plaintiffs on the lawsuit. These groups have come together to oppose ill-considered activities on the Northside of Mt. Hood in the Cooper Spur Area.

The lawsuit raises four claims:

- (1) That the Forest Service has not considered the cumulative impacts on the four large projects planned for the Cooper Spur area. The cumulative impact of the Polallie-Cooper sale, the Clear timber sale, the Cooper Spur ski area expansion, and the development of a major resort at Cooper Spur represents significant new information that must be considered and analyzed by the U.S. Forest Service before Polallie-Cooper can proceed.
- (2) That the proposed logging in riparian areas is a violation of the Northwest Forest Plan and its Aquatic Conservation Strategy. The Forest Service has failed to explain why logging along streams in the Polallie Cooper area is necessary for the health of the streams, and how the logging will make the streams healthier.
- (3) That the Forest Service failed to indicate what science they were relying upon in the decision to log the Polallie Cooper area to decrease fire risk. Recent science indicates that the Forest Service plan will, in fact, INCREASE fire risk in the Polallie Cooper area, yet the Forest Service has not considered this science in its analysis of the Polallie Cooper timber sale.
- (4) That the Forest Service only considered two alternatives in the Polallie Cooper Environmental Assessment: log extensively or do nothing. There was no consideration of a restoration alternative that would address the issues of fire risk without an extensive commercial timber sale.

The lawsuit asks the Forest Service to halt any further actions on the Polallie Cooper timber sale (including the associated Clan timber sale, scheduled for auction tomorrow, July 9) until further analysis can be done.

“The Forest Service is misleading the public by failing to admit the cumulative impact of all these projects going on at Cooper Spur,” stated Greg Dyson, Executive Director and Attorney for Bark. “Plus, the Forest Service is misleading the public by claiming Polallie Cooper will address fire risk issues in the area. I have walked those sales, and I have seen trees well over 12 inches in diameter marked to be cut. Cutting those trees will increase, not decrease the fire risk.”

Heather Weinstein of the Mazamas added, “We are only asking the Forest Service to be truthful about what they are planning in the Cooper Spur area, and to follow the law.”

“Since these sales were planned new information has come to light that the Forest Service refuses to consider and that will make a huge impact on the same area of Mt. Hood as the sales,” said Kate McCarthy of the Friends of Mt. Hood.

“I walked through the Clan sale to see for myself, and I found a very healthy forest with many areas of open canopy (instead of dense trees). I am convinced that ‘fire prevention’ is just an excuse to cut these trees for profits and prepare for Mt. Hood Meadows' expansion at Cooper Spur, and it breaks my heart,” said Cecily Williams, whose family owns 60 acres bordering the Clan sale.

## Background

The Pollalie-Cooper timber sale is located in the Cooper Spur area of Mt. Hood National Forest, on the northeast flank of Mt. Hood. A controversial expansion of the Cooper Spur ski area was recently announced, along with the development of a major resort on land that Mt. Hood Meadows recently received as part of a contested land trade just outside the forest boundary. The Pollalie-Cooper timber sale involves three separate logging projects and almost entirely surrounds the area where the destination resort is proposed to be developed, and Pollalie-Cooper directly overlaps with the current 1,400 acre Cooper Spur Ski Permit area. In addition, the Forest Service is planning another large timber sale, called Clear, directly adjacent to the Cooper Spur Ski Area and the massive destination resort development.

Polallie-Cooper would log 9.8 million board feet of timber on 865 acres of land and would result in 4.1 miles of road construction in the Cooper Spur area. Clear would log 459 acres and build or reconstruct 5.2 miles of roads. The present Cooper Spur ski area is 50 acres, while the expanded area would cover up to 1400 acres and perhaps more as Meadows has indicated that it intends to propose expansion into the Historic District. The private resort proposal includes as much as 450 housing units, with a combination of motel, duplex, condo, single-family and employee units; an 18 hole golf course; an amphitheatre, a swimming pool, a covered ice skating rink; paved and unpaved hiking trails, groomed cross-country ski trails; and a “village core” with upscale shopping and appearance. Bark has requested the Forest Service to stop all work on the Polallie-Cooper sale until the Forest Service takes public input to determine what the public wants in this area and also analyzes the combined environmental effects of these projects.

While the Forest Service continues to tout to local residents these sales as fire risk reduction, only 10% of the sales are aimed at reducing fire risk in the Urban/Wildlands interface.