

General Information and possible points of objection gleaned from the Bear/Cub EA, the Upper Clackamas River Management Analysis, the Northwest Forest Plan, and various comments filed by the ONRC.

I'll start with the one I've been banging my head against for the last several hours: there is a resident single spotted owl within ¼ mile of unit 12 of Bear. That was one of the units that I was most drawn to: deep shade, immediate change in air temperature and moisture from the road, trees like pillars with fluttering lichens on trunks and braches. Rattlesnake plantain was everywhere. I got the odd sense that humans were not as welcomed here as they were in some of the other units....21b of Cub being an example of a forest that shared some characteristics but seemed very different. Anyhow: seven units of the sale (18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25) are listed as critical habitat for the northern spotted owl. According to the Watershed Analysis (1995) "Harvesting isolated patches that contribute to the nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat within a 1.2 mile radius of an activity center would almost certainly result in some take (many of the most isolated patches are in areas that are already below the threshold, but where owl activity centers persist). Within 10-20 years, conceivably at least seventeen [37% of current population in the watershed] of the Matrix owls could be subject to take."

The EA (1996) finds...surprise, surprise: no significant impact.

The reason I've been banging my head is that I got into spotted owl science online, and there's enough hints for me to understand the depth of the controversy, but not enough hints to answer me this question: so what are the chances, according to the greatest weight of scientific conjecture, that the spotted owl will survive? The only full-text studies I found were ones by Lowell Diller, who states that he found over a thousand spotted owls on tree-plantation Simpson Timber lands in California, and then one on the difficulties in determining owl population increase and decline. This is the weight of online evidence after two hours of searching....there are enough hints to show that this is not the only points of view, simply the only points of view translated into easily understood language (in Diller's case) and broadcast widely online.

I found articles hinting that Oregon owl populations have been found to be stable, but was not able to find the source of that information.

Another point: the Watershed analysis states that there have been two peregrine falcon nesting sites known near the entire upper Clackamas basin. The EA states that Bear and Cub are within range of affecting two peregrine falcon high potential/known nesting sites. The units affected are 19, 18, and 25, which will not be logged until July 31st.

The logging is said to be likely to reduce energy acquisition or increase energy expenditure. "No effect to the peregrine falcon". I don't know if the two sites they're talking about in the EA are the sole two nesting sites in the entire region – would be curious to find out.

According to the Watershed Analysis, fire has historically played an inextricable role in the upper Clackamas ecosystems. The predominant form of these fires were small understory burns. There were also a frequency of stand-replacing burns, which resulted

in large patches of “early seral” vegetation. Hmmph. I looked at their “before the makeover” and “after the makeover” maps, and there’s a huge amount more early seral now than there was in 1930, huge even given that fire suppression had started in 1920, and logging had not. It’s my understanding that it takes an early seral ecosystem more than a decade to become mid-seral.

YET one of the reasons stated for the sale was that the incongruous islands of trees needed to be removed to create a state of biodiversity echoing the fire-derived days of yore. Take out those smooth edges, they’re saying, and feather the newly irregular borders. None of that stuff is interior habitat anyways.

Interior habitat means late-seral (aka old growth) habitat with over 70% canopy coverage that exists farther than 500 feet away from any natural or manmade break in the canopy. Okay, so not being up on my jargon, I wasn’t looking up when I walked the units. I’m dubious.....

One of the most doubt-enhancing aspects of the entire project, to me, was the assertion, by the Forest Service, that because the hydrology of the area was supplied by a relatively large number of seeps and springs, and wasn’t as subject to predicted flooding and drought as other logged areas nearby, there was a lesser need to curtail logging, for the sake of andadramous fish or water quality. I cry foul: where do the seeps and springs come from? A magical source deep in the ground that will always renew itself?

Less than 15% of the soils in the area will be impacted, the EA asserts. No need therefore to worry. Again, that’s not an argument that I buy, given that the entire landscape is about to go topsy-turvy. I find it hard to picture the subsurface ecology continuing blithely as before. But it was turned topsy-turvy by fire, before, I would guess that the forest service might say. I say: a fire and a cosmetic imitation of fire are about as similar as youth and a facelift.

The EA says that removing these stands would not affect old-growth obligate species because they are not interior habitat. It admits that there would be some impact to the many species that use islands of ancient forest as refugia....and then does not list the known examples of either group of species.

But that’s okay, because: “Plants and animals that have minimal ability to disperse would be maintained in other land areas such as Late-Successional Reserves, Riparian Reserves, 100 acre owl reserves, administratively withdrawn lands, and within the connectivity network.”

Units 21, 14, 15, 13, and 12 are all classified as late-seral forest. Units 13, 14, 15, and 21, are all admitted to have “developed structural diversity and complexity”.

Wind throw, disease, and insects were mentioned as prime reasons that the units in the sale should be cut. “We hurt you before, so now we’ll need to operate to fix the wound we made.” I wonder about the amount of wind throw those five trees remaining per acre will experience?

