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MT. HOOD WINS! – U.S. FOREST SERVICE CANCELS COOPER SPUR TIMBER SALES

Sandy, Oregon – The U.S. Forest Service has announced the cancellation of the 865 acre **Polallie-Cooper** timber sales near **Cooper Spur on Mt. Hood**. The announcement is a key victory for conservation groups working to protect the watersheds, wildlife and backcountry recreation that Cooper Spur offers.

A unique and diverse coalition of conservation and recreation groups challenged the Polallie-Cooper timber sales in federal court in Portland, Oregon. “These sales just didn’t make any sense. We don’t need to clear cut Mt. Hood to improve the forest,” said Sandi Scheinberg, Executive Director for Bark. Bark, a forest watch group based in Portland, Oregon, is the lead plaintiff in the litigation. “**Logging in the Crystal Spring watershed threatens the public water supply, and cutting large old-growth trees only increases fire risk.** This project lacked common sense and scientific support.” Other plaintiffs included Oregon Natural Resources Council, the Mazamas, Friends of Mt. Hood, Oregon Wildlife Federation, Friends of Tilly Jane, Hood River Valley Residents Committee and the Sierra Club.

Bark and other conservation groups worried that the sales would take out the biggest trees while leaving behind small material that could increase fire risk. “We worked with an expert fire scientist, who told us these sales were not good for the forest. **The public had no choice but to go to court to preserve the municipal watershed and wildlife corridor,**” said Chris Winter of Cascade Resources Advocacy Group (CRAG), a Portland attorney who represented the conservation groups.

The Polallie-Cooper timber sales are one piece of a much larger debate about the future of Mt. Hood. The sales were planned adjacent to the private lands that Mt. Hood Meadows has proposed for a destination resort near Cooper Spur. **Cancellation of the sales is a major step towards protecting the North side of Mt. Hood for future generations.** The problems with the timber sale included:

- **Clearcuts in the Crystal Springs Watershed** – Crystal Springs provides drinking water for one-third of Hood River County. The Forest Service planned logging activities inside the riparian reserves within the Crystal Springs watershed.
- **Logging old-growth** – The Forest Service claimed the sales would reduce fire risk, but they planned to log the largest and most fire-resistant old-growth trees.
- **Wildlife habitat** – The sales would have clearcut and heavily thinned a key migration corridor for deer and elk moving around Mt. Hood.
- **Recreation** – The logging project would have ruined the visual quality of an area that thousands of Oregonians love for backcountry recreation and enjoyment of Mt. Hood.

Peter Morrison, a forest ecologist with more than 25 years of experience, reviewed the sales for the conservation groups. **He wrote that the Forest Service “provides no support” for the claims that the sales would “result in a reduction of wildlife risk.”** He found that commercial thinning may, in fact, increase potential fire risk in the area.

The Forest Service now plans to take a fresh look at the area. “The local community has a science-based plan that will improve the forest and protect Mt. Hood for future generations. We hope the Forest Service will work with the community to put that plan in place,” said Scheinberg. Winter concurred, stating that “the Forest Service should listen to the public and work with local citizens to permanently preserve Mt. Hood. **We don’t need clearcuts for Cooper Spur.**”

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