

Good Examples of Bad Management (and reasons why public oversight is essential)



Environmental Laws Give You a Voice

It might be surprising to learn that our bedrock environmental laws like the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are not necessarily designed to protect ancient forests, watersheds or threatened wildlife. While some laws do mandate that federal land managers abide by certain guidelines, other laws are expressly created to offer the public a voice in public land management. For example, NEPA is a law that instructs federal agencies to disclose the environmental impacts of their actions to the public and to allow the public to engage in project planning.

The Public Needs to Participate in Land Management

These days, beneficial forest restoration projects are not hard to find in our national forests. However, all too often restoration activities are mere “window dressing” on destructive logging projects that continue to place our last ancient forests and watersheds in grave danger. This is why it is so important for organizations like KS Wild to implement public lands oversight programs on the ground.

The following are some examples of logging projects that KS Wild and others have challenged through appeals and litigation as the result of federal land managers in the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) breaking environmental laws and placing our public forest heritage at-risk.



Mr. Wilson Timber Sale

The Mr. Wilson timber sale was located on the Glendale Resource Area of the Medford BLM, near Glendale, Oregon. The sale was sold in 2003 and included 203 acres and 6.4 million board feet of older forest.

While there were responsible thinning opportunities in tree plantations in the project area, the BLM was proposing to log some of the oldest trees in the Cow Creek Watershed. The sale was planned in “critical habitat” for the spotted owl in a “key watershed” for salmon recovery.

Instead of waiting for the appeals court to issue a decision on the case brought by KS Wild and others, the BLM logged the old-growth forest. In 2006, however, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals found that the BLM failed to consider the impacts of the ancient forest logging and violated NEPA. Unfortunately, most of the destructive logging had already taken place.

The Mr. Wilson Old-Growth Timber Sale was logged two years before a court found that it was illegal. Many Americans rightfully ask, “How can that happen?”

Meteor Timber Sale

The Meteor Timber Sale is located on the Salmon-Scott Ranger District of the Klamath National Forest about 30 miles southwest of Yreka, California. While the Forest Service claimed that the sale was needed to “maintain stand health” and reduce “risk of losing these stands to catastrophic fire” these facts did not bear out on the ground. In reality, the sale included 744 acres of some of the most fire resilient old-growth trees in the Salmon River watershed. The sale was planned in “critical habitat” for the spotted owl in a “key watershed” for salmon recovery.

Rural residents and conservation groups pled with the Forest Service not to proceed with this sale. They wrote to their elected officials, submitted written comments and ultimately appealed and filed suit over the sale. In 2006, a federal judge agreed with KS Wild and local citizens and determined that the Meteor timber sale violated federal law by not disclosing the impacts of old-growth logging.

In fact, Judge Morrison England agreed with KS Wild that the Forest Service had pulled a “bait and switch” with the public by analyzing the effect of thinning small trees on paper while marking ancient trees for logging in the field. This confirms the importance of “groundtruthing” whereby KS Wild staff and volunteers field-check and photograph timber sales so as to protect rare ecosystems and hold federal agencies accountable to the public they serve.



In the case of Meteor, a judge agreed with KS Wild that federal agencies cannot write something on paper and then do something totally different on the ground.



Building roads is a nightmare for salmon and other aquatic species in part due to sediment that pours into creeks as the result of logging operations.

Diet Coq Timber Sale

The Diet Coq timber sale is located north of Camas Valley on the Roseburg District BLM in the Coquille Watershed. This sale was designed as a “restoration” project. Upon inspection, conservationists with Umpqua Watersheds determined many of the old-growth cedar and Pacific yew trees were marked for cutting.

Of particular concern at Diet Coq was a road built right along Lake Creek. Logging, including the old growth cedars and yews, was carried out within 20 feet of the creek, sending sediment into this fish bearing creek.

Given the problems with this project, conservationists raised concerns to the BLM and ultimately protested and appealed this timber sale.

The Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center (KS Wild) monitors all federal projects proposed in the Klamath and Rogue River watersheds of northwest California and southwest Oregon. We work with agencies to reduce the negative impacts of proposed projects, support those projects that would repair damage done over the last century of rampant clearcutting and road-building and litigate projects that violate our nation’s environmental laws. Visit our website or join our email list if you would like to stay abreast of public lands management in the Klamath-Siskiyou and learn how you can help leave a living legacy for future generations.

www.kswild.org - 541.488.5789