

CASCADIA REVIEW

Updated Forest Plans May Permanently Protect Older Forests

by Grace Brahler, *Wildlands Director* and Madeline Cowen, *Grassroots and Digital Organizer*



An unnamed creeek runs through the now-withdrawn Flat Country timber sale above the McKenzie River on the Willamette National Forest (photo by Andrew Kumler).

This year, we're presented with two monumental opportunities to amend forest plans across the United States. The U.S. Forest Service is moving forward to 1) amend all national forest plans to protect remaining old-growth trees from logging and 2) amend the 30-year-old Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP), which will update management plans for 17 forests across Washington, Oregon, and California.

Adopted in 1994 after decades of unsustain-

able clearcutting in our national forests that drove the spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and Pacific salmon to the brink of extinction, the NWFP has accomplished much of what it promised: to protect and develop older forests and the species that rely on them, to maintain habitat connectivity through different land use designations, and to protect and restore habitat for anadromous fish and other aquatic species. These conservation measures have contributed to climate change mitigation, both by...

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Permanent Protection Looms on the Horizon



This March marks the five-year anniversary of the creation of Oregon's newest designated Wilderness area — the 30,500-acre Devil's Staircase, located northeast of Reedsport in the Oregon Coast Range.

The culmination of over a decade of grassroots action by Cascadia Wildlands, conservation partners, and supporters like you, the Devil's Staircase Wilderness is now forever safeguarded for its immense ability to sequester and store carbon, its outstanding salmon and wildlife habitat, and for its own intrinsic value. Because of its remote location and rugged topography, the federal agencies that oversee this unique area have rightly opted to passively manage for recreation.

Along with its Wilderness designation, came Wild and Scenic Rivers Act designations for Wasson and Franklin Creeks within Devil's Staircase. This Congressional designation requires land

managers to protect free-flowing conditions, water quality, and the outstandingly remarkable values of the waterways. In January 2023, the Siuslaw National Forest finalized its comprehensive management plan for these two idyllic creeks.

Since the establishment of Devil's Staircase, our broken Congress has been paralyzed with inaction and has nothing to show for new Wilderness in our special region.

However, with your help, we remain optimistic about establishing permanent protections for remaining mature and old-growth forests in the 24-million-acre Northwest Forest Plan area — not through Congress, but through a Forest Service amendment to the landmark 1994 plan (see cover story).




This has been a primary goal of Cascadia Wildlands since the beginning, and while we have succeeded greatly in stopping reckless timber sales through grassroots organizing and litigation campaigns, we have been unable to create policy to permanently protect our remaining older forest. Opportunity is currently knocking, and Cascadia Wildlands staff remains deep in policy advocacy to achieve this goal.

Like we did with Devil's Staircase, we will continue to work side-by-side with you until we achieve this founding goal. Thank you for weighing in and taking action when opportunities arise. Your voice makes a difference, and your support makes our work possible.

Yours,

Josh Laughlin
Executive Director



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CRITTER CORNER



Wolverine captured by remote camera in Montana (photo by Kalon Baughan).

Wolverine *(Gulo gulo)*

At long last, wolverines received federal Endangered Species Act protections in late 2023.

Wolverines are members of the weasel (mustelid) family, though their nickname is “skunkbear” — based on their appearance, not aroma. Numbering fewer than 300 in the lower-48 states, wolverine have very large home ranges, with females ranging up to 150 square miles and males nearly 350 square miles.

In a sign that wolverines are returning to Oregon, one was seen along the Columbia River and then near Santiam Pass in the central Cascades in April 2023. Imperiled by trapping, habitat loss and disturbance by motorized recreation, wolverine need deep late spring snowpack for their denning behaviors, making them particularly vulnerable to the worsening impacts of climate change.

25th Anniversary Celebrations a Success!

Thank you to everyone who joined us in December

by Kaley CoslowSauer, *Design and Events Director*

Our Silver Jubilee was held on December 9, 2023, at Ninkasi's Better Living Room. With your support, and with 150 people in attendance, we raised nearly \$20,000 for wildlands, wildlife, waterways, and our climate! In case you missed it, be sure to check out our commemorative video "Cascadia Wildlands Celebrates 25 Years!" on our YouTube channel @CascadiaWildlands,

produced by our Comms Fellow, Claire Barber.

Also in December was our first ever Holiday Open House! It was a festive evening with food and drink where we connected with quite a few of you throughout the evening. Thank you for checking out our new office space and for visiting with us. It was good to catch up with supporters one-on-one.

And of course, we couldn't have done any of this without our event sponsors and donors:

Mountain Rose Herbs

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Sundance Natural Foods

Wrapping up 2023 with you all was a blast — we can't wait to connect in 2024.



Bureau of Land Management's Big Weekly Elk Blunder

by Nick Cady, *Legal Director* and Peter Jensen, *Legal Fellow*

Cascadia Wildlands' legal team has had its hands full this spring. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been quickly planning "programmatic" logging projects that broadly authorize logging across hundreds of thousands of acres. We have challenged these timber sales one by one, and several court rulings are anticipated this year. With each of these projects, the BLM has been pushing the boundaries of its 2016 Resource Management Plan (RMP). The RMP was designed to ramp up logging levels across 2.5-million acres of public land in Western Oregon in exchange for certain protections for late-successional forest dependant species. One of the

species which was given surprisingly fair protection was the marbled murrelet, a seabird that nests in coastal old-growth forests. The RMP called for reserving all occupied habitat and buffering this habitat from logging. These protections aligned with recommendations from the scientific literature and murrelet research groups.

Predictably, the BLM is now trying to walk back these commitments. Through the Big Weekly Elk timber sale in the coastal forests outside of Coos Bay, Oregon, the BLM proposes to log throughout some of the last remaining mature and old-growth forests in the area. These forests are supposed to be

reserved from harvest under the RMP, but the BLM is arguing it has "reinterpreted" the RMP and no longer needs to protect documented murrelet-occupied habitat. The BLM is arguing now that it only needs to protect "newly discovered" murrelet sites, but at the same time, is also arguing it no longer needs to survey for the species (thus there will be no newly discovered sites). This position demonstrates how bold the agency has become in pursuing its agenda of generating timber, even in the reserves! As always, Cascadia Wildlands will keep you up to date on our efforts. Stay tuned for developments.



State Forest Habitat Protections Stay on Track

by Grace Brahler, *Wildlands Director* and Madeline Cowen, *Grassroots and Digital Organizer*

We are one step closer to protecting 300,000 acres of vital habitat! State-managed public forests in western Oregon, including the Tillamook, Clatsop, and Santiam State Forests, are home to some of the Cascadia bioregion's most iconic species: marbled murrelets, northern spotted owls, red tree voles, salmon, salamanders, and more. State forests offer crucial carbon storage, clean our air, filter our drinking water, and provide us with recreation opportunities like fishing, hiking, camping, birding, and foraging. Yet, for decades, these forests have been the target of aggressive clearcutting and road building, often on steep slopes, leading

to sedimentation, landslides, and degraded habitat for imperiled species.

Fortunately, habitat protections for state forests are finally moving forward following a vote in March by the Oregon Board of Forestry to proceed with the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) without further delays. We can anticipate approval from federal agencies later this year followed by a vote to officially adopt the plan.

While this legacy plan is not perfect, it is a major conservation win that will protect roughly 300,000 acres of habitat for imperiled fish and wildlife through a

network of stream and forest reserves for 70 years and expand no-cut buffers for a greater number of streams and some upland, landslide-prone sites. These protections offer myriad benefits, including improved habitat development and connectivity, better water quality for the thousands of Oregonians who rely on forested watersheds for their drinking water, carbon storage to help mitigate climate change, and continued recreation opportunities for decades to come. Thank you for helping us keep this important plan on track.



Native Plants Can Help Limit the Risk of Home Ignition During Wildfires

by Madeline Cowen, *Grassroots and Digital Organizer*

With the climate-driven wildfire season extending further into the shoulder seasons, it is increasingly important to think about ways to protect our homes and communities from future fires. Extensive research has shown that most homes lost to wildfire are ignited by embers that are blowing far ahead of the flames. These embers get into crawl spaces, attics, gutters and on top of roofs, igniting flammable material. In addition to home retrofits to limit these ember entries, updating the landscaping around your house is also an important way to decrease the risk of you or your neighbor's home from igniting.

Here are some of our favorite native species, that are both beautiful and pollinator friendly, as well as fire resistant:

Groundcovers: Rosy pussytoes (*Antennaria rosea*), Sulphur buckwheat (*Eriogonum umbellatum*), wild strawberry (*Fragaria*)

Shrubs: Vine maple (*Acer circinatum*), Saskatoon serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), wild mockorange (*Philadelphus lewisii*)

Trees: Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*), Pacific crabapple (*Malus fusca*), quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*)





The Big Weekly Elk timber sale near Coos Bay threatens mature and old-growth public forests in the C this illegal timber sale (photo by a Cascadia Wildlands WildCAT volunteer).



Oregon Coast Range. Cascadia Wildlands and partners are currently in federal court working to halt

Celebrating the Wild Success of the Endangered Species Act: 50 Years of Preventing Extinction

by Bethany Cotton, *Conservation Director*

When President Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act into law on December 28, 1973, he proclaimed: “Nothing is more priceless and more worthy of preservation than the rich array of animal life with which our country has been blessed. It is a many-faceted treasure, of value to scholars, scientists, and nature lovers alike, and it forms a vital part of the heritage we all share as Americans.” As we celebrate the 50th birthday of this cornerstone conservation law, these words remain true.

Like a hospital emergency room, the Endangered Species

Act safeguards species of plants and animals most at risk of extinction. The law is designed to address the threats imperiling the species and get them on the road to recovery. Wildly successful, nearly all species protected by the law survive today (tragically, a few were likely already extinct when they were listed) and many have recovered to the point they no longer need the Act’s protections, including the bald eagle. Some species are doing better, reestablishing lost territories and increasing their populations while still needing the Act’s protection, including wolves, grizzly bears, and

black-footed ferrets. Others remain in real trouble and need the law’s protection more than ever, including the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet and the recently listed wolverine.

Preventing extinction by protecting species and the habitat critical to their survival against threats — including logging, habitat fragmentation, and the compounding impacts of climate change — is and will continue to be a core part of Cascadia Wildlands’ work as we enter the next half century of wildlife protection.





[left, top to bottom] Wenaha subadult wolf stretches in the snow (photo by ODFW). Grizzly bear (photo by Jean Beaufort, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons). Black-footed ferret (photo by USFWS). [right, top to bottom] Northern spotted owl (photo by Charles Yackulic/USFS). Marbled murrelet (photo by USFWS). Wolverine (photo by Kalon Baughan).

Oregon State University Withdraws from Management of Elliott State Research Forest

by Josh Laughlin, *Executive Director*

Changes have arrived for the nascent Elliott State Research Forest. The long-time plan for Oregon State University (OSU) to become the manager of the recently created 82,500-acre Elliott State Research Forest, located in the Oregon Coast Range northeast of Coos Bay, took a drastic turn in November when the school's president pulled out of the process, citing growing tension.

Instead, the Oregon Department of State Lands will step into the manager role with a governor-appointed, stakeholder-led, oversight board to govern the forest, similar to the arrangement on the nearby South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. Cascadia Wildlands sees this as a positive development as

it was becoming clear that OSU and its research platform were increasingly rigid and inflexible.

A central conservation pillar to the Elliott State Research Forest is the designation of a large-block protected area, comprising nearly 34,000 acres on the forest's west side. Surpassing the nearby Devil's Staircase Wilderness in size, this protected area is intended primarily for the recovery of imperiled species, like marbled murrelets and Oregon Coast coho salmon. Restoration thinning will be permitted in the area's dense, second-growth tree farms to help restore structural complexity back into any homogeneous stands, and all older forests within it will be

safeguarded for their habitat values. Smaller protected areas will be scattered throughout the rest of the Elliott, which includes strong protections for known spotted owl and marbled murrelet sites.

A federal Habitat Conservation Plan, which guides oversight of imperiled species, is currently being finalized as is a rejiggered Forest Management Plan now that OSU has withdrawn from the process. We expect the Elliott State Research Forest to be operational in 2025 and an education and recreation planning process will follow thereafter. This has been a long road to get here, and we are appreciative of your support and advocacy along the way.



WildCATs (Cascadia Action Team) Gear up for Upcoming Field Checking

by Madeline Cowen, *Grassroots and Digital Organizer*

Want to be a forest detective? “Field checking” involves gathering site-specific information about an area proposed for logging, known as a “timber sale,” on public lands like National Forests and lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Field checkers collect stories, images, and information — think photographs of the understory, core samples, and GPS data points — to inspire the public to fight against the destruction of public lands for corporate profit. By seeing the

forests ourselves and documenting what’s there, we can use the information we gather to write substantive comments, support legal efforts, protect a myriad of species, and safeguard the many drinking water sources of our region. Perhaps most importantly, the process of field checking is also a motivating way to visit and grow connections with the places we are working to protect.

Interested in field checking? While there is no experience

necessary, please note that the work often involves hiking off trail on uneven terrain in adverse weather conditions. Soon, we will be offering a video series and in-person training for newcomers and those wanting to brush up their skills. Join us at a monthly WildCAT meeting to hear an update on the timber sales we’re currently field checking.

More information can be found at CascWild.org.



Forest Plans for the Future (CONTINUED FROM FROM COVER)

reducing carbon emissions and retaining significant amounts of carbon in existing forests. The plan also has spurred the creation of restoration and recreation jobs.

However, as our understanding of forest management improves, so must our management strategies. The plan failed to fully protect mature and old-growth forests and allows logging and road building in ecologically sensitive areas. These shortcomings were made evident by the Flat Country timber sale proposed by the Willamette National Forest, which would have clearcut 1,000 acres of older forest if it had not been withdrawn after an uproar of public opposition.

Most alarmingly, the original plan was developed without input from Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities. The ongoing amendment process presents an important opportunity for federal agencies to right this historical wrong and collaborate with and listen to Tribes

on how to co-manage their ancestral homelands and apply Indigenous Knowledge in conjunction with western science.

As the NWFP undergoes the amendment process, so are *all* national forest plans. While the intention of the Forest Service is to protect old-growth forests nationwide, we are also pushing for durable protections for the mature forests that will become the old-growth of the future. Worsening climate chaos and biodiversity loss demand that we meet the moment and move forward with amendments that maintain and build upon key conservation measures of the Northwest Forest Plan, including putting an end to commercial logging of mature and old-growth forests and trees. Federal agencies will complete environmental analyses of the national and Northwest Forest Plan amendments in summer 2024, which will provide key opportunities for the public to weigh in on proposed changes — stay tuned.



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GIVE THROUGH YOUR IRA: If you are at least 70-1/2 years old, consider making a Qualified Charitable Distribution directly from your IRA to Cascadia Wildlands. This avoids the tax consequences of the Required Minimum Distribution while supporting your favorite non-profit!

DONATE STOCK: Cascadia Wildlands works with Fidelity (DTC #: 0226) to facilitate stock donations. Our account number is: Z40191931.

MAKE A BEQUEST: Naming Cascadia Wildlands in your will as the beneficiary of a qualified retirement plan asset such as a 401(k), 403(b), IRA, Keogh or profit sharing pension plan will accomplish a charitable goal while realizing significant tax savings.

DONATE CRYPTOCURRENCY: If you own crypto, you can help Cascadia Wildlands' mission by donating it. The process on our website is fast, secure, and donating crypto allows you to enjoy the tax savings on the gains.

Charitable Gift Annuities and Charitable Remainder Trusts: A generous donor helped us launch an endowment fund through the Oregon Community Foundation, allowing us to offer Charitable Gift Annuities and Charitable Remainder Trusts. These two options facilitate income for the remainder of a donor's life or a specified number of years, while obtaining an income or estate tax benefit. At passing, funds are gifted to Cascadia Wildlands.

Learn more/get started, contact:
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what's
inside?

THANK YOU!

for being a part of our Cascadian movement

Save the date for the long awaited

Return to Wonderland!



20th Annual Wonderland Auction

Saturday, December 14, 2024
6-10pm

at Venue 252 in Eugene, Oregon

We can't wait to see you there!

*Tickets and more info available on our website in the coming months.



The Wonderland Auction is a night of fun, friends, and philanthropy that will provide support to Cascadia Wildlands in 2025. With your support, we will continue to fight for and protect the wildlands, wildlife, clean waters, and precious climate of the Cascadia bioregion.