

# FRIENDS OF DOUGLAS-FIR NATIONAL MONUMENT

## Dispatch: New Board Member

### The Friends add a new Board Member

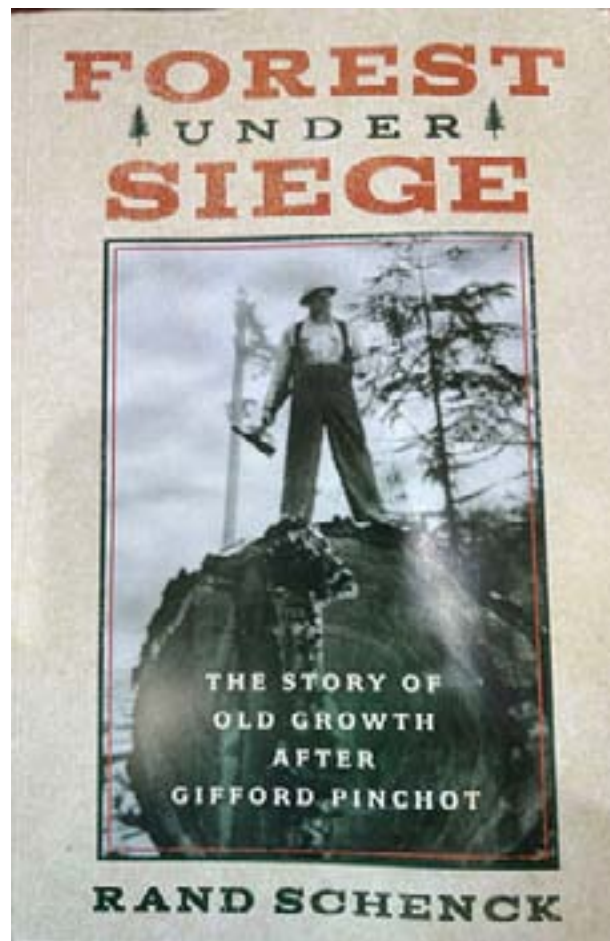
The Friends of Douglas-Fir National Monument are fortunate to have added a new Board member, Rand Schenck.

Rand comes to us as he has also been contributing his talents to the Sierra Club, to the Oregon Natural Resources Council (now Oregon Wild), 350PDX, a collective focused on climate justice, and Mobilizing Climate Action Together (MCAT), the last two of which Rand helped found. In addition to now serving on the Board of the Friends, Rand is the Forestry and Natural Lands Lead for MCAT, a community of volunteers working to ensure that Oregon builds a healthy climate and green-energy economy.

Rand's focus on protecting Oregon's wild lands, wild waters and wildlife fits perfectly with the Friends. In addition to his service to the environment and to a number of large organizations where he helped them be more humane and effective, Rand is the author of *Forest Under Siege, The Story of Old Growth after Gifford Pinchot*, (Basalt Books, 2024), reviewed below.

The Friends is already benefitting from Rand joining the Board. Rand represents the newest addition to what makes the Friends possible: our volunteers. There are still many spaces to fill; on the Board if you are so inclined, or out in the field, sending information, impressions, or pictures of the proposed national monument.

Milo Mecham, President



## You Should Read This: *Forest Under Siege*

Our newest Board member, Rand Schenck, is the author of *Forest Under Siege* (Basalt Books, 2024), a history of the Forest Service focusing on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest (GPNF). The GPNF is located in Washington, around Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Adams and east. Any of the national forests of the Cascades, originally dominated by a diverse Douglas-fir ecosystem, could have served as a fulcrum for the story Rand Schenck tells, but none could be more representative.

The story starts with the creation of the Forest Service, and the culture that Gifford Pinchot established: a culture of conservation of the forest where multiple uses were emphasized, because multiple use served the overall goal of usefulness for the greatest number of people. Unfortunately, the Forest Service quickly became focused only on logging, filling its ranks with graduates of forestry schools, with their attitude that “over-mature trees” should all be removed to make way for new trees that eventually could be harvested just as they became suitable, in a continuing cycle.

Rand does a very good job of describing the sad process where the idea of a maximum cut exploded from a reasonable upper limit of what could be cut to an exponentially growing and impossible goal. Sustainability was defined as starting with the removal of all old growth “over-mature” or “decadent” trees. The book tracks the decline in vision from a view of sustainable, multiple uses of the forest for the good of all, to a view of the forest as a collection of trees to be cut, to a view of trees as a crop that can spoil if it is not cut, to a view that it must be cut regardless of evidence that such actions hurt the forest.

The story goes all the way through the reorientation of the Forest Service towards a more ecologically sensitive approach to the Pacific Northwest forests. This reorientation was refined by a new generation of Forest Service leadership, but it was forced on the Forest Service by court decisions. Throughout, and especially in the final chapters, the discussion integrates a cogent review of the literature supporting a scientifically based approach to restoring our forests to what they once were. While optimistic in the final chapters, *Forest Under Siege* does not gloss over the fact that the most recent change has been slowed by internal resistance from those holding the old view the “management” is only another word for cutting down trees and “multiple use” means many ways to use the trees once they are cut.

While it is not explicitly discussed, *Forest Under Siege* provides me with insights into why, without major changes, the Forest Service is unlikely ever to accept any view except the idea that “management” equals “cutting down trees.” The national forests have become local interest forests. Although it is not mentioned in any of the several federal laws discussed in *Forest Under Siege*, the idea of supporting local economies has become the major justification for “forest management.” Even though automation and consolidation actually mean that most of the communities near the PNW National Forests have no real stake in the timber industry, the Forest Service offices located in these communities still justify the logging of trees in the National Forest by saying that they will help the local economy.

Obviously, creating Douglas-Fir National Monument will change the rules and thus the outlook regarding management of this area. What *Forest Under Siege* tells me is that what the national forests as a whole need is a new, national approach. We should think of a different way to support local communities proximate to national forests, one that starts with, and stays with, the national value of the forest. We must change the law so that multiple use explicitly includes climate protection, makes management mean more than cutting, and shows local communities that they benefit from the national forests not solely by extraction, but because they share in the national benefits of the forest.

In the meantime, you can do well by reading *Forest under Siege* by Rand Schenck. It can be ordered from your good local bookstores or from Washington State Press <https://wsupress.wsu.edu/>