

## FRIENDS OF DOUGLAS-FIR NATIONAL MONUMENT

This dispatch has three short articles: one by Rand Schenck on the so-called Fix Our Forests Act, currently before Congress, a second one on Action needed, and the last on our new map of the proposed Monument.

### Fix Our Forests Act

The Fix Our Forests Act (FOFA) is a false solution to a real problem – buildings burned by wildfires. FOFA is a trojan horse to enable huge logging projects on our public lands. FOFA would be a gift that keeps on giving to the timber industry and do little to actually address the problem of wildfires.

We have several significant concerns about this pending legislation. The legislation:

- represents a major rollback of the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.
- would greatly reduce public engagement in how millions of acres of our public forests are managed.
- would significantly reduce the reliance on science in land management decisions.

Our limited resources can best be used to address the harms resulting from wildfires by focusing on homes and communities most at risk. Proven risk-reduction strategies include:

- creating defensible spaces around at-risk communities;
- encouraging and helping funding for home hardening;
- ensuring effective emergency planning.

We also need to distinguish between the wildfires that burn in drier east side forests from those that burn in the moister forests west of the Cascade crests. Fire frequency on the east side has historically been on a much more frequent cycle than those on the west side.

We must first acknowledge the primary reason wildfires are a much more significant problem now than they were 50 years ago: climate change, especially hotter and drier summers, has increased the scale and frequency of wildfires.

We know that during the period from WWII until the early 90s our forests were “broken” as a result of the unsustainable level of logging that took place throughout the Pacific Northwest. The Forest Service virtually succeeded during that period in liquidating almost all of the old growth in the Pacific Northwest. That liquidation of old growth led to the Northwest Forest Plan that reduced logging by some 75% so that endangered species like the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet would not go extinct.

Protection of existing natural areas is our best natural climate solution. Single species, same aged timber plantations burn more severely while mature and old-growth forests are much less susceptible to severe wildfires. Lastly, road building in our forests increases significantly the risks from wildfires as most wildfires are human caused. Our limited resources can be much better used to close hundreds if not thousands of miles of forest service roads.

Especially on the east side, some scientifically sound ecological restoration thinning and prescribed burning are needed to reduce risk of uncharacteristic wildfires. Fires are inevitable and necessary in fire-prone landscapes. A century of fire suppression has caused the mess we have now. Going back to the logging levels prior to the Northwest Forest Plan is a false solution. Ramped up logging projects that bypass regulations, that ignore the public's wishes for the restoration of mature and old growth forests will only make things worse.

**Action Needed:** Write your Senators, Senator Wyden and Senator Merkley and urge them to oppose the Fix Our Forests Act.



## Time to Take Action

There are two activities in Washington, DC, that deserve careful attention. One could use a letter from our Friends, one should be monitored for future action.

### “Fix” [sic] Our Forests Act

Because there is no reason to change the law to give additional opportunities to undermine protections, we urge you to oppose the Fix our Forests Act as it is currently written.

You can put a message in your own words, or use the message below, to say something like:

I am writing to ask you to oppose the Fix our Forest Act. We should not significantly weaken the critical protections of our environment when science shows us that more roads and more logging will increase, not decrease, fires on our public lands. We should use our limited resources to create defensible spaces around at-risk communities, encouraging and helping funding for home hardening, and ensuring effective emergency planning.

You can send an email to Senator Wyden at:

<https://www.wyden.senate.gov/contact/email-ron>

You can send an email to Senator Merkley at:

<https://www.merkley.senate.gov/connect/contact/>

### Roadless Area Conservation Rule

The other issue to monitor is the Trump Administration’s move to amend the Forest Service’s Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This rule protects thousands of acres of mature and old growth forests within the proposed Douglas-fir National Monument, and at least a million acres nationwide. The Trump Administration wants to do away with all protections of roadless areas, to allow new roads to be built and these areas to be open for logging. The Forest Service is taking the lead on this action. The Forest Service is likely to release the Draft Environmental Impact Statement sometime in March (but the Forest Service might change that timing). They’ve also indicated that there will be an opportunity for public input, and those leading the monitoring and resistance hope there will be a formal comment period.

There is no need to act on this yet, but watch for an ALERT when the time comes. The only hope we have is to provide so many cogent and pointed objections that whatever the Forest Service does will be challengeable and tied up in court for years.

Milo Mecham, President

## New Map Available

One of the features of our website has always been a map showing the boundaries of the proposed national monument, as well as some of the most important natural, scenic, and recreational values of the proposed monument. We, the Board, have updated the map. We used the current Forest Service map, updated by showing more trailheads and campsites, drew the boundaries of the proposed monument, and added some labels of noteworthy places.

A feature of that portion of the monument that includes Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land is the concentration of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). These areas were called for by Congress as areas on BLM land “where special management attention is required ... to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes” As the name suggests, the ACECs in the Cascade Range often contain old growth stands, but they also contain other important botanical species. The proposed national monument has long contained four important ACECs, but there were two other areas in close proximity that also deserved to be included: Snow Peak and the Middle Santiam Terrace. Snow Peak is west of the Crabtree Creek old growth area. It also contains mature and old-growth trees, but it is most notable because it supports the only Oregon location of deer cabbage (*Nephrophyllidium cristagalli*), a wetland botanical species. The Middle Santiam Terrace is, as the name suggests, a 206-acre parcel along the Middle Santiam River, which represents an extremely rare lower-elevation river terraced remnant stand of old-growth. It also contains a Native American cultural site, one of few in the region on public lands.

The BLM has just announced their intent to massively increase logging on its lands in western Oregon. That means increasing the logging of mature and old-growth forests, many of which currently have some level of administrative protection. This threat is all the more reason for a Douglas Fir National Monument.

It was an easy decision to correct the earlier oversight and incorporate these two ACECs into the proposed national monument. However, this does not extend any protection, and under the Trump Administration’s stated goal of logging on all federal land, only increases our burden to be ready to react to their ongoing threat.

Feel free to go on the website and check out these sites and the rest of the proposed National Monument on our updated map.

Hopefully it is snowing in the Monument as you read this, even in the lower elevations, but you can plan your visit for the spring and summer and fall. When you go, send us any pictures you like and maybe we can get them on the website.

See other articles in this and future Dispatches about the need to take action regarding activities in Washington.

Milo Mecham, President