



THE DIRTY DOZEN

Twelve Terrible Timber Sales in Northwest California's National Forests



A publication of the Environmental Protection Information Center



An Overview...

The northwest corner of California contains the largest series of wild lands remaining on the American West Coast, a landscape that has endured the ravages of industrial logging and mining, dams and development, and yet retains enormous ecological promise today. The tangle of mountains that has been called the “Klamath Knot” is one of the premier places in North America for white-water sports, hiking, and other recreation. It’s also a key refuge for salmon and steelhead, as well as being the state’s (and region’s) best hope for large mammals that need big wild places to roam.

At the heart of this great natural area are such prized jewels as the Trinity Alps, Marble Mountains, Siskiyou, and Yolla Bolly Wilderness Areas—lands that are forever protected from chainsaws. But bordering these protected places, four National Forests are hanging in the balance, with 5.6 million acres of public land at stake.

Under the Northwest Forest Plan, adopted in 1994 as a blueprint for ecosystem management in the range of the northern spotted owl, the lands in these National Forests were divided into three general categories: existing protected areas, like Wilderness; two kinds of reserves (those along streams, and “late successional” or older forests); and “matrix” land, meaning forests that are now open to logging.

Unfortunately, this latter category included many of the region’s remaining roadless lands and a great deal of old-growth forest habitat. Scientists who evaluated the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) for the federal government determined that it was uncertain if its environmental standards would be sufficient to protect imperiled species, a fear that

has been realized in the years since the NWFP was adopted.

In the last 10 years, numerous species of salmon have been listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and continue to experience declines in their populations. And now, additional evidence has emerged that shows both the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet, two species central to the design of the NWFP, are going extinct much more quickly than previously believed. Many agency scientists who designed the NWFP now insist that it must evolve to take old-growth forests, and old trees, off the chopping block entirely.

Meanwhile, the Bush Administration has been busy taking the NWFP apart from the other end, unraveling its protections and safeguards with a full-scale assault on the rules and regulations that make the NWFP work on the ground. Their aim is clear: do away with 30 years of environmental law and progress, lay claim to as much public land as possible, and prevent any further protection of magnificent wild lands and rivers.

In the pages that follow, we’ll look at twelve of the most destructive timber sales threatening this precious region. A few themes jump out over and over again: the use of phony “fuel reduction” rhetoric to justify logging in remote forests; inadequate consideration of logging impacts on fish and wildlife; and an unflagging enthusiasm for cutting big trees, under any and every possible excuse.

Please take a few minutes now to learn about, and help us stop, these terrible timber sales. So much of the future depends on what we do today.

Defending a Crowning Jewel: The Salmon River Sales

The National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences found that salmon and other fish populations in the Salmon River are key to the species' recovery throughout the Klamath basin.

Of all the beautiful, ecologically significant, and threatened landscapes in northwest California, the Salmon River stands out as a preeminent example of both the promise of conservation and the peril of industrial logging. Among the greatest kayaking rivers in the world, the Salmon River is also one of the region's most important refuges for threatened salmon and other fish. The quality and quantity of the Salmon River's startlingly clear, cold water owes a great deal to the fact that the headwaters of both the North and South Forks are protected in Wilderness. But even though 98% of this spectacular watershed is in public hands, protection of the Salmon River is far from assured.

As a recent authoritative review by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences noted, the fish that survive in the Salmon River are the key to salmonid recovery in the rest of the Klamath basin. To keep the fish, we need to protect the forests, which have been ravaged by mining, heavy logging, a series of huge fires that followed logging, and by salvage logging after the fires. The net result is a watershed teetering on the brink—still the region's best candidate for protection and restoration, but far too fragile and important to risk any further fragmentation and loss of the basin's remaining ancient forests.

Which, unfortunately, seems to be exactly what the Forest Service has in mind.

With world-class whitewater, the Salmon River is one of the only undammed and undiverted rivers in the entire Klamath basin. *Photo: Sam Camp*



Instead of thinning brush and fire-prone areas, the Knob targets old-growth trees up to 7 feet in diameter.

Photo: Bob Belt

1 THE KNOB TIMBER SALE

With 27 logging units in ten different drainages of the Salmon River, the Knob timber sale contains significant portions of the old-growth forests remaining in both forks of the watershed. From 589 acres, the Forest Service would allow more than 7.3 million board feet of trees to be removed—equal to about 1,500 logging truckloads. The Knob would impact two inventoried roadless areas, as well as a Wild and Scenic River corridor. The proposed logging would also degrade 125 acres of designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl, and there are concerns about toxic chemicals, as the Forest Service plans to poison gophers to get tree farms to grow where the forests once stood. But the biggest problem with Knob is the cumulative effects of the sale, taken together with recent and planned logging operations in the Salmon watershed.

The Forest Service brushed aside EPIC's requests for a restoration-oriented alternative to be examined, and ignored our comments pointing out the many ways in which the Knob violates the agency's own rules, the nation's environmental laws, and good sense. After the Regional Forester denied our formal appeal restating all these points, EPIC turned to the federal courts, where a challenge to this destructive timber sale is now pending.

Cover photo credits:

Top Photo: *Bob Belt*; Bottom Photo: *Sam Camp*



2 THE METEOR TIMBER SALE

Together with the Knob, the Meteor timber sale targets much of the remaining old forests in the Salmon River watershed.

The Meteor timber sale illustrates why conservation advocates are so frustrated with the Forest Service’s continuing mismanagement of the Salmon River watershed. In 2001, the Forest Service unveiled the “Comet Administrative Study,” a proposal to log old-growth forests, ostensibly to “study” the resulting impacts on rare and sensitive mollusk species. Fortunately, this ill-advised proposal was stopped, but the Forest Service was undeterred, and it soon announced a new proposal to log many of the same areas, only this time calling it the Meteor timber sale.

With more than 7 million board feet of logging proposed on 744 acres, the Meteor would take another big whack out of the remnant low-elevation forest of the Salmon River watershed. Like the Knob, the Meteor has units scattered across both forks of the Salmon River. In fact, some of the Knob and Meteor units share boundaries, just as each sale has units that share boundaries with other logging projects, past and proposed.

As with the Knob sale, the Forest Service is attempting to justify the logging with bogus claims of “fuels reduction,” asserting that it needs to cut big trees to pay for cutting areas where “fire hazards” may actually be presenting a problem. The larger point the agency refuses to address, however, is that taking out the big trees will actually increase the risks of fire.

Rather than a legitimate “fuels reduction” project, this is quite simply a timber sale. A timber sale that would allow logging next to a Wild and Scenic River corridor, along the boundary of a proposed Wilderness addition, and in northern spotted owl habitat. A timber sale that would log on unstable hillsides and in riparian corridors that should be off-limits under the NWFP’s Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS)—and would be if the Bush Administration hadn’t “reinterpreted” the ACS to make it toothless. A timber sale that would log remnant old-growth habitat that should be protected under the Survey and Manage protocols of the NWFP—except that the Bush Administration also eliminated this program.



(upper) Big, fire-resistant Ponderosa pines are marked for cutting in the Meteor; thickets aren’t.

Photo: Don Maddox

(lower) Standing atop a flowing stream, Scott Greacen touches a tree marked for cutting within a riparian reserve. These areas would be off-limits—except the Bush Administration “reinterpreted” key provisions of the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP).

Photo: Bob Belt

3 THE WHITTler TIMBER SALE



Spilling off the high northeast face of the ridge between the Salmon River and Scott River, the Whittler timber sale is at some points only a stone's throw from the famed Pacific Crest Trail. At a lower elevation, one of its units is right next to the East Boulder Creek trailhead leading into the Russian Wilderness. The Whittler also contains roadless lands that are proposed for addition to the Russian Wilderness, but because these roadless areas were not "inventoried" by the U.S. government, the Forest Service is claiming that it has no obligation to protect these irreplaceable lands.

Protection for this area would be more than appropriate, and not only because it is a strikingly beautiful, dense forest in a landscape that has been afflicted with the patchwork disease of industrial logging. The 760 acres of wild lands targeted by the Whittler are also a key wildlife corridor between the high country and protected valleys of the Trinity Alps Wilderness, through the Russian and over to the Marble Mountains Wilderness.

This landscape connection is one of only two that provide mostly intact cover for animals like the American marten, Pacific fisher, and wolverine that move between the great Wilderness reserves (the other corridor runs down the main stem of the Salmon River). The Whittler also includes habitat for the northern spotted owl and the northern goshawk, a rare, large hawk adapted to flying swiftly through the thick canopy of old-growth forests to pursue its prey.

Though the logging units are literally at the top of the watershed, they include much of the last old-growth forest in that part of the Scott River drainage. The area is so significant to Klamath River salmon that NOAA Fisheries, the federal agency charged with protecting threatened salmon, fought logging in the same area when it was proposed for cutting under a different timber sale. Somehow, the same logging that was previously unacceptable to the agency is now less objectionable—a change that was not based on improvements to the proposal, but, it seems, on political pressure from the top.

The Whittler timber sale contains roadless lands that are within proposed additions to the Russian Wilderness, with units that are only a stone's throw from the famed Pacific Crest Trail.

(upper) Scenic glory. July snow above Whittler units, next to the Pacific Crest trail.

Photo: Don Maddox

(lower) EPIC Forest Watch hikers take a break in the cool interior groves targeted by the Whittler—home to goshawks, spotted owls and fishers.

Photo: Don Maddox





The Westpoint threatens such species as the extremely rare Siskiyou Mountains salamander, which is restricted to a tiny range on the California/Oregon border.



4 THE WESTPOINT TIMBER SALE

One of the Forest Service’s standard practices for pushing destructive projects through public review is to combine a bad project with a relatively good one. A related technique combines some desirable actions—closing roads and carrying out ecologically benign fuels reduction and “underburns,” for example—with proposals that would be flatly unacceptable if taken on their own. In either case, it’s a bureaucratic version of “hostage taking,” in which environmental advocates are told, in effect, that if we object to the bad aspects of a proposed project, we’re responsible for stopping any good parts as well.

The proposed Westpoint timber sale illustrates both kinds of ugly combinations. Though it’s being presented under a single Environmental Analysis (EA), it’s actually two quite distinct timber sales, in places that are literally hours away from one another. The less objectionable sale is in the Scott Bar Mountains, east of the lower portion of the Scott River. The completely unacceptable proposal is high in the headwaters of Middle Creek, on the west side of the Scott River, reaching almost to the northeast corner of the Marble Mountains Wilderness. Though it’s less ravaged from logging than its neighboring drainages, Middle Creek is a damaged watershed that suffered serious landslides in the 1997 storms.

The Middle Creek portion of the sale includes some good actions, such as road closures desperately needed in this steep and fragile landscape. But at the same time, it would build 1.8 miles of new road and 12 new landings on steep, unstable slopes, in an area that is already over the “threshold of concern” for sediment loads in the streams. And the central action is lots of logging of big trees within key habitat areas, including riparian reserves that should be protected under the Northwest Forest Plan. No amount of good stuff can make these bad ideas any better.

The Forest Service claims that the logging would “improve stand health” and “reduce the risks of catastrophic fire.” In truth, logging big trees would accomplish just the opposite, for bitter experience has shown time and again that old-growth logging increases fire risks. Had the Forest Service evaluated an alternative, they might have come up with a way to actually reduce fire risks without further damaging forest health.

In total, the Westpoint would log 4.5 million board feet from more than a thousand acres, using both tractors and helicopters to move the fallen trees. Species that would be affected include the northern spotted owl and the extremely rare Siskiyou Mountains salamander, which conservationists have petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list under the Endangered Species Act.

All of these issues were raised in our comments on the sale, and again in a formal appeal to the Regional Forester. All were brushed aside. Now, EPIC and the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Project (KS Wild) are challenging the Westpoint project in federal court.

(upper) Open, park-like areas such as this are included in the Westpoint sale—targeting the best of what’s left in this area.

Photo: Bob Belt

(lower) Big incense cedars are marked for cutting by the hundreds in the Westpoint. They’re hardly the greatest fire risk in the area.

Photo: Scott Greacen

5 THE HORSE HELI TIMBER SALE

Near the tree line, high on the steep Siskiyou Crest, a critical wildlife corridor stretches from the Klamath Mountains to the southern Oregon and northern California Cascades. This “highway in the sky” should be a top priority for conservation and protection, offering a key connection for wildlife that need intact forests to travel between these areas. The Forest Service has different plans, however, and is now threatening old-growth forests in this key corridor with the Horse Heli timber sale.

The Horse Heli covers more than 1,600 acres on the steep, fragile slopes of Condrey Mountain. As its name implies, the timber sale would use helicopters in its operations, something the Forest Service attempts to pass off as an ecologically superior alternative, claiming that it reduces negative impacts by reducing the use of tractors and logging roads. But the dark side of helicopter logging is that it allows cutting in the most inaccessible, steep places, and because it carries a huge operating cost, it means helicopters are not used to log small trees.

The ancient trees threatened by the Horse Heli are not just the most fire-resistant, but are also the ones most valuable to wildlife. This is true for both live healthy trees and for those that have become standing “snags” or large fallen logs. These are the structural elements of old-growth forests that provide shelter for many species that can’t thrive anywhere else.

The Forest Service tries to justify Horse Heli by claiming the cut is necessary to protect “forest health” and stream functions. But again, cutting big trees in this remote area would increase fire risks rather than diminish them. These streams are already impaired under the Forest Service’s own standards, and logging on steep slopes can only lead to further sediment pollution and problems for salmon and steelhead—certainly not improve stream functions as the Forest Service contends.

*For its impacts on
old-growth forests
and wildlife,
longtime Klamath
forest watchers say
Horse Heli is
one of the worst
timber sales in
the entire forest.*



Incense cedars.
A key area for wildlife
and plant diversity could be
wrecked by industrial logging.

Photo: KS Wild



6 THE BEAVER CREEK TIMBER SALE

The Forest Service claims it needs to log the Beaver Creek sale to pay for restoration work in a watershed damaged by industrial logging on downstream private lands.

About 15 miles northwest of Yreka, the Beaver Creek timber sale covers more than 975 acres, targeting some of the last ancient trees that remain in this upper Klamath River tributary. The timber sale includes more than 600 acres of designated Critical Habitat for the northern spotted owl, and it would reduce habitat in six spotted owl “core areas” below the Forest Service’s threshold for concern.

The timber sale also includes more than 6 miles of stream habitat for the threatened coho salmon, Chinook salmon, and steelhead. Beaver Creek is a key summer refuge for these and other fish in the Klamath, but that function is already “at risk” from previous logging, mining, and road construction. Nonetheless, the Forest Service is proposing to log 79 acres of riparian reserves, and has also proposed another timber sale, the “Uptown,” right next to this one. Thus, the cumulative effects of the proposed logging could be devastating, particularly for fish and wildlife.

Again, the Forest Service attempts to justify the Beaver Creek timber sale as “reducing fuel loads,” but it’s clear that the greatest fire risk in the area is heavy logging on adjacent private lands and the public-land logging proposed here.

EPIC is challenging the Beaver Creek timber sale in federal court. One further issue we’re raising is the fact that when the Klamath National Forest staff analyzed the project, they refused to analyze distinct alternatives to the project as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Instead, the two “alternatives” were virtually indistinguishable, both proposing to cut the same acres in the same way, construct the same quarter-mile of road, and reopen the same four miles of roads. Such failure to even consider a more conservative or ecological approach flies in the face of legal requirements.



(upper) The Beaver sale threatens six pairs of northern spotted owls and more than 600 acres of Critical Habitat.

Photo: Doug Thron

(lower) According to the Forest Service’s logic, these trees are fire hazards—hardly the case.

Photo: KS Wild

7 THE EAST FORK TIMBER SALE

Covering nearly 2,000 stream miles and more than 2 million acres, the Shasta-Trinity is the largest National Forest in California, and its biggest producer of timber from federal land. This heavy cutting has come at a high cost to the incredibly diverse, once-enormous forests of Douglas-fir, true fir, ponderosa and sugar pine, cedar, and oak.

Clearcuts frame tree plantations. Those plantations that fail become fields of brush, but even successful ones make lousy habitat and burn easily—and hot. The surviving older forests, and especially dense stands, act differently when faced with fire. They seem to damp fires down, resist crown fires, and retain functional structure, whereas plantations are reduced to ash and sterile soil.

One would reasonably conclude that thinning to reduce fire risks should focus on plantations. The problem is, there's little demand for the small trees that are the greatest fire risk. So the Forest Service, in what has become a common practice, designed a big timber sale and is attempting to pass it off as “fuels reduction.” The 2,000-acre, 10 million-board foot East Fork timber sale would, we're told, reduce fire risks and make better habitat.

But the Forest Service is planning to cut heavily in mature stands, which would create a hotter, drier landscape. Besides increasing the risk of catastrophic fire, the East Fork timber sale would also degrade habitat for species like the northern spotted owl, fisher, and goshawk. In all, more than 2,000 truckloads of logs would be removed, including hundreds of majestic legacy trees—true old growth—that are marked for cutting.

EPIC has pointed out the potential for “significant adverse cumulative effects” in the East Fork/Smokey Creek watershed of the South Fork Trinity River, designated a “Tier 1 Key Watershed” under the Northwest Forest Plan. This designation means that salmon and wildlife habitat should come first in this area. Instead, this timber sale would make an even worse mess. The Watershed Assessment that's supposed to guide agency action emphasizes the need for restoration and road removal in the area. The East Fork sale could not be further from these goals, and would even allow logging in the old-growth and riparian reserves.



*Of the \$11.3 million
the Forest Service
made selling
federal timber
in California
in 2003, more
than \$6 million in
receipts came from
the Shasta-Trinity
National Forest alone.*

(upper) Even in younger stands, the big old legacy trees fill key ecological roles. Top scientists have called on the Forest Service to stop logging old trees.

Photo: Christine Ambrose

(lower) The Forest Service refused to take the big trees out of the East Fork sale.

Photo: Christine Ambrose



8 THE UPPER DUBAKELLA TIMBER SALE

Most of the forests in this area have been converted to tree plantations, with the

Upper Dubakella sale targeting the last patches of old-growth in the watershed.

With the proposed Upper Dubakella timber sale, the Forest Service is returning to the same backwards logic that it used to justify old-growth logging before the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan was adopted. The Forest Service spin suggests that clearcutting all but a few trees per acre from old-growth forests would provide habitat for “species dependent on early seral stages.” But if there’s one thing that is too abundant in our forests, it’s young tree farms. What we lack is the old, “complex” forest habitat targeted by the Upper Dubakella sale.

The Upper Dubakella sale would cut 171 acres using the so-called “green tree retention” prescription, which is Forest Service-speak for cutting all but a few trees in an area. Another 138 acres would have most of their big trees removed with a “thin from above” prescription, a practice more commonly known as “high-grading.” In total, the sale would log more than 1,000 acres, of which 958 would suffer the erosion, soil compaction, and general degradation that is caused by tractor yarding. A much larger area would be affected by further fragmentation and the increased risk of fire.

This proposal to liquidate old-growth in the Shasta-Trinity flies in the face of important new information that underscores the importance of protecting all remaining ancient forests. A review of the conservation status of the threatened northern spotted owl shows:

- the species is still declining;
- the decline proved to be much steeper than had been anticipated in western Washington and Oregon;
- a triad of emerging threats—sudden oak death, the West Nile virus, and barred owl encroachment—make protection of the species’ remaining habitat in northwest California and southwest Oregon more critical than ever before.



The Forest Service is trying to continue liquidating our children’s heritage under the rubric of “green tree retention,” giving clearcuts a different name.

Photo: Bob Belt

9 THE DEADWOOD TIMBER SALE



The Deadwood timber sale stretches across South Fork Mountain, with most of its units perched along the upper rim of the Grouse Creek watershed. This area is a critical biological corridor between the relatively intact forests found in the Pilot Creek watershed and remnant wildlands to the north. Though the Forest Service acknowledged the importance of this corridor, it flatly refused to analyze the impacts that this timber sale would have on imperiled species.

The Grouse Creek watershed is a “patchwork” of public and private lands, with steep, fragile hillsides leading down to its streams. Logging on private lands has caused a massive amount of erosion in the area, and the watershed is now choked with sediment. Forests like the ones targeted by Deadwood underline the critical importance of public lands in maintaining habitat viability.

Surveys for old-growth-dependent species in the Deadwood sale area found a species of snail that had never before been described by scientists. However, because it’s a newly discovered species, it is not on the Forest Service’s list of “Sensitive” species (which affords little protection in any case).

Pressed by environmental advocates, the Forest Service did drop some of the old-growth logging it originally proposed in the Deadwood sale. It also dropped the idea of bulldozing fourteen miles of “mechanical fireline” around the entire project area, lacing the mountain-top with another industrial scar that would take centuries to heal.

But the Deadwood timber sale still retains many of the problems that were in the initial proposal, hardly living up to its billing as something that would accelerate the development of “late-successional” (mature) forests and reduce the risk of fire. Rather, by opening up the forest canopy in these stands, logging is likely to dry out the forest floor and accelerate the growth of understory brush, increasing the risk of hot, catastrophic fires in the area.

As with many other timber sales proposed in the region, the Forest Service is trying to “sweeten the deal” with this one by adding so-called “hazard trees” that could be removed. The Forest Service does not specify the volume of trees it would allow to be cut through this method nor does it analyze the resulting effects. It plans to allow the decision as to which trees will fall only when this time is at hand—exactly the kind of unsupervised agency discretion that invites abuse.

Wildlife surveys in the Deadwood sale area found a snail that had never before been described by scientists.



(upper) Must our forests be “sanitized”? The Forest Service claimed it needed to cut these massive red firs to save them from mistletoe.

Photo: Scott Greacen

(lower) A mature grove, doing very nicely without “thinning.”

Photo: Scott Greacen



10 THE COLD CHIMNEY/OCEAN TIMBER SALE

The Black Butte River is proposed for protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act due to its importance to salmon and steelhead.

The Forest Service hopes to auction off a huge volume of trees through the Cold Chimney/Ocean timber sale, aiming to allow logging companies to “bid” on a staggering 10 million board feet from only 500 acres of public land. This disastrous timber sale would remove more volume per acre than nearly any other in the Mendocino National Forest since the Northwest Forest Plan was adopted in 1994. In other words, this huge volume could only come from many large, old trees.

The Cold Chimney/Ocean is located on the ridgelines above Cold Chimney Creek and the Black Butte River, which joins the Middle Fork of the Eel River just east of Covelo. The Black Butte River is currently proposed for protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (pending federal legislation), in large part due to its exceptional importance to salmon and steelhead in the Eel River watershed.

The timber sale includes substantial areas of nesting habitat for the northern spotted owl, as well as “roosting and foraging” habitat that owls need to feed their young. And given the existing cutover landscape surrounding the units of this timber sale, the impacts from such logging would be severe.

To the east and south, the Cold Chimney/Ocean borders vast areas that were extensively logged under state regulations. These lands were part of what is known as the “Commander Tract,” and were in private hands until very recently. Fortunately, the state of California was able to purchase about 23,000 acres of this land in 2003, and at the end of that year, the title was formally conveyed to U.S. citizens to make it part of the Mendocino National Forest.

This is a victory for the public and for fish and wildlife, and one that should not be undermined by this shortsighted timber sale. Past logging in these watersheds has left no room for a margin of error—particularly when so much hinges on their recovery.



(upper) The Cold Chimney/Ocean timber sale threatens several rare plants, including the beautiful mountain lady slipper orchid.

Photo: EPIC Archives

(lower) The Black Butte River is a critical source of cold water to the Eel River basin.

Photo: California Wilderness Coalition

11 THE SPANISH FIRE SALVAGE

The Cold Chimney/Ocean timber sale originally included units above Spanish Creek, a major tributary of the Black Butte River. In the hot, dry fall of 2003, however, an incautious camper's fire went out of control and raged up the steep canyons above Spanish Creek, burning through the thick, formerly fire-suppressed stands, old clearcuts, and into ridge-top old-growth forests.

Now the Mendocino National Forest is proposing to salvage log in some of these burned forests. The need for action is not clear, as the Spanish Fire area is at little risk from wildfire in the near future. And scientific studies show that forests subjected to salvage logging following fires tend to become the most fire-prone of all.

Meanwhile, it has become increasingly clear that there is no ecological justification for post-fire salvage logging. Fire, forests, and the wildlife of northwest California have evolved together for millennia. Standing dead trees and fallen logs provide essential habitat elements for predators like the marten and fisher. Pileated woodpeckers and other cavity-nesting birds thrive in forests that have recently burned.

Taking out the burned trees removes a key pulse of nutrients that are vital to the recovery of the forest, and logging almost inevitably involves damage to soils, streams, and the recovering habitat. As one specialist told the Forest Service recently, about the only thing worse than logging a burned forest would be paving it.

The Forest Service has found that Spanish Creek is one of the coldest sources of water in the entire Eel River basin, which once boasted some of the largest salmon runs in the world. Diversions and high sediment loads have made the Eel River exceedingly shallow and warm today, however, and these cold-water species are precariously close to being lost in the watershed. The Forest Service should be focusing on protecting and restoring this critical cold-water tributary, not on projects that would degrade and destroy it.



The Forest Service found that Spanish Creek is one of the coldest water sources to the Black Butte River, which is one of the coldest tributaries in the entire Eel River basin.



(upper) Cavity-nesting birds like the pileated woodpecker thrive in forests that have recently burned.

Photo: EPIC Archives

(lower) Studies show that the tree plantations (background) established after post-fire logging are the stands most likely to suffer high-intensity fire in succeeding years.

Photo: Bob Belt



12 THE DIVIDE AUGER TIMBER SALE

The Divide Auger targets old-growth forests that are adjacent to the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness, one of the wildest and most remote places in California.

Just off the southeast corner of the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness, ancient forests miraculously survived the logging frenzy of the second half of the 20th century. These lands were also somehow missed when a “primitive area” was designated in these mountains in 1931, however, and then again when the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness was established through the Wilderness Act of 1964. Now these remote, old-growth forests are slated for cutting, with the “Divide Auger” sale only stopped pending a federal court decision on EPIC’s challenge to it.

The Divide Auger sale is located in the Thomes Creek watershed, which is eligible for protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and is absolutely essential for both steelhead and Chinook salmon in the Sacramento River. The Divide Auger is also located at the eastern, and near the southern, extent of the range for several imperiled species, including the northern spotted owl and northern goshawk. Not only are these forests currently “occupied” by these rare species, but the lands in peril also help maintain habitat connections between the Yolla Bolly Wilderness and a critical wildlife reserve just to the south—the Buttermilk Late Successional Reserve. The Forest Service ignored all of these concerns in authorizing the sale, and argues that these old-growth forests—after surviving centuries of fire, drought, insects, and pathogens—will now succumb to death and disease if they are not cut down.

The Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) improved the status quo in 1994 by establishing “Late Successional” and Riparian Reserves across the Pacific Northwest. But this timber sale is representative of the inevitable consequences of the NWFP’s inherent problems, which permits old growth to be cut in such critical areas. The failure of the NWFP to prevent the kind of logging that causes widespread harm to fish and wildlife—and specific logging plans like the Divide Auger—should prompt public officials to re-examine and make needed improvements to this regional blueprint for public lands.



(upper) These forests are an important wildlife corridor between the Yolla Bolly Wilderness and a key old-growth reserve just to the south.

Photo: Christine Ambrose

(lower) The Forest Service won’t be replanting trees like this one if the Divide Auger sale is logged.

Photo: Christine Ambrose

HELP DEFEND YOUR ANCIENT FORESTS!

All these destructive projects are planned for your public lands. The Forest Service is responsible to us all, and is required by law to take into account the public's comments on its proposed actions. It is only with active citizen participation that the Forest Service will improve its policies and practices, abandoning destructive plans like these and providing lasting protection for our forests, fish, and wildlife.

You can help resist the ongoing efforts to turn our public lands over to the logging industry, and move the Forest Service on to the vital restoration work that lies ahead. Please help build awareness about these issues by talking to your friends, writing letters to the editor, and sharing this publication. Please also let your views be known to the Forest Service as often as possible. Every comment counts.

EPIC'S NATIONAL FOREST CONSERVATION PROGRAM

EPIC monitors proposed logging operations and other land use activities on the four National Forests in northwest California, covering 5.6 million acres of public land. To support this work, please consider becoming a member or making a special contribution today.

The Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)

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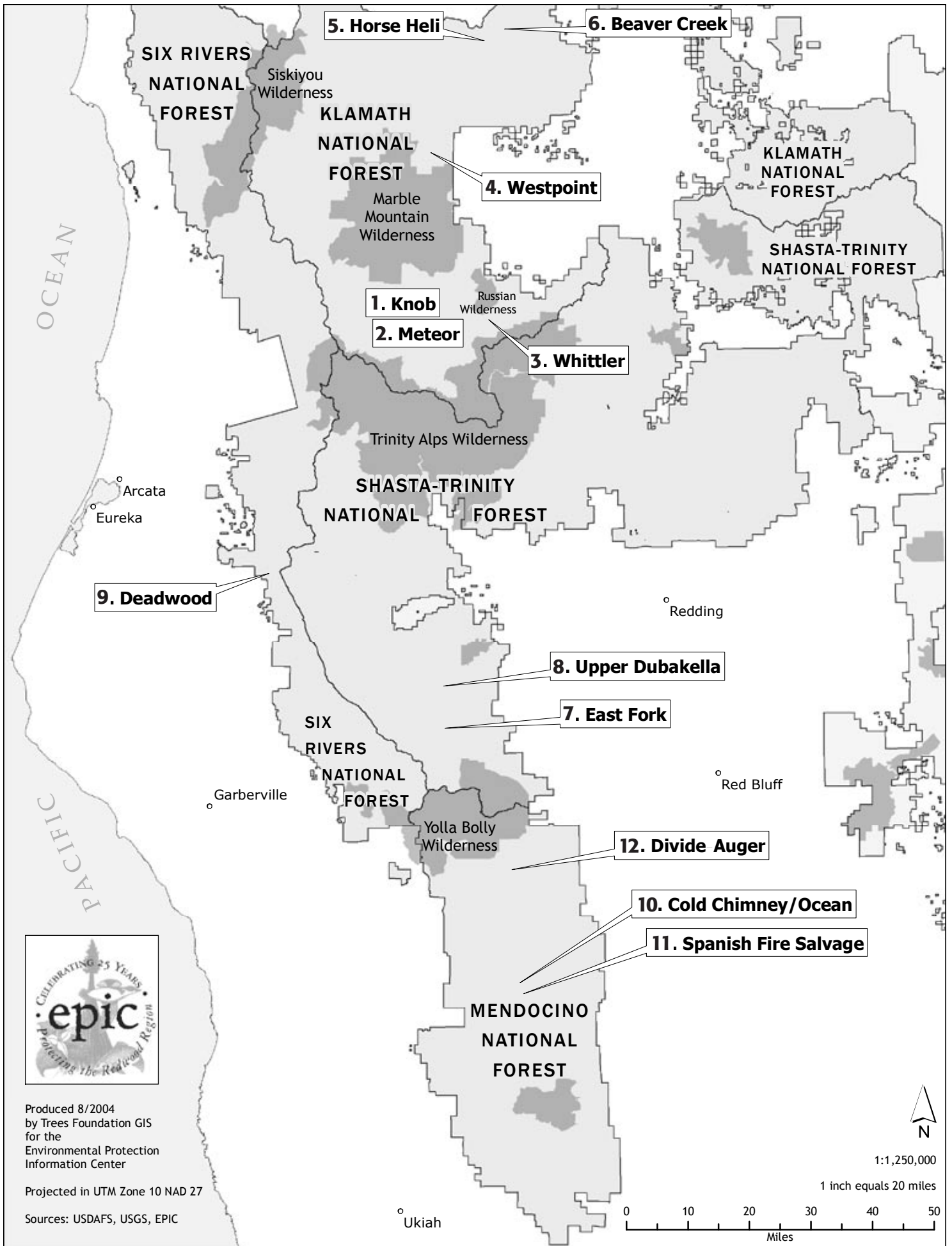
www.wildcalifornia.org

THANKS TO...

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For the current status and additional information on these and other projects on National Forests in northwest California, please see EPIC's website or contact the Forest Service.



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Projected in UTM Zone 10 NAD 27

Sources: USDAFS, USGS, EPIC



1:1,250,000

1 inch equals 20 miles

