



## Cooper Spur Wild and Free Coalition

PO Box 100  
Mt. Hood, Oregon, 97041

# Logging in the Cooper Spur Area:

## The Polallie-Cooper & Clear Timber Sales

*Working to preserve and protect the biological integrity and historic nature of the northeast side of Mt. Hood*

Four big projects threaten the Cooper Spur area on the Northeast side of Mt. Hood: (1) the expansion of the Cooper Spur Ski Area from a modest 50 acres to as much as 1400 acres; (2) a massive 4-season destination resort; (3) the Polallie-Cooper timber sale; and (4) the Clear timber sale. Each of these projects is being prepared separately. The full cumulative impact to the northeast side of Mt. Hood is not being adequately assessed.

The Northeast side of Mt. Hood encompasses the Middle Fork and East Fork watersheds of Hood River and the Crystal Springs Water District. The proposed logging and development will degrade most of the remaining low-elevation forest in these watersheds; compromise the drinking water quality in the Hood River Valley; and increase fragmentation of a key migration corridor for deer, elk, and raptors, and contribute to breaking the genetic links between east-side and west-side populations of old-growth associated species.

### The Polallie-Cooper Project: Clan, Kilt, & Tartan Timber Sales

#### *East Fork Hood River Watershed*

- 875 acres of logging
- 9.8 million board feet of timber removal
- Negative impacts to Tilly Jane Creek
- Negative impacts to key wildlife migration and "connectivity" corridors

The Polallie-Cooper project has been divided into three sales which will log mature native forest to the East and West of Hwy 35 adjacent to the Cooper Spur area. The Tartan sale lies to the East of Hwy 35, while Clan and Kilt, located West of Hwy 35, directly surround the area proposed for ski expansion.

#### KEY ISSUES:

- The planning area lies entirely in the "transient snow zone" where precipitation can occur as either rain or snow and where rapid melting due to rain on snow events is not an uncommon occurrence (Forest Service Environmental Assessment, p.23). Logged areas accumulate more snow, thus have greater run-off, greater erosion, and a substantially increased risk of slide and debris torrents, negatively affecting streambank stability.
- "The [Polallie-Cooper] Planning area is located in a crucial position on the landscape for the connectivity of late-successional associated species around the north side of Mt. Hood. This is the only link for small home range, mature forest wildlife species around the north side of Mt. Hood" (EA, p.36). The timber sales would result in a negative impact to an important "connectivity corridor" providing for the dispersal habitat and reproductive needs of late-successional associated species on the north side of Mt. Hood.

### Clear Timber Sale

#### *Middle Fork Hood River Watershed*

- 459 acres of logging native forest
- 5.2 miles of new roads built
- Negative impacts to key wildlife migration and "connectivity" corridors

The Clear timber sale will build roads and log in a roadless area adjacent to the Mt. Hood Wilderness. Clear is still in the early stage of planning. An environmental assessment has not been completed.

### Cumulative Effects of Planned Projects:

- The Polallie-Cooper timber sales alone would have a negative effect on the wildlife migratory corridor and wildlife genetic variability. The Clear timber sale would magnify this negative effect, both in scope and duration.
- In the Polallie-Cooper EA, the Forest Service explains the negative effects to wildlife, specifically the “connectivity corridor” would “discrete in time (8 years) but large in scale” (EA, p.62). However, before that 8 years is complete, the Forest Service hopes to log the Clear sale area, located in the same “connectivity corridor.”
- The Forest Service intends to enter the Polallie-Cooper area for additional logging in 15-20 years, while the area will still be feeling the magnified effects of the Clear sale. This is a blueprint for ecological fragmentation and devastation.

### Fire, Thinning, and the Wildlands/Urban Interface in the Polallie-Cooper Timber Sales

#### What is the “Wildlands/Urban interface”?

“The Wildlands/Urban interface refers specifically to areas where forests meet urban development, particularly houses. There is general agreement that the Wildlands/Urban interface is primarily within 60-200 feet of houses. Fences, power lines trails, roads, and properties with no buildings do not on their own constitute Wildlands/Urban interface areas.” – *Wildfire, Natural Part of the American West* by Native Forest Network

#### How much of the Clan and Kilt timber sales are really about fire risk in the Wildlands/Urban interface?

These sales would result in the logging of 445 acres. The Forest Service’s stated goal of reducing the risk of fire in the Wildlands/Urban interface encompasses only 94 acres of this logging (**just 21% of the sales**).

#### Should commercial timber sales be used to reduce fire risk?

- “In the short term, **all harvest areas would have an increased potential for ground based fires** due to the increase of branches and other fine fuels left onsite after logging. These ground based fires could produce crown fires in surrounding stands due to increased heat.” – Polallie-Cooper EA, p. 58
- Commercial logging increases the fuel load on the forest floor, both by slash, needles and branches left behind and through changes to the forest structures. Thinning decreases the canopy coverage, allowing heat and light more access to the forest floor and drying up bushes, branches, and small trees. This accumulation of dried fuel results in “faster fire spread, greater flame length, and more erratic shifts in the speed and direction of fires.”
- “Timber harvest, through its effects on forest structures, local microclimate, and fuels accumulation, has increased fire severity more than any other human activity.” – Sierra Nevada Project, a report commissioned and funded by Congress.

Information provided by Coalition member, **BARK**, at: [www.bark-out.org](http://www.bark-out.org)