

To: Port Townsend Leader

From: Mike Cronin
371 Hidden Trails Road
Port Townsend, WA 98368 360-385-5454
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In recent weeks there have been several letters in the Leader including the recent December 30th letter opposing a timber sale proposed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Being green is much more complicated than it may seem. The choices we make and the positions we take are based on our life experience and the consequences are not always apparent.

I retired from DNR in 2006 after 31 years managing forests in east Jefferson County and I can add some historical perspective which may help you see the long term impacts of this opposition to timber harvest. I do not speak for DNR and only represent myself as a professional forester and a member of this community.

In 1988 and 1989 A timber company purchased the lands around Beausite Lake from a private landowner as well as a larger property around Gibbs Lake from the Boy Scouts of America. The company began logging these lands under the Forest Practices rules of the time (which required minimal buffers around lakeshores). Community speculation was that the company would log all legally accessible timber then subdivide the land and sell it as residential or recreational tracts. The environmental community demanded that DNR halt this operation but it was legal at the time. Jefferson County commissioners, under pressure from their constituents, petitioned DNR to acquire the land to halt this logging and pending conversion. The timber company agreed to temporarily suspend operations until DNR and Jefferson County could formulate a proposal. DNR manages 13,600 or so acres of Forest Board lands in East Jefferson which provide income to the county. DNR prepared 11-12 million board feet of timber from these lands to be traded to the timber company for the lands around Gibbs and Beausite lakes. The deal was completed and the county requested reconveyance of **some** of the land from DNR trust land to county owned park land. Jefferson County then identified approximately 260 acres as having lower recreation potential and asked DNR to maintain this land as working forest in the Forest Board trust. These working forest, trust lands are not immediately adjacent to the lakes and have been under DNR management since then. Most of this DNR managed land is in young third growth forests regenerated after the logging of the previous owner along with approximately 79 acres of economically mature second growth. After twenty years DNR has proposed a timber sale

The DNR's current timber sale proposal, referred to as **Silent Alder** includes multiple harvest units on trust lands around east Jefferson County. Two of these units are located between Gibbs and Beausite lakes. The timber sale proposal is designed to target stands dominated by mature alder and maple. The current market for alder is better than that for conifer construction lumber. DNR is required to provide a relatively even flow of timber regardless of market conditions so targeting the better value species is economically

logical. There are approximately 79 acres of economically mature forest between the two lakes. It is not old growth as was stated in an earlier letter to the Leader. DNR has developed an Eagle Management Plan in cooperation with WDFW to address the habitat needs of the resident eagles. Of this 79 acre stand DNR proposes a regeneration cut (clearcut with legacy and wildlife tree retention) on 49 acres and thinning of 16 acres. The clearcut area will be reforested following harvest using a mix of local species and their growth will be monitored by DNR. A 400 foot radius, 4.5 acre no harvest buffer around the eagle nest is planned as well as thinning only on the 8 acres between 400 and 800 feet of the nest tree. Other protected areas within this stand include 5.5 acres along the east boundary determined to be difficult to access without impacts to forested wetlands. No harvest is planned on 2 acres of forested wetlands and an additional 8 acres of wetland management zones will be thinned around these wetlands. Leave tree clumps within the harvest unit remove another 2 acres. As noted in the December 30th letter, there are indeed trails within this trust land parcel, just as there are trails in most of the other dispersed forest parcels managed by DNR. These trails are user built without authorization from DNR and are subject to disturbance from the harvest activities every 40 to 70 years.

This harvest unit design is in keeping with the DNR's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), which is a contract with the federal agencies to provide for long term protection of threatened and endangered species in working forests. It is considerably more restrictive than the Forest Practices rules regulating private forest land management.

I believe that small dispersed forest parcels of 40 to 1000 acres as DNR now manages on the north Olympic Peninsula can be managed as working forests and still serve as open space, adding greatly to our quality of life. Past DNR management has believed that these small dispersed parcels cannot be efficiently managed as working forests and that consolidation of forest land in larger blocks, further from population is the only viable option. This notion is reinforced by continued opposition to timber harvest. You cannot have working forests without cutting trees and you cannot live in a wood house and oppose logging at every opportunity. The DNR's forest management under the HCP has been recognized nationally as a state of the art balance of ecological protection and forest product production. As an affluent community we may have the power to stop timber harvest near our homes and require that it be done 'somewhere else' where our sensibilities are not offended, but is this in our long term interest? Timber harvest from these lands is sustainable and managed to a much higher standard of environmental protection than it is in any other area likely to provide the forest products we demand. Each person on earth uses about 3.5 pounds of wood per day and in industrialized nations the figure is much higher. If not from the productive forests of the Olympic peninsula where should this wood come from? Canada, South America or Asia may be your preference but I can assure you that their logging regulations are far less restrictive and protective of the environment as those of the DNR.

Mike Cronin CF