



NATIVE FISH SOCIETY

Advancing the Recovery of Native, Wild Fish in Their Homewaters

March 20, 2018

TO: Curry County Board of Commissioners Court Boice, Thomas Huxley, Sue Gold & County Administrator John Hitt

FROM: Mark Sherwood, Executive Director & Curry County Resident

RE: Agenda Item 6B Proposed Letter To Supervisor Of Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest Re: Timber Salvage

Dear Board of Commissioners and County Administrator,

The Native Fish Society is a conservation non-profit organization that utilizes the best-available science to advocate for the protection and recovery of wild, native fish and promote the stewardship of the habitats that sustain them.

Today I'm writing you on behalf of our 3,700 members and supporters across the Northwest and our Curry County based River Stewards to strongly oppose Commissioner Boice's proposed letter to Supervisor of Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest requesting additional post fire logging.

The Chetco River is among the Pacific Northwest's last bastions for wild salmon and steelhead populations. These remarkable fish depend on the Chetco's clean water and intact habitats for their continued survival. It's no coincidence that this stronghold for salmon is Oregon's wildest river – nearly 40% of the Chetco River is within the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. Public lands anchor habitats for the remarkable fish that sustain the ecosystem and support significant local sport and commercial fisheries. In fact, the 2009 Dean Runyan report for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife found that sport fisheries in Curry County alone bring millions of dollars annually into our communities – real economic value that supports local families and businesses.

According to the best available science post-fire logging provides no ecosystem benefits and the associated road building increases negative impacts to fish from increased erosion and soil disturbance (Beschta et al., 2004, Lindenmayer et al. 2008).

In steep slide prone areas, burned trees left standing will fall and slide into streams where they increase habitat complexity and recruit spawning gravels (Roering et al., 2013). An estimated 50% of the large woody debris that creates and maintains complex fish habitats comes from landslides, which carry trees and other large woody debris into the river. These logjams protect juvenile fish from predators, offer shade during the summer when water temperatures spike, provide critical spawning habitat by trapping gravel, and maintain floodplain connection. However, instead of

creating logjams like forested slides, clear-cut landslides unleash a torrent of sediment that smothers spawning gravel with fine particulates. Occurring at a rate 24 times more often than the background rate, landslides on clear-cut slopes reduce water quality and cause torrents, which rip spawning gravel from the streambed.

The best-available science also finds that old, diverse forests fare better in wildfires than the young, uniform groves planted in their place after a forest is clear-cut. Logging LSR areas and converting them to timber plantations will increase the vulnerability of our public lands for future major wildfire in the Chetco River Basin. Timber plantations burn hotter and more severely than wilderness areas (Bradley et al., 2016)

This is also the case for the 13,000 acre matrix lands currently under consideration by the Forest Service for post-fire logging and the nearly 13,000 acres of lands found within the road prism that are already being logged for public safety. Additionally, the private timber holdings in the South Fork and North Chetco drainages are in the process of being clear-cut and will be replanted as tree plantations. All of these actions increase the vulnerability of these areas for future wildfires.

Already there are concerns of increased turbidity and sedimentation from the clear-cutting that is already occurring on private and public lands in the Chetco watershed. To request additional logging on public lands (beyond what is required for public safety) represents a failure to connect the preservation of our public lands with the wild, native fish these lands support and the jobs, dollars, and ecosystems these fish support in our community.

We need to balance the values of timber and fish to our community, not choose one at the expense of the other. Instead of advancing controversial actions that divide our community like those in Commissioner Boice's letter, the Curry County Commission can provide an example of sound leadership by focusing on the work needed to better prepare our community for future wildfire in our area. This includes increasing fuels treatment and defensible space around private homes, increasing the coordination between state and federal fire fighters, and securing the equipment needed to protect our county's residents, their homes, businesses and families.

On behalf of our members, supporters and Curry County based River Stewards we respectfully request that the Curry County Board of Commissioners utilize the best-available science in its decision-making process and make recommendations that reflect this science and balance the county's values of timber and fish. As such, we strongly recommend the Curry County Board of Commissioners vote to reject Commissioner Boice's letter requesting additional post-fire logging.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Sherwood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "S".

Mark Sherwood, Executive Director

Citations

Bradley, C.M., C.T. Hanson, and D.A. DellaSala. 2016. Does increased forest protection correspond to higher fire severity in frequent-fire forests of the western United States? *Ecosphere* 7:1-13.

Beschta, L., C. A. Frissell, R. Gresswell, R. Hauer, J. R. Karr, G. W. Marshall, D. A. Perry, and J. J. Rhoads. 1995 *Wildfire and salvage logging: recommendations for ecologically sound post-fire salvage logging and other post-fire treatments on federal lands in the west*. Pacific Rivers Council, Portland, Oregon.

May, C., J. Roering, L. S. Eaton, and K. M. Burnett. 2013. Controls on valley width in mountainous landscapes: the role of landsliding and implications for salmonid habitat. *Geology* 41:503-506.

Lindenmayer, D.B., P.J. Burton, and J.F. Franklin. 2008. *Salvage logging and its ecological consequences*. Island Press: Washington, D.C.