



For Immediate Release: October 23, 2018

Contact: Asha Aiello, 503-222-9505

A Victory for Responsible Forest Management on the Umpqua National Forest: Challengers Give Up Suit Against Quartz Project

Portland, Ore. – Environmentalist groups have dropped their challenge to the Quartz Project on the Umpqua National Forest after failing to obtain an injunction against the project in federal court. On October 11, United States District Court Judge Michael McShane denied the groups' motion for a preliminary injunction. This is a significant victory for active forest management on a landscape badly in need of restoration.

AFRC intervened in the case on behalf of its members Rosboro Company and Swanson Group, the purchasers of two separate timber sale contracts to implement the project. Both Rosboro and Swanson Group began implementing their respective timber sales over the summer and are depending on the timber to keep their mills and employees operating at current capacity through the winter.

The Quartz Project is designed to improve forest stand growth, health, and diversity on the Umpqua National Forest and reduce the risk of wildfire. The 517-acre project authorizes the commercial harvest of stands that occur on "matrix" lands, which are specifically designated for timber harvest.

In his decision denying the injunction, Judge McShane determined that the public interest and balance of interest favored the project. The court found that "there are substantial public and private vested interests in the form of signed contracts, jobs, and tax revenue, among other things, that will be negatively and definitely impacted if the preliminary injunction were to issue[]." The court also recognized the public interest in reducing wildfire risk in the area. Judge McShane noted that "[w]hile the risk of fire is certainly speculative as to the specific area in question, the raging (and massive) months-long fires in Oregon and Northern California the past few summers demonstrate the threat is real."

Judge McShane also rejected the group's legal arguments, finding the Forest Service's efforts both sufficiently informed the public about the project and analyzed the effect of the Bureau of Land Management's change in its governing plan which covers some of the adjacent areas. As to public participation, the plaintiffs asked for further rounds of public comment regarding red tree voles, but the court found the survey process was ongoing, in part, based on public comments and if the Forest Service was required to open up public comment for the confirmation of every additional nest site, it would likely result in a "never-ending process of supplements and further comment."

On October 18, one week after Judge McShane's denial of the motion for injunctive relief, the parties stipulated to voluntarily dismiss the lawsuit with prejudice.

“We are pleased that Judge McShane expressly acknowledged the substantial public and private vested interests regarding the implementation of this sale,” said AFRC Staff Attorney Sara Ghafouri. “It is crucial that the Quartz Project is implemented to reduce wildfire risks before the summer months approach.”

“This decision acknowledges what Oregonians already know: responsible, active forest management is part of the solution to our federal forest health crisis, resiliency, community protection, and reducing toxic smoke that endangers public health,” said AFRC President Travis Joseph. “AFRC was proud to join the Forest Service to defend this scientifically based, much-needed project. Our industry will continue to stand up for responsible forest management on the Umpqua National Forest and throughout the Pacific Northwest.”

#####

About the American Forest Resource Council

AFRC is a regional trade association whose purpose is to advocate for sustained yield timber harvests on public timberlands throughout the West to enhance forest health and resistance to fire, insects, and disease. AFRC does this by promoting active management to attain productive public forests, protect adjoining private forests, and assure community stability. It works to improve federal and state laws, regulations, policies and decisions regarding access to and management of public forest lands and protection of all forest lands. The ultimate goal of AFRC’s programs and initiatives is to advance its members’ ability to practice socially and scientifically responsible forestry on both public and private forest lands.