



Judge Green-Lights Important Restoration Project on Mt. Hood National Forest, Pushing Aside Challenge from Activist Groups

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Portland, Ore. - On June 18, Judge Michael Mosman, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court in Oregon, issued a ruling rejecting environmental groups' challenge to an important thinning project on the Mt. Hood National Forest to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk. Called [Crystal Clear Restoration](#), or CCR, the project will restore over 11,000 acres of public land in Wasco County to better and safer conditions.

Anti-forestry groups challenged the restoration project by mischaracterizing the project as “commercially logging thousands of acres of old growth” and targeting the Northern Spotted Owl. Despite the best available science showing a need for active forest management and restoration, groups continue to trot out inflammatory rhetoric to undermine the public’s confidence in responsible forest management and the U.S. Forest Service. Fortunately, the Court looked at the facts and rejected the groups’ alarmist claims.

“In the Pacific Northwest, the vast majority of the public shares a common vision for healthy, resilient forests, safe and vibrant rural communities, and increased use of sustainable, climate-friendly products like wood,” said AFRC President Travis Joseph. “The CCR project balances these goals and outcomes. We are pleased that the court rejected the legal challenge but are disappointed that a common-sense project like CCR is subject to litigation. We believe that time and resources are best spent working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders to achieve results for people and our public lands, rather than the scorched-earth approach the plaintiff groups took.”

The CCR Project is a huge step in the right direction for forest restoration and conservation on a fire-prone landscape. The project was specifically designed to thin and reduce wildfire risk in a section of wildland-urban interface and sensitive to owl habitat. In fact, it will potentially *increase* owl habitat in the future by reducing risk of wildfire. The CCR Project’s timber output will also provide the community with a supply of climate-friendly wood products and support rural jobs and economies. Lastly, it also promotes safe and responsible fire-suppression activities, which is vital to the safety of those on the ground actively fighting fire and accessing difficult landscapes.

Judge Mosman rejected all three claims plaintiffs brought, highlighting a few issues. Most importantly, the court rejected the argument that there is scientific controversy over thinning in

order to reduce the risk of wildfire. The court highlighted that the project effects on fire were not significant and that less than 1% of the project was in old-growth stands, which can be logged if identified as at risk for fire or disease. The court also rejected the assertion that the logging of stands for the benefit of the northern spotted owl is highly controversial. Currently, there are no owls occupying the project area. Earlier in June, the court denied a request for an injunction against the project, finding that the public interest favors action to decrease the risk of catastrophic fire and to support the local economy.

“We are pleased that Judge Mosman expressly acknowledged the important context surrounding this project,” said AFRC Staff Attorney Sara Ghafouri. “It is crucial that the implementation of the CCR Project begins now to help sustain the forest products industry and reduce the wildfire risk that threaten local communities.”

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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.