



## Register Now: AFRC Annual Meeting Welcomes Keynote Speaker USFS Associate Chief Chris French

This is a final reminder to [register](#) for the 2025 AFRC Annual Meeting, taking place April 22–24 at Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, Washington. Register today and join public lands professionals, industry leaders, and policymakers for the West’s premier forest policy and management conference.

We’re honored to welcome U.S. Forest Service Associate Chief Chris French as this year’s keynote speaker. The agenda also features remarks from Congressman Cliff Bentz, as well as a presentation from Duane Vaagen, CEO of Vaagen Bros. Lumber, on the innovative “A–Z” forest management model—a paradigm shift designed to deliver benefits to all stakeholders.

This year’s meeting will also feature dynamic panel discussions on:

- Politics in Washington, D.C.
- U.S. trade laws and their implications for natural resource industries
- Recent Supreme Court rulings and their potential impacts on forest management

The popular Public Forest Managers’ Breakouts return as well, offering direct engagement with regional and state agency leaders. Don’t miss this unique opportunity to connect with peers, explore critical issues shaping federal forest policy, and engage directly with top federal land management officials.

Registration, lodging details, and the full agenda are available [here](#). Be sure to register separately for the AFRC Golf Open at Elk Ridge Golf Course—offering panoramic views and a challenging 18 holes. AFRC would like to thank our generous sponsors for supporting this year’s annual meeting!

## 2025 AFRC Annual Meeting Sponsors



## Washington DC Update

***AFRC submits comments on President Trump's Executive Orders on timber and lumber production.*** In early March, President Trump signed Executive Orders aimed at boosting domestic timber and lumber production (See [March 2025 AFRC Newsletter](#)), which in part, directed the Secretary of Commerce to initiate an investigation to determine the effects on the national security of imports of wood products: timber, lumber, and their derivative products. In response to the Secretary's [request](#) for public comments, AFRC provided [substantive feedback](#) recognizing the wood products industry as critical to the nation's national security and economic resilience.

AFRC emphasized that while our members are well-positioned to meet growing domestic demand for timber and wood products, significant inefficiencies in the delivery of federal timber—primarily from U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands—are impeding that potential. These inefficiencies stem from outdated federal forest policies, counterproductive environmental regulations, anti-forestry litigation enabled by the Equal Access to Justice Act, and slow consultation processes under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). AFRC highlighted that these regulatory and procedural hurdles have created a significant disparity between timber growth and harvest levels on federal lands, preventing the full utilization of available resources and contributing to mill closures across the West.

To increase efficiency and unlock the full potential of the domestic timber supply, AFRC identified key policy opportunities for the Trump Administration. These include streamlining NEPA processes, expediting ESA consultations, and revisiting outdated land management plans—especially on O&C lands in western Oregon, where actual timber harvests remain far below sustainable levels.

AFRC recommended that modest policy reforms and improved federal agency leadership could greatly enhance timber output from public lands without compromising environmental goals. Such actions would not only reduce reliance on imports but also revitalize rural economies, protect communities from wildfire risks, and strengthen the national wood products manufacturing base.

***Senate Hearing on Fix Our Forests Act.*** On March 6, the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Forestry, Natural Resources, and Biotechnology held [a hearing](#) on the Fix Our Forests Act ([H.R. 471](#)), which passed the House with a strong 279-141 bipartisan vote on January 23.

The subcommittee heard from five witnesses, including Tim Vredenburg with Oregon's Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians who testified in favor of the Fix Our Forests Act. Mr. Vredenburg's [testimony](#) expressed strong support for Fix Our Forests, including expanding the size of Categorical Exclusions and addressing the *Cottonwood* decision. Tim noted that many federal forests in southwest Oregon are overstocked with 1,500 trees per acre when historical conditions supported 35-50 trees per acre with open meadows due to indigenous forest management. Tim also expressed urgency for action:

*The wildfire crisis is not a distant threat. It is here, and it is growing more severe every year. The choice before us is clear: continue down the path of inaction and watch our lands, waters, and communities suffer, or take bold, decisive steps to implement large-scale solutions that will make a real difference.*

The Fix Our Forests Act was also supported at the hearing by a representative from the National Association of Forest Service Retirees and a representative from the American Property Casualty

Insurance Association. The legislation was opposed by a county commissioner from Gunnison County, Colorado who believes the Categorical Exclusions were unnecessary and controversial. The Trump Administration did not send a witness to the hearing but has expressed strong support for the Act.

A bipartisan group of four Senators are discussing a possible Senate version of the Fix our Forests Act: John Curtis (R-UT), John Hickenlooper (D-CO), Alex Padilla (D-CA), and Tim Sheehy (R-MT). These Senate offices are also in communication with staff from the House Natural Resources Committee in the hopes of finding common ground on a proposal that could pass this year. With the prospects for a Farm Bill reauthorization looking dim again this year, forestry reforms may only be achievable through stand-alone legislation.

The last time Congress passed major stand-alone forestry legislation was over 20 years ago with the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, which only passed after fires scorched much of the West earlier that summer and fall. It is quite possible that it will take another devastating fire season before 60 votes can be secured in the Senate to pass substantive legislation through that chamber. It is still unclear if Republicans may attempt to advance forestry reforms through the reconciliation process, which only requires 51 votes in the Senate but must have a clear connection to the budget as determined by the Senate Parliamentarian.

***AFRC makes trip to DC.*** AFRC staff and members were in Washington, D.C. the week of March 10 for a Federal Forest Resource Coalition Board Meeting, but also took the opportunity to meet with lawmakers, Congressional staff, and officials from the Trump Administration. The group met with Congressional offices from Washington, Oregon, California, Wyoming, and Montana, as well as staff from key committees to encourage Congressional support of forest reform legislation and providing needed funding and oversight.

AFRC staff also participated in meetings with high-ranking officials at the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, and the Department of the Interior to discuss some of AFRC's priorities for the new administration. */Nick Smith & Heath Heikkila*

## **Settlement Reached in Challenge to the Pintler Face Project**

On March 25, Judge Christensen with the Montana District Court approved a [settlement agreement](#) and stipulation of dismissal between the Government and Plaintiffs Yellowstone to Uintas Connection, Native Ecosystems Council, and Alliance for the Wild Rockies in the challenge to the Pintler Face Project on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. The case was dismissed with prejudice and the court will retain its jurisdiction to enforce the terms of the settlement agreement, which does not implicate any remaining commercial work for the Project, and avoids the need for further litigation over the issue of Canada lynx habitat mapping. AFRC intervened on behalf of Sun Mountain Lumber, Iron Pine Company, Powell County, and Anaconda-Deer Lodge County in support of the Project. *See Yellowstone to Uintas Connection, et al. v. Marten, et al.*, No. 9:24-cv-00025-DLC (D. Mont.).

Plaintiffs' challenge of the Pintler Face Project included claims that the Forest Service failed to prepare a stand-alone analysis under NEPA for its 2020 remapping of lynx habitat and unlawfully tiered the Project's approval to that remapping. The remapping showed a decrease of lynx habitat by 60%, from 2,711,422 acres to 1,625,806 acres, and reduced Lynx Analysis Units (LUAs) within the Beaverhead-Deerlodge from 509 to 78 LUAs.



In July 2024, Judge Christensen [granted](#) in part and denied in part Plaintiffs' [motion](#) for a preliminary injunction (PI) by enjoining implementation of the Project's non-commercial treatments but permitting the remaining commercial harvest activities to proceed. Judge Christensen's predominately favorable decision came after holding oral argument in Missoula, which was attended by over 30 community members in support of the Project. See [July](#) and [August 2024 Newsletters](#).

The 73,624-acre Pintler Face Project includes 3,934 acres of commercial thinning and regeneration harvest. At the time of Plaintiffs' motion for a PI, four timber sales had been awarded, all salvage contracts, and Sun Mountain and Iron Pine were in the midst of implementation. The timber stands in the Pintler Face project-area are made up almost exclusively of lodgepole pine that are in the 80- to 110-year age class and in serious decline because lodgepole pine rapidly deteriorates after 80 years of age. For that reason, time was of the essence in implementing this important forest health project.



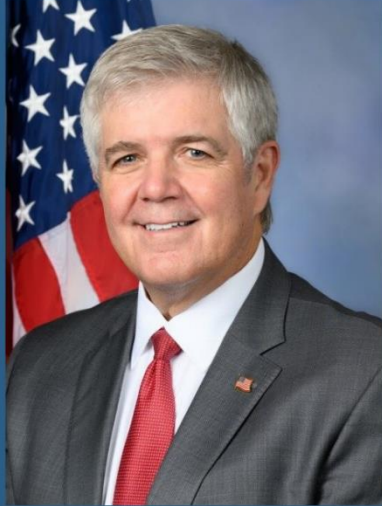
*Deteriorating stands of lodgepole pine being harvested for sawlogs and to establish healthy trees.*

Per the terms of the Settlement Agreement, the Forest Service will forego the Project's non-commercial treatments of precommercial thinning and prescribed burning on approximately 2,186 acres that are in lynx habitat, according to the agency's 2001 and 2020 mappings. The Forest Service may implement all other activities authorized under the Project. In return, Plaintiffs will be awarded \$70,000 in attorney fees and costs under the Equal Access to Justice Act. Although the Forest Service's decision to agree to forego non-commercial treatments in lynx habitat is concerning, it is unlikely that the court would have allowed those treatments to proceed. By settling, the Forest Service can focus on resolving the issue of lynx habitat mapping and is currently accepting public comments on a [proposed programmatic amendment](#) to the 2009 Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest Plan on mapping and identifying LAUs.

This case has had many "wins" for our industry and the local communities near the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. For example, in denying a PI on the commercial harvest, Judge Christensen recognized that "dead and dying timber loses its commercial value rapidly," and that "even a short-term injunction would jeopardize the local economy." Judge Christensen also cited declarations from Sun Mountain and Iron Pine that were submitted as part of AFRC's motion to intervene. This shows that participating as an intervenor is an important and effective method for bringing more voices into the

courtroom. Our members were able to fully complete their timber sales, keeping the milling and logging infrastructure vibrant and active. AFRC would like to thank Julie Weis with Haglund Kelley, LLP, for her excellent work and tireless representation and advocacy in this case. /Sarah Melton

## The AFRC Podcast



### Episode 43: D.C. Update with Congressman Cliff Bentz



The AFRC Podcast is a monthly discussion examining key issues and news relating to forestry, forest products and public lands management.

Rep. Cliff Bentz has navigated shifting political landscapes, working through changes in congressional leadership, party control, and a new presidential administration. In this conversation, we'll ask his opinions on DOGE and the President's recent executive actions on timber and forest management, the future of the Fix Our Forests Act, and how rural communities and local public lands managers can be empowered in important management decisions.

[Click here to listen to Episode 43.](#) Our podcast is also available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

## Big Win From Magistrate Judge DeSoto in the Challenge to the South Plateau Project

On March 31, Magistrate Judge DeSoto of the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana issued a favorable [Findings and Recommendation](#) (F&R) upholding the South Plateau Project on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest. *See Ctr. for Biological Diversity et al v. U.S. Forest Service et al.*, 9:23-cv-00110-DLC (D. Mont.). In this consolidated action, Plaintiffs Center for Biological Diversity, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Council on Wildlife and Fish, Gallatin Wildlife Association, Native Ecosystems Council, and WildEarth Guardians brought claims under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), NEPA, and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). AFRC represented Sun Mountain Lumber, purchaser of the Plateau DXP timber sale, as a defendant-intervenor.

The South Plateau Project is an important condition-based management project that authorizes treatments on 16,462 acres and will generate 83 million board feet over the Project's 15-year duration. Currently, there are three timber sales associated with the Project—Hall Pass, Mosquito Gulch, and Plateau DXP. The Project's landscape-scale approach will help improve forest resiliency and account for the potential changes in the on-the-ground conditions over the Project's lifetime. Currently, most of the project area is comprised of homogenous lodgepole pine stands, and 80 percent are rated as highly susceptible to mountain pine beetle outbreaks. Condition-based management is an appropriate methodology when

dealing with dynamic and unpredictable site conditions due to known stressors, like insect and disease outbreaks.

The focus of this consolidated action is whether the Project complied with the Custer-Gallatin Revised Forest Plan's three standards that allow for temporary reductions in grizzly bear secure habitat below baseline conditions inside the recovery zone/primary conservation area for grizzly bears; and standards related to timber management in Canada lynx habitat. The South Plateau Project overlaps with three grizzly bear management subunits—Henry's Lake #2, Madison #2, and Plateau #1, but only two of those subunits will have temporary reductions below the baseline levels due to the South Plateau's project activities. The Project also authorizes regeneration harvest activities in the South Madison Lynx Analysis Unit.

Magistrate Judge DeSoto found that the Forest Service's interpretation of the three grizzly bear standards and lynx standard were reasonable and owed substantial deference under Ninth Circuit case law. Magistrate Judge DeSoto agreed with Defendants and Defendant-Intervenor that the Project's design features are binding obligations on the agency and help ensure compliance with the relevant Forest Plan standards. The magistrate judge also rejected Plaintiffs' argument that the Forest Service needed to know the exact locations of the temporary road construction and regeneration harvest treatments to ensure compliance with the Forest Plan standards. Magistrate Judge DeSoto also rejected all five of Plaintiffs' ESA claims, their NEPA hard looks claims, and that an EIS instead of an EA was required.

This decision is a huge win, not only for Sun Mountain Lumber who seeks to implement a portion of the Project, but also for proponents of condition-based management. Magistrate Judge DeSoto's decision comes on the heels of the Ninth Circuit hearing oral argument in *North Cascades Conservation Council v. U.S. Forest Service*, No. 24-1422 (9th Cir.), an appeal of Chief Judge Bastian's decision upholding the Forest Service's use of condition-based management for the Twisp Restoration Project on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

Plaintiffs have the opportunity to "object" to Magistrate Judge DeSoto's F&R, which is due on April 14. Defendant-Intervenor will have an opportunity to provide responses to any objections that are filed. Judge Christensen will then review those objections and determine whether to adopt, reject, or modify Judge DeSoto's F&R. /Sara Ghafouri

## **Injunctions Dissolved in the Challenge to End of the World and Hungry Ridge Projects**

On March 27, Magistrate Judge Dale with the Idaho District Court [granted](#) the Government's motion to dissolve the injunction in the challenge to the End of the World (EOTW) and Hungry Ridge Projects on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest. AFRC participated as Defendant-Intervenor in support of the Forest Service. See *Friends of the Clearwater v. Probert, et al.*, No. 3:21-cv-00189 (D. Idaho).

The EOTW and Hungry Ridge Projects are important forest health and fuels reduction projects that the Governor of Idaho identified under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act as priority treatment areas to address insect and disease infestations, and the increased risk of severe wildfires. The EOTW 49,565-acre project area lies entirely within the Wildland Urban Interface and includes commercial thinning, prescribed burning, and watershed improvements on 17,908 acres of intermediate and regeneration harvest, generating about 144 million board feet (mmbf) over the life of the Project. The 30,000-acre



Hungry Ridge Project includes 7,144 acres of intermediate and regeneration harvest and will generate about 173 mmbf.

In June 2022, Judge Dale ruled in favor of Plaintiff Friends of the Clearwater and enjoined both Projects, finding that the Forest Service had not adequately accounted for the preservation of old growth in its analyses for the Projects. Having identified deficiencies under NEPA and NFMA, Judge Dale remanded the EOTW Project back to the agency and ordered the Forest Service to prepare an EIS, and to further evaluate the Hungry Ridge Project's EIS.

Specifically, Judge Dale found that the Forest Service erred when it counted North Idaho Old Growth (NIOG) within Management Area 20 (MA20) as existing old growth and, therefore, failed to demonstrate compliance with the Forest Plan's requirement to maintain a 5% minimum of Forest Plan Old Growth (FPOG) for stands within MA20, and a 10% minimum of FPOG forest-wide. The court also found that the agency failed to take NEPA's "hard look" at the impact of the Projects because of the potential cumulatively significant impacts on old growth when the EOTW Project and neighboring Hungry Ridge Project are considered together. See [June 2022 Newsletter](#).

In January 2023, the Government filed a motion to alter the court's judgment, which AFRC joined, requesting that the court not mandate to the agency how the deficiencies in the Forest Service's analyses for the EOTW Project must be resolved on remand and arguing that the court's order requiring an EIS was pre-determining the outcome of the additional analyses that the court required. In denying the motion, Judge Dale reaffirmed that there was a substantial question that a significant environmental impact may occur, such that an EIS was required. See [January 2023 Newsletter](#).

Following the Forest Service's completion of supplemental NEPA analyses, the Government filed a motion to dissolve the injunction in January after the agency issued an EIS for the EOTW Project and a supplemental EIS and new Decision Notice for the Hungry Ridge Project. In granting the Government's motion, Judge Dale found that the Forest Service had accurately identified the composition of stands managed as MA20 with additional stand data, verified old growth types and acres of FPOG, eliminated the inclusion of NIOG in assessing old growth, eliminated regeneration treatments in areas with FPOG, and addressed the cumulative impact of the two Projects on old growth. Overall, the Forest Service concluded that the total percentage of old growth, forest-wide, will remain unchanged at 14.7% after the implementation of both Projects. Judge Dale concluded that the Forest Service had adequately addressed each of the court's concerns for the Projects, and "provided reasoned, clear, and thorough analyses for [the agency's] conclusions."

Plaintiff objected to dissolving the injunction, arguing that a new administrative record and additional briefing were needed and asserting new claims that were not included in their original complaint—but Plaintiff did not claim that the Forest Service had failed to remedy any of the deficiencies identified in the court's remand order. Judge Dale concluded that the purpose of NEPA, which is ensuring processes but not outcomes, had been met and that Plaintiff could file a new lawsuit based on its new claims, but to allow the injunction to remain in place while the court considered the merits of a yet-to-be-filed supplemental complaint would be inequitable. /Sarah Melton

## **Judge Aiken Issues Two Decisions Involving Challenges to BLM Projects**

***Integrated Vegetation Management for Resilient Lands Project.*** On March 31, Judge Aiken of the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon [adopted](#) Magistrate Judge Clarke's Findings and

Recommendation (F&R) in the challenge to the BLM’s Integrated Vegetation Management for Resilient Lands (IVM Project) located in the Medford District. See *Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Ctr. et al. v. U.S. Bureau of Land Mgmt. et al.*, Nos. 1:23-cv-00519-CL, 1:23-cv-01163-CL (D. Or.). In this consolidated action, Plaintiffs Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center, Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild, and Soda Mountain Wilderness Council (collectively KS Wild Plaintiffs), and Applegate Siskiyou Alliance (ASA Plaintiffs) brought claims against the BLM under the Federal Lands Management and Policy Act and NEPA. AFRC represented itself and the Association of O&C Counties (AOCC) as defendant-intervenors.

The IVM Project’s treatment area is about 684,185 acres within the Medford District, predominately within the dry portions of the late-successional reserve (LSR) land use allocations and the treatments involve integrated vegetation management, which is a combination of silvicultural treatments, fire and fuels management activities, and harvest methods. Specifically, the Project authorizes 4,000 acres of commercial harvest annually (with a 20,000-acre maximum), of which 17,000 acres will occur within LSRs over a 10-year period, as well as small-diameter thinning and prescribed fire. The 2016 Resource Management Plans (RMPs) have a specific management direction for LSR-Dry land use allocations, which requires BLM to implement selection harvest or commercial thinning treatments on at least 17,000 acres per decade within the Medford District. The project is in furtherance of that important management direction.

In May 2024, Magistrate Judge Clarke issued his [F&R](#) in favor of Plaintiffs on many of their claims. As a general matter, both plaintiff groups attack BLM’s use of “tiering” to the 2016 RMPs’ Final EIS for the analysis of certain environmental impacts and the agency’s use of Determinations of NEPA Adequacy to implement site-specific projects—such as the Late Mungers Project. BLM awarded the Late Mungers and Penn Butte Timber Sales to AFRC member Murphy Company shortly before Judge Clarke issued his F&R. See [June 2024](#) newsletter.

KS Wild Plaintiffs’ arguments on summary judgment focused on the 2016 RMPs’ “20-Year NSO Standard,” which provides that treatments in non-nesting roosting habitat for the northern spotted owl do not preclude or delay by 20 years or more the development of such habitat; whereas, ASA Plaintiff’s arguments focused on the 2016 RMPs’ standards for Recreation Management Areas. Of particular importance is Magistrate Judge Clarke’s rejection of BLM’s interpretation of its own forest plan, finding it “plainly inconsistent” with the 2016 RMPs’ text. BLM had interpreted the 20-Year NSO Standard to mean that only silvicultural treatments that are located in non-nesting-roosting habitat and seek to speed the development and quality of such habitat must comply with the standard.

Despite Federal Defendant’s and AFRC’s strong objections to Judge Clarke’s F&R, Judge Aiken adopted Judge Clarke’s ruling without providing any additional analysis or response to Defendants’ objections. Now that there is an official ruling on the merits, the parties have an opportunity for additional remedy briefing before Judge Clarke within 30 days.

***N126 Late-Successional Reserve Landscape Scale Project.*** On March 31, Judge Aiken issued a [mixed ruling](#) in the challenge to BLM’s N126 Late-Successional Reserve Landscape Scale Project (N126 Project) in the Northwest Oregon District. See *Cascadia Wildlands v. Adcock et al.*, No. 6:22-cv-00756-AA (D. Or.). AFRC is a defendant-intervenor in the litigation.

Plaintiff Cascadia Wildlands challenged the N126 Project, alleging violations of NEPA, as well as the Pucker Up and Gone Fishin’ Projects, two site-specific projects approved under the N126 Project. Plaintiff claimed that BLM violated NEPA by failing to take an adequate “hard look” at the direct,



indirect, and cumulative impacts of the N126 Project and associated projects implementing the N126 programmatic decision; and that BLM violated NEPA by failing to prepare an EIS. See [April 2024 newsletter](#).

This is an important landscape-scale project to restore complex late-successional forests and authorizes commercial harvest, non-commercial restoration treatments, roadwork, and fuels treatments within the Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) and Riparian Reserve Land Use Allocations (LUAs). Commercial treatment is authorized for 16,230 acres: 14,227 acres of LSRs and 2,003 acres of Riparian Reserves. The N126 Project will generate at least 380 mmbf over 19 years through implementation of site-specific projects, such as the Pucker Up Project (8 mmbf) and Gone Fishin' Project (5.4 mmbf). AFRC members have purchased several timber sales associated with the N126 Project: Sierra Pacific Industries purchased the Pucker Up, Gone Fishin' and King Condon (16.8 mmbf) sales; Freres Engineered Wood purchased the Walker Point (6.9 mmbf), Upper Greenleaf (6.9 mmbf), and Walker Point Density (6.9 mmbf) sales; Swanson Group purchased the Electric Crossing (7.9 mmbf) sale; and B&G Logging purchased the Cefir Miles (2.6 mmbf) sale.

Plaintiff alleged that the N126 Project EA and the Determinations of NEPA Adequacy for the Pucker Up and Gone Fishin' Projects violated NEPA because the EA did not sufficiently analyze the treatments authorized in the LSR and Riparian Reserve LUAs and their impacts on NSO recovery. Interestingly, Judge Akin rejected Plaintiffs' central claim, finding that BLM appropriately tiered to the 2016 RMP and its project-specific analysis satisfied NEPA, relying on the previous decision in the challenge to the North Landscape Project for support. See *Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Ctr. v. U.S. Bureau of Land Mgmt.*, No. 1:19-cv-01810-CL (D. Or. Aug. 24, 2021).

Although Judge Aiken ruled in favor of BLM and AFRC on many issues, the court found that BLM's analysis of increased sedimentation from road construction, repair and hauling failed to provide a detailed analysis at the site-specific level. Moreover, Judge Aiken found that BLM failed to appropriately consider the Deadwood Restoration Project's cumulative effects on increased sedimentation and impacts on the northern spotted owl. Finally, in response to Plaintiffs' argument that an EIS is required under NEPA, Judge Aiken found that Plaintiffs raised "substantial questions" whether the construction of new roads may have a significant impact on the marbled murrelet. In light of this decision, the parties now have 30 days to provide remedy briefing in response to Judge Aiken's ruling on the merits. /Sara Ghafouri

## **Survey Aims to Identify Oregon Forestry Workforce Needs**

The Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is seeking input from forest sector employers and self-employed individuals for its Oregon Forestry Workforce Assessment Survey. We encourage members to participate by [clicking here](#).

In 2024, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 1552, requiring HECC to conduct a forestry workforce study to help identify and address challenges in Oregon's forest sector. HECC formed a subcommittee of the Workforce and Talent Development Board to oversee the selection, monitoring, and completion of the study. Forest sector partners collaborating on the study include Associated Oregon Loggers, the Oregon Forest Industries Council, and AFRC. The survey is being conducted by ECONorthwest, a public policy research firm.

The survey will help researchers better understand the challenges facing Oregon’s forestry workforce and employers. Input from industry members will provide valuable insight to support efforts across public, private, and non-profit organizations.

This short, anonymous survey takes about 15 minutes to complete and is designed to identify key workforce challenges and opportunities. At the end, participants will also have the option to share additional feedback—including specific challenges, recommended solutions, and success stories from their experience in the field. /*Nick Smith*

## **Dollar Shrinks But Moves Forward**

Just like the U.S. Dollar’s buying power, the Dollar Mountain Project on the Colville National Forest has also been shrinking—at least in terms of treatment size. The Dollar Mountain Project encompasses approximately 50,784 acres west of Kettle Falls, WA, and north of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. Initiated in 2019, the Project recently reached a major milestone with the publication of its Final Decision in February—marking over six years of planning and collaboration.

Planned under the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA), the Dollar Mountain Project represents a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation . The Three Rivers Ranger District, which is adjacent to the reservation, holds significant cultural and ecological value for the Tribes. However, decades of fire suppression and legacy management practices have resulted in severely altered vegetation and fuel conditions, leaving the forest at high risk for catastrophic wildfire and threatening important ecological resources such as stream systems and wildlife habitat.



*Photos: elevated fire risk across the Dollar Mountain landscape.*

As is often the case, management decisions on one project are influenced by external rulings and strategies applied elsewhere. In the case of Dollar Mountain, several key developments altered the scope of the original Draft Environmental Assessment:

- June 21, 2023: The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington vacated the Large Tree Management Guideline of the 2019 Colville National Forest Land Management Plan. This decision reinstated the older Eastside Screens standard, which limits the harvest of trees 21 inches in diameter or larger and imposes restrictions on commercial harvest in late- and old-structure forests.
- January 16, 2025: A settlement agreement required the Colville National Forest to rescind the updated 2020 Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU) boundaries outlined in the 2019 plan. Until further notice, the Forest must revert to the 1999 LAU boundaries for lynx core habitat management.

Together, these decisions reduced the number of acres eligible for treatment by 7,159 acres—land that would have supported the local milling infrastructure and contributed to regional restoration goals. This reduction is particularly concerning in light of the increasing severity of wildfires. Just south of the project area, the 2024 Bridge Creek and Sawmill fires scorched tens of thousands of acres on the Colville Reservation, reinforcing the urgency of proactive forest management.

While legal battles and debates over wildlife habitat and large tree protection continue, the reality on the ground is stark: our forests are at growing risk. When a wildfire ignites, it doesn't distinguish between what is being "protected" and what isn't—it takes everything in its path. Despite the setbacks, there is hope that the smaller Dollar Project can still deliver meaningful restoration outcomes—helping safeguard both Forest Service and Tribal lands from the increasing threat of severe wildfires. */Tom Partin*