More on Logging Without Laws

Hyalite Timber Sale Re-Emerges As Salvage

Hyalite Canyon, a spectacular glacier-carved canyon south of Bozeman, Montana, is the most popular recreation area in Region 1 of the National Forest system. Heavily impacted by public and private lands logging in the past, Hyalite is threatened once again - this time by salavge logging under the infamous Salvage Rider.

The Hyalite 2 Salvage Sale, announced on November 1, is the first Salvage Rider sale offered on the Gallatin, which is targetted with 14 million board feet of salvage. The logging program on the Gallatin has been virtually shut down the past several years because the forest is so important for wildlife habitat and recreation, and due to the impacts of private lands logging on "checkerboard" inholdings within the Gallatin. The Salvage Rider is once again opening up the fragile lands of this spectacular corner of the Yellowstone Ecosystem to heavy logging.

The Hyalite Timber sale, originally proposed in 1990, was shut down indefinitely this year by a lawsuit which was filed in 1991. The suit was successful because the Forest Service failed to consider the impacts of adjacent private lands logging in analyzing the sale.

The current scoping document lists a series of "issues" to be "considered" before the Forest Service (FS) ignores them all and logs it anyway. Cumulative impacts is not among the issues to be considered. Nor is visual quality in this important recreation area. Some of the logging is to be done right near the road. One huge area to be logged is directly across the canyon from Practice Rock, one of the most popular rock climbing areas in the Bozeman region.

Another issue the FS is ignoring is the danger associated with log trucks hauling on the narrow, steep Hyalite Canyon road, which is heavily used. Many of the sale units are to be helicopter logged, requiring helicopter pads right along the road in the narrow canyon.

There is a brief comment period on the scoping document, so for what it's worth please write the FS and let them know you oppose this salvage sham. Mention the cumulative impacts, visual quality and traffic issues they are ignoring. Please write:

Gene Gibson, District Ranger
US Forest Service, Bozeman Ranger District
3710 Fallon, Box C
Bozeman, MT 59715
(406) 587-6920

For more information contact Native Forest Network Yellowstone/PO Box 6151/Bozeman, MT 59771-6151.

Congress and the Clinton Administration have signed off on a new vision for our National Forests. They call it forest "health." Angela L. Coffin photo.

Cove-Mallard Update

Reports of the Forest Service's assault on the Cove-Mallard roadless area reached the pages of the *Christian Science Moniter* this summer. Citizen protest and direct action against roading and logging in this vital corridor entered its fourth year, and forest activists monitoring the sales documented numerous violations of water quality and wildlife standards in the area.

In mid-October twelve protestors were found guilty by a federal magistrate of violating a FS closure of the area, but activists saw the trial as a positive development in their campaign. Using a "necessity defense," they argued that the sale was illegal and that the Forest Service's closure violated their rights to free speech. The trial lasted over a week and received extensive media coverage.

The Forest Service has instituted closures at several controversial timber sales this summer, in some cases using the military to enforce them. This tactic is designed to prevent citizen observation and protest of timber sales, many of which have been exempted from environmental laws and judicial review under the salvage logging rider.

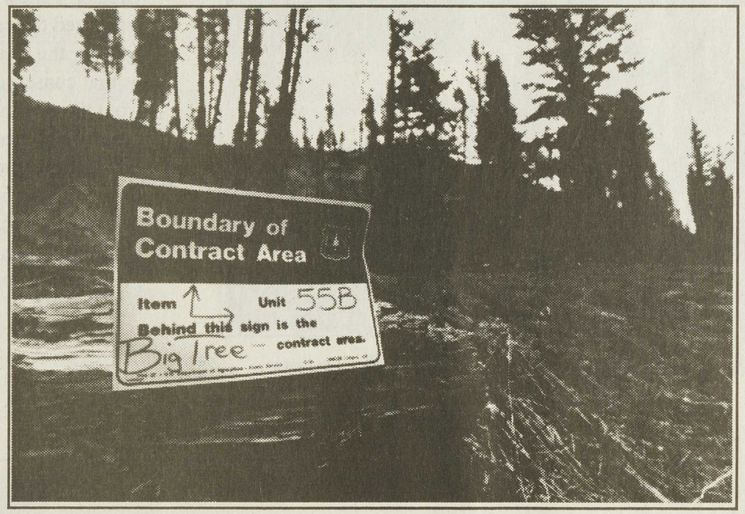
Thunderbolt Sale Demonstrates Need For Repeal

A huge timber sale on the Boise and Payette National Forests planned for the South Fork of the Salmon River is a prime example of why the salvage logging rider should be repealed. AWR's Idaho field representative Don Smith has worked with other Boise area environmental groups to document numerous problems with the sale - problems that include grave threats to habitat for bull trout and the endangered Snake River chinook salmon, as well as the loss of millions of taxpayer dollars.

The Forest Service proposed the 13 million board foot sale and then sought comments from other federal agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. But after learning that these agencies were opposed to logging the area, the Forest Service unilaterally suspended discussions with them. The issue was then elevated to Washington, D.C. where the Clinton Administration gave the go ahead for logging.

In an attempt to reassure the public in the wake of the passage of the salvage rider, the Clinton Administration issued a "Memorandum of Agreement" (MOA) which was signed by federal agencies including the Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. This MOA stipulated that "agencies agreed to adhere to the standards and guidelines in applicable land and resource management plans as well as standards and guidelines adopted as a part of PACFISH and the goals, objectives, and guidelines contained in NMFS' biological opinion on Snake River Basin Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs)." (Letter to Regional Forester, U.S. Forest Service, from National marine Fisheries Service, October 5, 1995.)

However, documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show that the Forest Service rejected the opinions of these agencies and is proceeding with the Thunderbolt sale in a cavalier manner, disregarding environmental laws, standards and guidelines. These agencies all advised against proceeding with the sale, noting that it would violate the Clean Water Act, Idaho state water quality laws, and the Forest Service's Management Plans themselves, which call for restoration of the South Fork.



Under logging without laws, the Forest Service has closed off huge areas of National Forest to the public. Mark A. Wilson photo.

In one comment, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service noted "This action does not comply with the PACFISH nor the National Marine Fisheries Service Biological Opinion on the Land and Resource Management Plan for Eight National Forests. We conclude from the preponderance of scientific evidence that the action proposed is likely to have detrimental impacts to fish and wildlife resources." (Memo, September 26, 1995.)

Rather than simply conducting the restoration work, as was suggested by several agency comments, the Forest Service has tied restoration funding to the logging project. The logging is estimated to lose about $2 million, and the restoration is expected to cost about $1 million. So by conducting the restoration without logging, the agency could save about one million dollars! And rather than merely mitigating the impacts of planned logging, as the restoration will now do, the project could potentially aid the recovery of critical spawning habitat.

AWR is working with the Idaho Sporting Congress, Idaho Conservation League, Idaho Rivers United, and The Wilderness Society to bring this sale to the attention of key members of Congress and the Administration in an effort to repeal the salvage rider. Watch for more details. Thanks to AWR staffer Don Smith for this report.