

Letters to the Editor
Hood River News
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Forever Green?

I would first of all like to applaud Alan Winans for his letter to the editor in the May 20, 2009 Hood River News. It sheds a little light on the management, or lack thereof, on our National Forests in Oregon and Washington as well as most of the rest of the country. A well-managed forest will stay green forever and provide us with an endless and renewable supply of wood and forest products to help sustain our lives and communities. The dollars generated by the active management of these National Forests will also help pay for our schools and roads.

A forest that is not actively managed will eventually burn up in a forest fire or die from outbreaks of insect and disease infestations. If you go up to Flag Point Lookout on the East side of the Mt Hood NF and look to the North you will see thousands of acres of trees that are dead or dying as a result of bark beetle infestations. Does anyone think it is good management to allow this to continue? These dead trees will eventually fall down and provide the tinder for a large forest fire.

If you go up to Cloud Cap Inn (when the road gets opened for the season) and look out over the results of the Gnarl Ridge Fire you will get a glimpse of what we can expect in much of the Mt Hood NF during the next several decades. Without active management we cannot prevent fires like this from occurring. We can stop them after they have already started, but at what cost. We spent close to 15 millions dollars putting out the Gnarl Ridge fire. The result is a lot of dead trees, unstable hill slopes, and a steadily rising Federal deficit.

The Forest Service actively managed our National Forests through most of the 20th century. This included the active suppression of forest fires. The suppression of these fires allowed the forests to grow up from what was once burnt off ground on much of the East side of Mt Hood in the early part of the 20th century. These forest were then actively managed to maintain their health and vigor as well as producing a steady stream of dollars to the County and the Federal Government. This is no longer happening. We are currently paying hundreds of millions of dollars every year to put out forest fires in areas that were producing revenue and forest products in the past.

If you agree with me, please write to the President, your Congressman, and your Senator to let them know you want our National Forests returned to a state of active management for the good of all of the people as well as wildlife that live in the area.

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