

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Karen Coulter, Director
(541) 385-9167
Paula Hood, Co-Director
(510) 715-6238
paula.e.hood@gmail.com

LAWSUIT FILED TO STOP LOGGING OF THE MOST POPULAR RECREATION SITE ON THE OCHOCO NATIONAL FOREST

On August 15th, 2016, the League of Wilderness Defenders/ Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project filed litigation to challenge proposed heavy logging at Walton Lake, the most popular recreation area in the Ochoco National Forest, in eastern Oregon. The Forest Service plans to remove virtually all Grand firs and Douglas firs—including large old growth trees—from a declared root rot infestation area, including many trees currently unaffected by root rot. Logging would also include commercially logging additional large fir near the lake in an area unaffected by root rot. Planned heavy logging would extend up to the popular campground area around the lake.

The Paulina Ranger District is using a Categorical Exclusion process that circumvents the requirement for a full Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement, eliminating disclosure of full environmental impact information to the public, as well as eliminating public opportunity to comment based on analysis of potential impacts of the timber sale, and public opportunity to file objections to the decision.

“The Forest Service admits that the proposed logging would completely transform the Walton Lake area from the beautiful old growth forest area people know and love,” says Karen Coulter, Director of the League of Wilderness Defenders’ Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project, “The Forest Service claims this logging is needed to eliminate root rot, yet logging is well documented in the science to spread root rot, thus defeating the stated purpose and need for the timber sale.”

“The heavy logging proposed would artificially convert naturally moist mixed conifer old growth forest to dry Ponderosa pine lacking much of the original large tree structure,” Coulter adds, “Such a controversial timber sale should not be allowed to go forward without full environmental impacts analysis and full opportunity for the public to comment and raise objections.”

Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project is a project of the League of Wilderness Defenders based in eastern Oregon dedicated to protecting and restoring native forest and high desert ecosystems on four National Forests—the Ochoco, Umatilla, Malheur, and Deschutes—and the Prineville Bureau of Land Management District. See our website for more details: bluemountainsbiodiversityproject.org.

League of Wilderness Defenders/Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project is represented by attorneys Jesse Buss, whose office is in Oregon City and Tom Buchele with the Earthrise Law Center. Earthrise is an environmental law clinic based at Lewis and Clark Law School in Portland, Oregon.