

Elk 16 Timber Sale

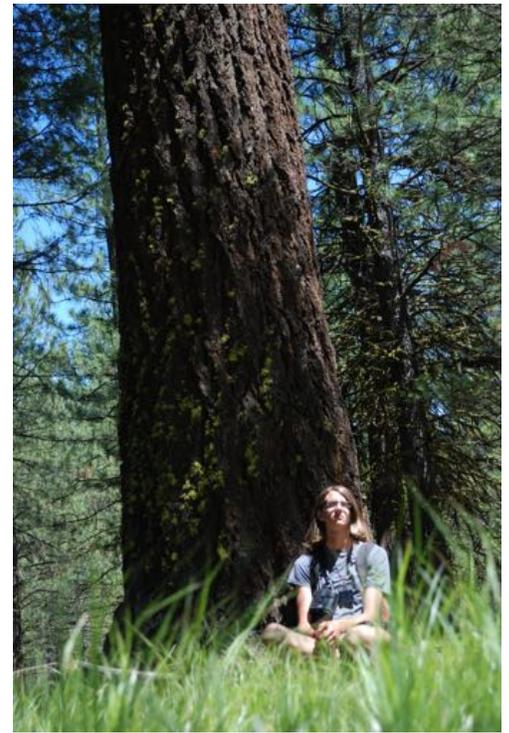
The Elk 16 timber sale proposes commercial logging in 13,240 acres, and includes logging of large trees and in mixed-conifer forests.



Butterfly in the Elk 16 sale.

The Elk 16 timber sale includes logging large trees over 21” in diameter in over 3,000 acres, despite a Forest Plan directive that prohibits the logging of live trees equal to or greater than 21” (except in cases of OSHA “hazard” trees). In order to circumvent Forest Plan direction and repeatedly log large trees in numerous timber sales across the region, the Forest Service is improperly using timber sale-specific Forest Plan amendments as a loophole. Large trees

are documented to be in severe deficit in eastern Oregon, and they are critical to providing habitat to numerous species. We are the only group that stands firm in the defense of large trees in the Malheur National Forest, and consistently opposes the use of Forest Plan amendments to violate the existing Forest Plan standards.



Kyle with a large fir in the Elk 16



Karen with large fir in Elk 16 sale unit.

In December of 2014, BMBP and our allies won the Snow Basin timber sale case in the Ninth Circuit Court. The court’s rulings should have severely curtailed the Forest Service’s use of these timber sale-specific amendments. The court found that the Forest Service failed to provide adequate analysis of the cumulative impacts of past amendments to the Eastside screens, which provides protective standards and guidelines such as prohibiting the logging of large trees. Repeated use of timber sale-specific amendments to circumvent forest-wide protections potentially renders broader-scale Forest Plan directions and goals moot. The court also ruled that the Forest Service had improperly attempted to use timber sale-specific amendments in forests without unique (site-specific)

circumstances, and therefore the use of these amendments was not justified. If the Forest Service sees a “need” to use project-specific amendments to address an actually common and widespread issue across



Karen with large fir in sale unit.



Karen with large old fir log in Elk16.



Butterfly in the Elk 16 sale.

the landscape, then the Forest Service must do a larger-scale analysis that is properly vetted and has broader scientific and public review. The Snow Basin ruling saved at least 10,000 large trees in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. However, despite the Snow Basin ruling, the Forest Service has continued to use these amendments to circumvent the law. The Forest Service claims Grand firs and other less fire-resistant trees are present in larger numbers and higher densities across the landscape than they were historically, as a consequence of fire suppression. However, the Forest Service abuses this rationale by applying it overly broadly and aggressively, including to areas with ample evidence of historic mixed-conifer and high-density forests, such as those in north and east facing slopes; deep gulches and narrow valleys; forests on soils that hold more nutrients and moisture (such as ash soils); and other

areas that show historic evidence of supporting mixed-conifer forests in general and Grand fir in particular. The Forest Service is using flawed assumptions that lack adequate scientific backing in order to log large trees



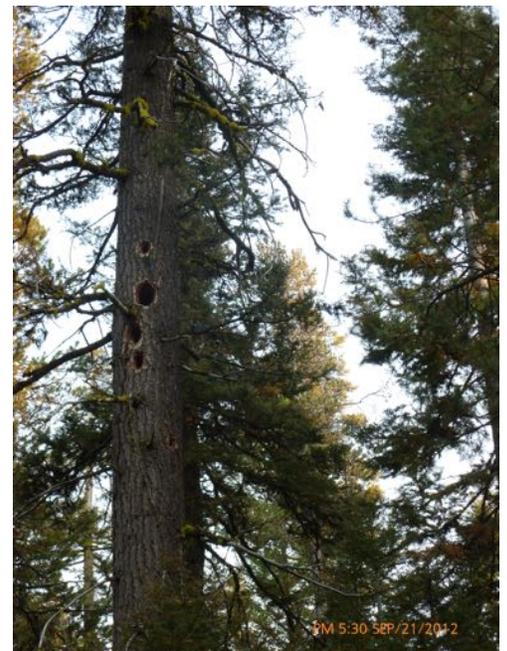
Karen with large old growth Ponderosa pines in the Elk 16 sale.

across many thousands of acres—despite the documented deficit in large trees across the landscape and their importance to wildlife. Over the last 24 years, we have repeatedly documented evidence of historic high-density, old growth Grand fir in areas where the Forest Service wants to extensively log large Grand fir.

In response to our objection to the Elk 16 timber sale, the Forest Service has made significant concessions, resulting in beneficial modifications. However, we continue to be very concerned that the Forest Service insists on using project-specific Forest Plan amendments to log large trees, including over thousands of acres in the Elk 16 sale, and we have not ruled out litigation. In addition, the Forest Service has not adequately analyzed and avoided impacts of their repeated use of project-specific amendments to species that depend on large trees and mature and old growth habitats, including Northern goshawk, American marten, and Pileated woodpecker. You can read more about the specific gains we made in modifying the Elk 16 timber sale in our 2015 Annual Report posted on our website. We are currently investigating the best options for defending large trees in this sale.



Snags (standing dead trees) such as this one in the Elk 16 sale provide essential wildlife habitat.



Fir with Pileated woodpecker holes in the Elk 16 sale.