

THE LEX TIMBER SALE

The Lex project area includes high elevation, subalpine forests, hemlock forests, mixed-conifer forests, never-logged areas, and many areas of naturally dense and complex forest types and habitats that are critically important for wildlife.

The Lex Timber Sale proposes to use clearcutting and heavy logging, including in: never-logged areas; moist mixed conifer forests; high elevation areas; forests adjacent to roadless areas; forests which may be potential Northern spotted owl habitat; and over recreation trails (including mountain bike, hiking, and skiing trails). Industrial, retrograde forest management practices such as clearcutting and the removal of the largest overstory trees have no place on public lands, and need to come to an end on all national forests. The Forest Service should not be logging in areas designated to be managed for intensive recreation, winter recreation, old growth habitat, scenic views, or administratively withdrawn areas.



Indian paintbrush in the Lex sale.

During our extensive field-checking of the sale, we documented that most of the sale units on the buttes have never been logged before, or had only minimal firewood cutting. In addition, the vast majority of the forests on the buttes are mixed-conifer, which are naturally dense and provide high value wildlife habitat for species such as deer, elk, grouse, marten, goshawk, and black-backed woodpeckers. The Forest Service should not log in mixed-conifer forest, especially on buttes, as these areas provide critical wildlife habitat for numerous species. We are also concerned about possible impacts to Northern spotted



Mouse in the Lex sale.

owls from logging in areas that are potential spotted owl habitat. Logging will degrade if not destroy the current habitat value for spotted owls, potentially violating the Endangered Species Act.

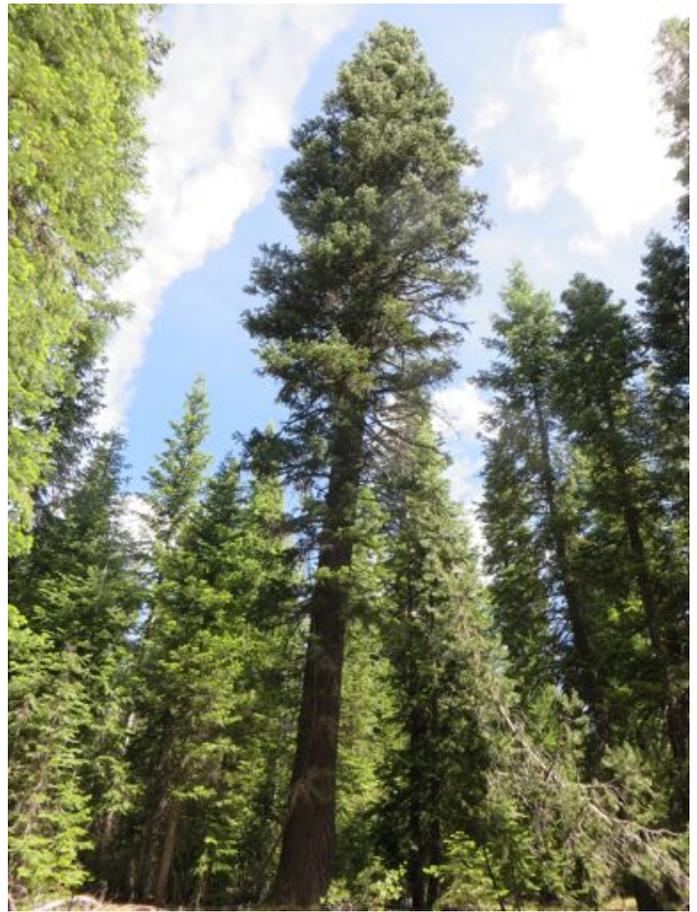
The assumptions and rationales about fire used by the Forest Service to justify this project do not reflect the majority of current and best available science. Current science provides mounting evidence that fire regimes were historically more complex, and often higher intensity, than what is often recognized in the assumptions and rationales upon which land management decisions are based. Particularly in higher elevations, naturally dense moist mixed-conifer forests, north/northeast facing slopes, and other microclimates and topographic variations across the landscape, forests historically included more dense stands, patchiness, and complexity than is incorporated by standard Forest Service management.



Bolete mushrooms from a Lex sale unit.



Scarlet gilia in Lex timber sale.



Mature trees in mixed-conifer forest in Lex timber sale.

The Lex project proposes to favor Ponderosa pine in certain mixed conifer areas through heavy logging of other naturally occurring species such as White fir, Lodgepole pine, and Grand fir. Ponderosa pine is a tree preferred by the timber industry because of its straight growth and relatively fast growth. Many fir species, such as Grand fir, have softer wood, and more often exhibit irregular growth features (which are great habitat for wildlife). Shifting the tree species composition in mixed conifer forest is not supported by the majority of current and best available science, and will degrade and destroy important wildlife habitat throughout the project area.



View of Mt. Bachelor from Lex sale.

Streams in the area may be suffering from possible hydrologic issues due to past logging. Streams that show evidence of higher historical flows are dried-up and dewatered. Current proposals for logging (if they move forward) may exacerbate hydrologic issues, as over-logging commonly causes negative affects on watershed hydrology. In addition, the effects of climate change on streams need to be considered, and logging practices that negatively affect hydrology, water quality, and stream habitats will likely exacerbate problems relating to climate change, and need to be considered in combination with climate change.

Snags (standing dead trees) and downed wood provide extremely important wildlife habitat that a disproportionate number of species depend upon-- many of which are listed, at-risk, or sensitive. Areas of high snag densities are important for black-backed woodpeckers (a species which is petitioned for uplisting on the ESA), as well as for other woodpeckers, birds, bats, mammals, and other wildlife.

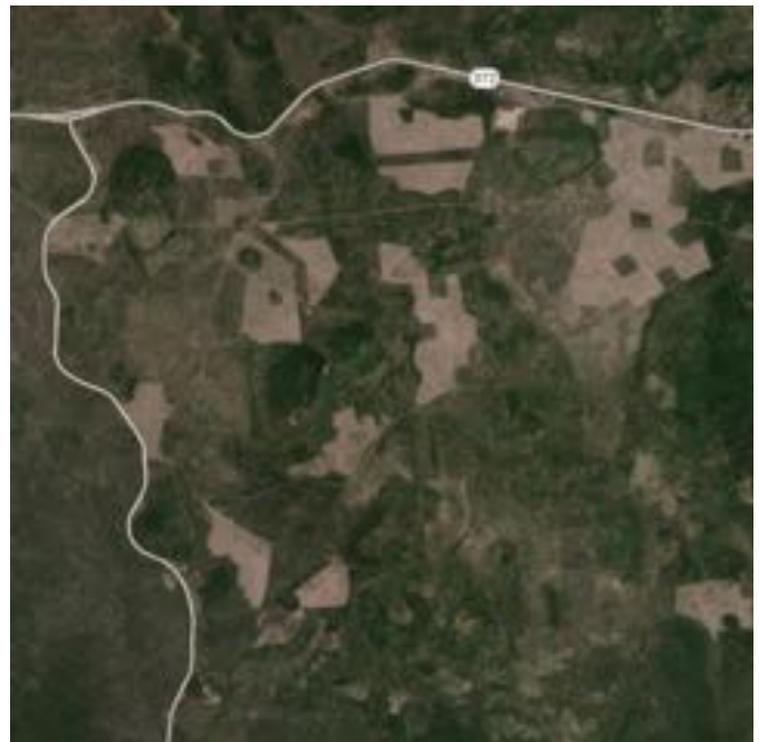


Alex with 33" Ponderosa pine in the Lex sale.



Maria with 57" diameter Grand fir in Lex sale unit.

Mountain pine beetles are a native insect and a necessary disturbance in forest ecosystems, and their larvae are a primary food source for certain woodpeckers and other birds. Proposals within the Lex project to remove snags through "salvage" logging are unacceptable, except in clearly defined circumstances involving public safety, such as major transportation corridors- and only when unavoidable.



The Google satellite image above shows the Lex project area, with severe past logging clearly evident. The Forest Service is proposing to re-enter previously logged areas and log the few trees that remained after the last round of logging. They are also proposing to log most of the remaining green patches of forest in the project area.

We are very concerned about cumulative impacts of the proposed heavy logging and roading in the Lex sale, especially in combination with the heavy logging degradation that has already occurred within the sale and in surrounding areas. These include impacts to: American marten; Pileated woodpecker; Neotropical migratory songbirds; woodpeckers; Black-backed woodpeckers; potential Pacific fisher; potential Canada lynx; relatively rare tree species (e.g. Whitebark pine, Western white pine, and Mountain hemlock); forest carbon storage; hydrologic flows, and recreational values.

We field-checked the Lex timber sale last summer, and submitted scoping comments to the Forest Service. Our work on this sale is ongoing, and we plan to prioritize public outreach and engagement during the upcoming comment periods. We will also continue to fight for the protection of sensitive and ecologically unique areas, native species, and ecological integrity in the Lex sale area.



The Forest Service is proposing to log the remaining “overstory” trees in many of the previously logged units within the Lex project area. They are also proposing to log the last remaining patches of forest that are unlogged or minimally logged within the project area, including in buttes and adjacent to roadless areas.