

## Unusual Logging Proposal Challenged in Court

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Bark, the Portland-based watchdog group for Mt. Hood National Forest, filed a lawsuit today in Oregon District Court to protect old-growth forests in the Lower Clackamas River Watershed. The lawsuit challenges a decision by the Salem District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to log some of the last remaining old growth features in an area heavily impacted by past logging. Bark alleges that the BLM's Airstrip Timber Sale violates several laws designed to protect imperiled species, and ensure thorough environmental analysis of resource extraction on our public lands.

One of the unusual issues is the manner in which the BLM has proposed to log the ancient trees. In the process of analyzing the proposed sale, Bark discovered that the BLM was skirting adequate analysis of the issue by designing the timber sale in such a way that all old growth logging would be an "incidental" impact of logging infrastructure developed at that site: new roads, yarding corridors, and logging landings mapped out over the top of these legacy forest features.

Olivia Schmidt, Program Director at Bark, explains, "The BLM has attempted to obscure the fact that the Airstrip Timber Sale would log old growth trees by leaving old growth forest out of the planned logging units, but designing its logging operations infrastructure to necessitate the cutting down of live old growth and standing dead old growth trees (known as snags). Both of these forest features are critical to the sensitive species found in the area including pileated woodpecker and four sensitive bat species. By planning roads and logging landings on top of these old growth features, the BLM is claiming that the logging of old growth is incidental to the timber sale, but in reality this old growth is the most commercially appealing aspect of the sale to timber companies and the most detrimental loss to habitat and forest health."

Brenna Bell, Bark Staff Attorney and NEPA Coordinator, describes BLM's violation of law, "The BLM's Resource Management Plan requires that it maintains enough large trees and snags to provide sufficient habitat for wildlife. The Airstrip project area already falls below the minimum required habitat standard, and the BLM now wants to further reduce this amount – in direct conflict with its own management plan. It is not surprising that the BLM also failed to analyze the impacts of reducing this habitat on sensitive birds and wildlife, keeping itself and the public in the dark about important environmental effects of the project."

With its legal challenge, Bark requests that the Airstrip Timber Sale be altered to comply with the Salem Resource Management Plan, and that the BLM prepare supplemental environmental analysis, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.