

The mission of the Olympic Forest Coalition is to protect and restore forest and aquatic ecosystems on the public lands of the Olympic Peninsula.



Olympic Forest Coalition

Summer 2010

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We thank all our members and donors for their financial support. If you have not contributed yet, we hope you will become inspired to do so.

We are including a self-addressed envelope for your convenience or, if you prefer, you can donate to OFCO online on our Web site www.olympicforest.org.

OFCO Tightens Its Belt

Few organizations have escaped the rigors imposed by these economic hard times, and OFCO is not among the exceptions.

For the past several years, Bonnie Phillips has been our salaried Executive Director. Now, however, many of our funders have cut the size of grants they provide to all of their beneficiary organizations, with predictable consequences. While Bonnie's compensation was always modest, given her unique combination of expertise, experience and passion for forest protection, what was once marginal has now become untenable and, with deep regret, we have discontinued the full-time ED position.

We wish Bonnie the best in whatever professional position she undertakes next—with the profound hope that it will leave her enough spare time to counsel with us as we seek out her wisdom on the whole host of issues we're working on.

Right now, Bonnie is deeply engaged in the dialogue about the use of forest biomass for energy production, and shares her thoughts in the article below.

Wood Biomass: A Massive New Threat to Our Forests—and Our Health

by Bonnie Phillips

First, let me say that I was very sad to leave OFCO. I've been with OFCO since its inception eight years ago, serving as a volunteer board member for four years before taking on the Executive Director job.

But I'm happy to say I believe that, with such a strong and talented board, OFCO will continue to thrive and carry out all of its important programs. I hope you'll continue your financial support. Even with my leaving, there are many bills to pay.

Even before I left OFCO in early April, I'd begun getting very concerned about what I see as the next major problem for the health of our forests—and for human health as well: intense pressure for a huge expansion of wood biomass plants for energy production.

The entire issue of biomass is very complicated (see additional article, page 6). Board member Toby Thaler and I have joined a national anti-biomass listserv and have learned a great deal. Most of the experience with biomass plants—and opposition to them—has been east of the Mississippi. For those of us in the West, these problems have surfaced only this year as state Land Commissioner Peter Goldmark has begun pushing woody biomass as a means of energy production—and of enhancing the Department of Natural Resources' ability to sell more trees.

Organization and individuals around the world are looking for ways to decrease greenhouse gases while providing new jobs. The U.S. joins in that effort, while also trying to become "energy independent." Clean energy and energy independence are not identical, although there is of course overlap. Congress and the current administration seem eager to jump on any bandwagon that purports to provide green energy and new jobs, often without looking at the science behind the claims. Hefty subsidies for biomass were

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provided in the Stimulus Package, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture recently announced more significant subsidies, so we can expect pressure on our national forests for additional logging to fulfill that promise.

Unfortunately, many environmental organizations in the West are supporting setting aside acreage for biomass in order to get legislation that would protect older trees. Don't look to large forest protection organizations to be on the leading edge of any anti-biomass movement.

With the caveat that differences (in size and operating methods) between plants can be significant, here are some of the major concerns with biomass energy production:

Not Carbon Neutral. The government and the industry tout biomass as carbon neutral. Unfortunately, this is not the case, as the Environmental Protection Agency has readily acknowledged (stirring up the vocal wrath of biomass proponents). The concept behind carbon neutrality is that carbon released during burning will be recaptured in replanted trees. The problem here is that it will take 40–60 years to recapture (and sequester) the amount of carbon burned and climate scientists say we must reduce greenhouse gases now. The second problem with the "carbon neutral" label is that the energy used to gather wood from the forest and transport it to the plant definitely adds more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

Wood biomass is dirtier than coal.

Wood Source for Biomass Not Sustainable.

Proponents of biomass claim that their source is sustainable—small diameter trees from thinning, branches, and other parts of trees that are not part of a normal commercial logging operation. Questions about whether this "slash" should be left on the forest floor to benefit soils and resident critters are not asked, much less answered. Proponents also claim—often with no scientific backing—that removing this material helps prevent forest fires.

Environmentalists may join them, sometimes to gain something in return. But, to be fair, many just don't understand the issue. The perception that renewable power sources are by definition "clean and green" is well entrenched. Actually, "renewable" just can mean capable of being exploited on an ongoing basis.

As more biomass plants are developed, the sources become less sustainable, and the push is on to log whole

trees. That's how it's gone in the eastern part of the U.S.; we can expect the same in our region.

Burning Wood Biomass Creates Major Health Problems. This one is the most scary and is getting the least attention. Here's a shock: Wood biomass is dirtier than coal.

The American Lung Association has come out against biomass burning because of studies showing respiratory problems. There are other problems as well, some relating to dioxin-like components produced in biomass burning. Four scientific studies in the U.K. have looked at health effects. One showed an increased risk of lethal congenital anomaly, such as spina bifida and heart defects, in infants born to women living near incinerators. Two others showed a significant increase in the risk of sarcoma. Another study found that exposure to high levels of dioxin was correlated to significantly lower boy-to-girl birth ratios.

A study in Italy showed increased mortality among women living in the vicinity of the incinerators compared with those living far away, for all causes: colon and breast cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.

Already a well-organized group of citizens in Shelton is working to stop the proposed Adage biomass plant. In May I co-presented at The Evergreen State College on problems with biomass. The students, and some residents of Shelton, had a lively discussion and the talk turned to what the college was planning. More students and faculty are now getting involved in the discussion. In June a forum in Olympia discussed similar issues.

Many communities in the east are rethinking their support of biomass burning based on strong citizen resistance, along with opposition from scientists and the medical community. You will be hearing more about this issue as it heats up (forgive the pun) in our state. And OFCO will be active on this issue; many board members share my concerns.

Update: DNR–Pope Resources Land Exchange

–CG

Last month, a group of concerned residents in Jefferson County met to discuss alternative solutions to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)–Pope Resources Land Exchange proposal. (See article "This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land" in our September 2009 newsletter archived on our Web site).

Public Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark has graciously allowed our county until May of next year to

bring forth alternative solutions to the land exchange. The citizens' group is brainstorming ideas including Trust Land Transfers, a community working forest, and park lands. The main goal is to encourage DNR to stay in eastern Jefferson County and retain the public lands that belong to all of us—while sustaining our schools, emergency services, and wildlife habitat through our working forests. Stay tuned.

Wild Olympics Campaign

by Connie Gallant

Much of our work is reactive, responding to threats to the forests we seek to protect. But our work is also proactive—working with other activists to map out and realize a vision for protecting more of the Olympic Peninsula's natural areas over the years.

About two years ago, we joined members of several environmental organizations to brainstorm ideas to "protect what we have and restore what we have lost." Designating more wilderness, adding more lands to our National Park using willing seller only provisions, and designating Wild and Scenic Rivers on the Olympic Peninsula are among the goals defined. (Washington state has only six designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, compared to Oregon's 60.)

During our discussions, it became evident that in order to protect our valuable watersheds, we needed to come up with a proposal and maps showing the areas of concern. Thus, The Wild Olympics Campaign was born.

We have crafted a carefully balanced proposal providing strong protection for salmon habitat and clean water, while simultaneously listening and accommodating concerns from a long list of local stakeholders.

To date, we have conducted over 20 presentations in all four counties of the Olympic Peninsula and Kitsap County to our collective memberships, community groups and leaders, churches and civic organizations. Our workshops have been received enthusiastically and have generated hundreds of postcards and letters to Congressman Norm Dicks. We also have met with local elected officials, tribes, conservation/recreation groups, businesses, timber companies, and many local residents. We continue to listen, address concerns and reach out to many groups and individuals.

For more information, contact OFCO's [Connie Gallant](#), Chair of The Wild Olympics Campaign, or see an [Olympic Park Associates newsletter article](#) on this topic, or visit [The Wild Olympics Campaign](#).

—photo by Connie Gallant



Wild Olympics Campaign Coalition Members

- Olympic Park Associates
- Olympic Forest Coalition
- Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society
- North Olympic Group of the Sierra Club
- Washington Wilderness Coalition
- The Mountaineers
- Campaign for America's Wilderness, Pew Environment Group
- The Sierra Club
- American Rivers
- American Whitewater

Off-Road Crowd Hijacks June 22 Forest Service Meeting on Aquatic Restoration

by Josey Paul

A large and well-organized group of ATV (all terrain vehicle) users is demanding that the U.S. Forest Service open the peninsula's national forests to ATVs. They may be at least partially successful.

About 47 loud and aggressive ATVers showed up at a meeting June 22 in Forks to demand access to the national forest. Also in attendance were one lone environmentalist and two or three timber lobbyists, depending on whether you count the Forks city attorney as a lobbyist. The meeting was supposed to be about setting priorities for the restoration of the Calawah River, but the ATVers hijacked the meeting and nothing else was discussed. Their demands are simple: Open up the forest to ATVs and don't waste government money on aquatics; if road maintenance is needed, cut down our forests to pay for it.

ATV use has been banned on the peninsula's national forests since 1991, although a few roads are open for street-legal motorcycles. The Forest Service has been lax

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in enforcing this rule, but lately has become more aggressive, with the same effect as kicking a hornet's nest. Now the ATVers are fighting back.

The Forest Service has a large network of roads, but this road network is poorly maintained. The roads deliver large, sometimes massive, amounts of sediment to streams and rivers, harming salmon habitat and other wildlife. In the worst cases, blown culverts lead to debris flows that destroy long reaches of streams.

Because the service lacks the money to maintain these roads, it has started a program of decommissioning those roads that are least needed and that pose the greatest threat to watersheds. With only a fraction of the aquatics money needed, the Forest Service decided to focus its limited funds on one or two rivers at a time, rather than spending its money on the worst problems throughout its forests.

As part of this focused-watershed process, the Forest Service designated the Calawah River as its newest focused watershed. The service proposes to decommission 57 miles of road in the Calawah watershed and to provide money for other aquatic restoration, mostly for salmon. Focused watersheds are run by citizen committees. When the ATVers saw that the Forest Service had created the Calawah River Focused Watershed Group and wanted their opinion, they organized at the grass roots and came out in force. The ATVers are poorly educated in the harm that roads and inadequate culverts cause to rivers and streams. In their view, ATVs cause no problems.

So now an aquatics program is stalled while the ATVers and the Forks city attorney work on an access plan to open part or all of the national forest to ATV use. The aquatics portion of the program will restart at the end of September.

The future of the Calawah River restoration is up in the air, with little apparent community support for the environmental process.

Voices Needed in Support of Keeping Olympic National Forest Free of ATVs/ORVs

The disturbing specter of ATVs/ORVs (all terrain vehicles/off road vehicles) in our forests is rearing its ugly head once more, and our voices are needed! Pressure from ATV enthusiasts has surfaced in the Calawah/Sitkum Watershed Collaboration process, intended to address protection of aquatic resources.

Late last month, OFCO Vice President Connie Gallant sent a letter to the Olympic National Forest (ONF) Pacific District Ranger opposing any ATV/ORV use in the Calawah/Sitkum Watershed and stating that, " ... we do not support changing the direction of the Calawah/Sitkum Watershed Collaboration Group away from its legitimate focus: Aquatics. Prohibition of ATV/ORV use is without doubt a positive position regarding clean water and aquatic quality for salmon. ATVs and ORVs cause great harm to watersheds, vegetation, and wildlife.

"For example, the use of off-road vehicles in Utah's Arch Canyon has degraded riparian vegetation and the waters of the Arch Canyon Creek. The Forest Service, as stated in its national website, is also aware of the damages created by this type of recreational activity: 'Erosion, user conflicts, spread of invasive species, damage to cultural sites, disturbance to wildlife, destruction of wildlife habitat, and risks to public safety can result from unmanaged recreation, including cross-country OHV [off highway vehicle] use.' "

The letter cited well-documented concerns for safety and environmental damage, and concluded, "For all of the reasons stated above, Olympic Forest Coalition is opposed to allowing any ORV/ATV use in the Calawah/Sitkum Watershed. We encourage the ONF to ... concentrate on the decommissioning of sub-standard roads and the watershed restoration process. ... We appreciated very much reading your statement: 'The Calawah is a unique and beautiful watershed, rich in many natural resources, and deserving of the most restorative actions that we can offer.' We could not agree with you more."

OFCO's position is that ATVs/ORVs should be banned from the entire ONF and also from DNR's Olympic Region, with a few pre-existing exceptions, until the agencies have implemented "robust and specific ORV regulations" to prevent the degradation seen in areas where ATVs/ORVs have been widely used.

Please make your views known by writing to:

Dean Millett, Pacific District Ranger
Olympic National Forest
437 Tillicum Lane
Forks, WA 98331

Your letter can be brief or detailed; for more talking points, [see Connie's letter](#) in its entirety on OFCO's Web site.



-Dosewallips photo by Jim Scarborough

Dosewallips: A Road to Nowhere

by Connie Gallant

Thanks for your campaign to prevent opening the Dosewallips Road. Just had a great bike trip there and wonderful to be away from cars. Lots of folks were getting a lowland backpack experience walking the road and happy to be by a river. Not all hikes have to be about the high country.

- Dave Moore

And the saga continues. According to the Olympic National Forest (ONF), the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is due out in August. We'll have to wait until then to learn whether it will include an alternative for a non-motorized trail.

The 2008 draft EIS was prepared by the Olympic National Forest and the Western Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration, as co-lead agencies, and the Olympic National Park as a cooperating agency. A trail option was not included.

Yet nearly three-fourths of the more than 500 public comments—a record for the ONF—rejected the agencies' intent to build a road along an unstable slope through the spectacular ancient forest or through critical salmon habitat, preferring a non-motorized trail instead. By choosing to ignore the obvious benefits of a road-to-trail conversion above the massive washout, the ONF essentially thumbed its nose at the many citizens who care about the integrity of this beautiful area.

Several years ago, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the federal agency charged with enforcing the Endangered Species Act for listed critters like the Puget Sound chinook, submitted a strongly worded letter to the Forest Service. NMFS's letter warned that the proposal to reconstruct the Dose Road within the river channel would degrade the chinook's

critical habitat to the point of jeopardizing this salmon run's very existence.

Proponents for rebuilding the road have argued that without it, the local economy suffers from a dearth of human traffic. The Mountaineers, a nonprofit organization, has kept excellent records of trail use and has found that the number of hikers and tent campers hiking the trail all the way to the campgrounds has actually increased in the past several years. The local economy has been affected in the same manner as the rest of the nation's economy—and it has nothing to do with the Dose situation.

A Record of Decision is expected to be signed in September by ONF Supervisor Dale Hom. There will be no more public comments. Depending on the decisions made by ONF, OFCO is poised to file appeals, joined by Sierra Club and Olympic Park Associates.

So we'll see if the Forest Service reaffirms its readiness to sacrifice this Northwest icon for the sole benefit of getting motor vehicles five miles farther up the valley: a road to nowhere.

The OESF Planning Process – Where's the Science?

by Sarah Farno, OFCO Intern

As an experimental forest that combines timber production and habitat conservation without designated set-asides to harvest, the Olympic Experimental State Forest (OESF) is a unique addition to Washington state's trust land forests. Sprawling over 260,000 acres north of the Quinalt, the OESF is intended to achieve three goals: 1) to sustain an "unzoned" system in which conservation methods are upheld and commodity production, such as timber, is integrated; 2) to conduct research and monitoring as a basis for experimental management; and 3) to incorporate intentional learning with management decisions. In addition, the OESF must meet the state's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) requirements to recover aquatic and endangered species.

Sounds good, right? Unfortunately, other than the harvest component, these goals are not being met. In direct contrast to the information listed on their Web site, the OESF project has been in effect since the mid 1990s, but very little research has been done on active and ongoing timber harvest units.

The OESF forest plan calls for managing timber harvest and road construction in the 11 different landscapes within the OESF, while simultaneously aiding restoration of riparian and aquatic ecosystems and supporting viable populations of endangered spotted

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owls and murrelets. While claiming that the agency cannot afford the experimentation or monitoring component, the current preferred alternative actually proposes an increase in streamside timber harvest of up to 80 percent.

By law, the plan is required to integrate the three major objectives articulated in the 1997 HCP:

- To protect, maintain, and aid natural restoration of riparian systems on Department of Natural Resources (DNR)-managed lands in the OESF by maintaining and increasing the recruitment potential for large woody debris and shade associated with riparian systems
- To attain and maintain within each landscape 20 percent Old Forest and 20 percent Young Forest habitat in support of the conservation of the Northern Spotted Owl, Marbled Murrelet and other wildlife species.
- To generate trust revenue through the sale of the timber. The current sustainable harvest level approved by the Board of Natural Resources for the OESF planning unit is 576 million board feet over a decade, to generate approximately \$144 million in gross revenue.

In order to achieve the first and second of these objectives, managers would need to know what currently exists in the OESF. But a current inventory of the condition of OESF streams and slopes and forests—and also of the species using these forests—has not been done, and herein lies the root of the problem: Turning the forests into a crop of trees leads to lack of biological diversity and over-simplification of forest communities and does nothing to repair decades of damage to streams and hill slopes from road culvert failures and landslides.

If the DNR's preferred alternative is adopted, increased timber harvest will continue without the research and restoration components to validate it, and without achieving the important goals of protecting aquatic resources and habitat for endangered species such as the murrelets and spotted owls. This is why OFCO is participating in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) review, pulling together a team of experts to review and comment on the proposed alternatives.

Management of the OESF will benefit from close public scrutiny and support for matching each timber harvest with a monitoring or research project to demonstrate that state-of-the-art science can yield better

timber revenues to schools and county trusts and also better fulfillment of the letter and spirit of the HCP.

OFCO—the sole peninsula-based advocacy group focused on this important and large forest landscape—is acting in support of an alternative that brings science into the OESF, and points out that these important conservation objectives are in fact not being addressed, while overharvest of timber and damage to forest ecosystems within the OESF continue to occur.

A short comment period was extended until July 15 to discuss possible landscape planning options and to receive input from the community. OFCO requested supportive comments via a July 9 e-mail alert. We will report updates on our Web site and in future newsletters.



Biomass Burning: the Basics

by Nikolai Starzak, OFCO Intern

The Obama Administration, the U.S. Congress, Washington state's Department of Natural Resources and many private timber owners have jumped on the bandwagon for biomass energy from logging residue. This year, Adage—a Corporation with East Coast and European roots—proposes to break ground for a biomass plant near Shelton, financed in part by federal stimulus dollars.

Well, what is biomass? How can it be utilized as a renewable energy resource?

Biomass, technically speaking, is material extracted from living or recently dead plant organisms, used as an energy source. Biomass can be anything from yard waste to sawdust; in this case, biomass refers specifically to logging residue, also known as slash. Notably, however, biomass does not include fossil fuels like coal or petroleum, which were decaying plant and animal remains millions of years ago.

Energy from biomass, at first glance, sounds like an attractive alternative to rapidly depleting reserves of coal and oil. When trees are felled, most timber extractors remove the tops and branches, leaving a dense carpet of fallen tree waste, almost like yard clippings. Typically, this logging debris is left on site or burned; biomass energy proponents say this dead matter could provide a "green" source of renewable energy.

But the technology has serious drawbacks. Biomass burning is one of the largest contributors of black carbon, a major cause of global warming and a major health concern. The American Lung Association has even taken a stance against biomass incineration, stating, "Burning biomass could lead to significant increases in emissions of nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and sulfur dioxide and have severe impacts on the health of children, older adults, and people with lung diseases."

Environmental groups like Incinerator Free Mason County and No Biomass Burn believe the ecological damage from burning biomass would be significant. The proposed Shelton Plant would consume 604,000 tons of biomass a year, and if available timber residue fell short of this requirement, there would be an incentive for new logging to make up the shortfall. This would not solve the problems of deforestation and carbon neutrality, but rather exacerbate them.

Timber debris itself, moreover, serves quite an important purpose in clearcut ecology. The carbon- and nutrient-rich slash decomposes and refertilizes the soil, effectively fostering new plant growth and restarting the forest life cycle.

Unfortunately, misinformation and misunderstanding about biomass burning have been widespread and have influenced federal energy policy. Biomass plants actually may receive 30 percent of costs in stimulus funds from the federal government for their "renewable energy" status and would be exempt from air quality legislation.

The proposed Adage plant would require 360 truck trips and 100,000 gallons of water a day and expel 20,000 tons of solid ash a year. While it is true that Mason County suffers a high unemployment rate, these proposed incinerator jobs could go towards solar power or another environmentally friendly alternative, rather than a venture that risks undermining the health of our state's forests—as well as its people.

FURTHER READING:

[Biomass Energy Centre](#)

[Claverton Energy Research Group](#)

[Incinerator Free Mason County](#)

[The Olympian article](#)

[No Biomass Burn](#)

OFCO Board Welcomes Paul Kampmeier

We are very pleased that Paul Kampmeier recently has joined the OFCO board. Paul is an attorney with the Washington Forest Law Center in Seattle. Before joining WFLC, Paul spent three years in private practice representing citizen activists and nonprofit organizations in environmental, land use, public records and consumer protection litigation. Paul volunteers for a variety of environmental organizations and enjoys traveling abroad, reading, backpacking and spending time with his wife and two kids.

In Paul's own words: "I was born and raised in Ohio, did my undergraduate work at the University of Michigan, then hiked 300 miles or so on the Appalachian Trail before moving to Delaware to work for a few years. Work there wasn't suitable so I went to Montana to live near Flathead Lake for a summer to work at a camp and backpack. [After more than two years of travel in Asia, Central America and Mexico] I moved to Seattle to go to the University of Washington School of Law. During law school I volunteered with American Rivers and Washington Environmental Council (WEC).

After law school I took a job with Smith & Lowney, a small firm in Seattle that represents nonprofits like OFCO in environmental enforcement and related activities. There I did a fair amount of Clean Water Act litigation on behalf of groups like Puget Soundkeeper Alliance (PSA), People for Puget Sound, Waste Action Project, Washington Toxics Coalition, etc. At that time I was also volunteering for WEC and PSA on their legal committees. At WFLC (my current job) I focus on Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act litigation on behalf of nonprofits working to protect and preserve natural resources on state and private forestlands in Washington and Oregon.

I also like to camp and hike with my fabulous wife and delightful two kids (Chloe, "age 4 and a half and three quarters" as she says, and August, age 3). I also bird and fly-fish. I make no mention of flaws and weaknesses, of course. You'll have to discover those on your own!"



Olympic Forest Coalition
c/o Alex Bradley
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