Cascadia Wildlands
we like it wild.

For immediate release

August 15, 2011

Contact:
Francis Eatherington, Cascadia Wildlands, 541-643-1309
Barbara Shamet and Wolfgang Schwarz, 541-530-7745

Conservation Group and Landowner
Seeks Halt of Elliott Forest Clearcutting

Inquiry Discovers Oregon Logging in High Landslide Area Above Private Property

Cascadia Wildlands and a concerned neighbor have called for an immediate halt to the Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) "Millicoma-Between" timber sale on the 93,000-acre Elliott State Forest southeast of Reedsport. After reviewing planning documents, the group and landowner discovered the state of Oregon is clearcutting an older rainforest above the landowner's property that has been documented as a "High Landslide Hazard Location."

The private property owners, Barbara Shamet and Wolfgang Schwarz, are concerned that a landslide from the clearcutting operation could travel through their property. In 1996, the landowners suffered the effects of a landslide after the state of Oregon clearcut above their property.

Timber sale documents for "Millicoma-Between", reviewed by Cascadia Wildlands, disclosed that if a landslide were to occur in the "Potential Debris Flow Track" leading through the landowners' property, it would end in the West Fork Millicoma River, a critical waterway for endangered salmon.

"The Oregon Department of Forestry should not assume it's OK to use our property as their landslide track," Barbara Shamet said. "We have suffered past landslides out of state lands as well as severe drift from their poisonous herbicide spraying."

When questions about the possibility of a landslide on the landowners' property were directed to the ODF, the agency failed to respond while the timber sale was being logged. Ms. Shamet tried to talk to the timber sale purchaser directly, but when she got near the contested area, the ODF blocked the road and threatened to have her and Mr. Schwartz arrested, even though they were on a road that accessed the top of their own property.

In addition, the "Millicoma-Between" sale never had the usual competitive bidding process of other timber sales. Instead, it was a negotiated trade with the logging company without public disclosure.

According to ODF, 35 acres of the "South Marlow Switch" timber sale, also above nearby private land, were so landslide-prone that the ODF offered the logging company other acres due to the prospect of a landslide destroying homes. ODF traded those 35 acres of young tress, and gave the logging company 39 acres of bigger and older trees in the "Millicoma-Between" sale. Because a landslide would only harm the Shamet/Schwarz property, including the West Fork of the Millicoma River, and not their actual residence, ODF deemed this exchange appropriate.

"The State of Oregon needs to reign in its reckless logging program on our public rainforests," says Francis Eatherington, Conservation Director of Eugene-based Cascadia Wildlands. "The state must be more accountable to Oregonians and put human safety before profits."

The disregard for private property and older public rainforests comes at a time when ODF wants to double the logging on the Elliott as part of its proposed Forest Management Plan, which remains under heavy scrutiny by the public and groups like Cascadia Wildlands. The state is expected to make a final decision on the clearcutting increase by the end of the year.

The state of Oregon has a constitutional mandate to generate revenue on the Elliott State Forest for schools. Cascadia Wildlands has long advocated the state raise revenue in more sensible ways. Scientists have found temperate rainforests, like those on the Elliott, can sequester more carbon per acre than virtually any other place in the world. Cascadia Wildlands has encouraged the state to leverage the Elliott's ability to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere for dollars in a climate change mitigation scheme. Other revenue generators exist including restoratively thinning the backlog of overstocked tree farms on the Elliott, land trades and conservation acquisitions.