The Newsletter of Forest Service Employees For Environmental Ethics Thinning Forests in the Ozarks The Forest Service wants to restore the Ozarks to what they once were. But local residents fear they'll lose the forests they love. Inside Trouble on the Tongass / An Arizona Controversy / FSEEE's 2014 Annual Report



Introducing Forest News 2.0

Public education has always been a core tenet in fulfilling FSEEE's mission of protecting our public lands. We know that an informed citizenry is key to holding the land management agencies accountable. And we have always wanted to keep our own donors and members informed of FSEEE's ongoing efforts on their behalf.

What began in the 1990s as the newsprint newsletter Inner Voice soon morphed into a 64-page magazine. For 10 years, FSEEE published quarterly editions of Forest Magazine, which included original investigations, in-depth reporting on the most pressing issues impacting our public lands, op-eds from key decision-makers and of course, the latest reports on FSEEE activities.

It was with great sadness that we made the decision to cease publication of Forest Magazine in 2010. Like so many publishers, we found ourselves unable to justify the expense of producing such an extensive print publication in the midst of the recession's financial vice grip.

Since that time, we have continued to create and distribute a small newsletter that you may well recognize as Forest News. And with this edition, we are pleased to announce the expansion of content. We have doubled the size to enable us to once again provide original investigations, FSEEE updates and, of course, photos showcasing the beauty of our spectacular public lands.

From Alaska to Southern California's Angeles National Forest, the Pacific Northwest to the Ozark Mountains, it is our hope that this edition of our expanded Forest News is able to take you to the far reaches of our public lands and provide you, our readers, with insight and inspiration. Welcome to Forest News 2.0!

Sincerely,

Andy Stahl
Executive Director

Any Stall

Inside

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California's Angeles National Forest brings nature to the metropolis.

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In the heart of the nation, the Mark Twain National Forest is a landscape of lush, dense forests. But evidence suggests the forests were more open before settlement. With support from several conservation groups, the Forest Service wants to thin wide stretches of these landscapes to boost habitat for birds. But local residents like the forests the way they are. It's a battle brewing in the Ozarks.

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Angeles National Forest. California

tuck in traffic somewhere in Los Angeles, it's easy to take the San Gabriel Mountains for granted. They're just there—a hazy line of mountains to the north, behind an office building or a fast-food restaurant.

The Angeles National Forest, which encompasses much of the San Gabriels, is the preeminent example of an "urban" national forest. More than 17 million people live a short drive away.

Like the city at its feet, the Angeles is remarkably diverse. It includes low chaparral, evergreen forests, snowy alpine ridges and rushing streams (about a third of Los Angeles' water comes from the San Gabriels). Its five wilderness areas provide important habitat for rare creatures such as California condors and Nelson bighorn sheep.

The forest is also home to a new national monument—last fall, with the stroke of his pen, President Obama created the 346,000-acre San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

The monument is one of only nine managed by the Forest Service (the National Park Service oversees 80). The agency is just starting work on a management plan.

Conservationists hope the designation will bring more funding to the Angeles National Forest. Its proximity to a metropolis brings an abundance of management challenges, from trash removal to dealing with graffiti and vandalism.

That proximity also brings great promise, offering an oasis of wilderness and quietude just a few miles from the teeming city. FN



The Battle for Butler Hollow

A Forest Service proposal to thin a heavily wooded section of southern Missouri's Ozark Mountains is raising fundamental questions about the nature of "natural."

The agency, backed by The Nature Conservancy, the American Bird Conservancy and the National Wild Turkey Federation, hopes to restore more than 18,000 acres near the Arkansas border to a closer approximation of the area's historical condition.

But local residents are rallying against the project, saying they like the woods just the way they are. Supporters of the Butler Hollow project say the landscape was much more open before European and American settlers arrived in the nineteenth century. Low intensity wildfires, many set by Native Americans, crept across the hillsides every few years, they claim, creating glades and open savannas.

"People have this idea that forests should be deep and shaded and that any human intervention is not natural," said Doug Ladd, conservation director for the Missouri chapter of The Nature Conservancy. "But there was really no true forest in the Butler Hollow area."

Those who live in the area, though, say restoring the landscape to historical conditions is folly. Many believe the Forest Service's true motivation is money—timber sales on the Mark Twain National Forest, where the proposed project is located, brought in nearly \$4 million last year.

"There will be so many changes in the future anyway because of climate change," said Tracie Snodgrass, 63, who grew up in the area. "We need to let Mother Nature do what she is going to do."

Others suspect the National Wild Turkey Federation is a central force behind the plans. The group supports projects that create the open grasslands that turkeys require.

Mark Twain National Forest officials say the project will take several decades to complete. They will use a combination of forprofit timber sales, non-commercial thinning, prescribed burns and applications of herbicides in an attempt to create and maintain open areas across the landscape.

Proponents point to the records of nineteenth-century government land surveyors who marked the location of "witness trees" as they platted out the area for settlement.

Those records suggest that trees in the area were more widely spaced than they are now.

Most of the area was logged around the turn of the twentieth century. The forest that grew back, undisturbed by fires, is much denser than historic conditions, according to Forest Service officials, and is being invaded by cedar trees.

Agency officials say the project is in line with restoration goals laid out in the Mark Twain's management plan, which was adopted 10 years ago.

"The Butler Hollow area also has a high concentration of glades, which are a rare and important habitat," Joe Koloski, district ranger for the area, said in a written response to questions. Koloski, who formerly worked as a biologist for the National Wild Turkey Federation, is overseeing the Butler Hollow project for the Forest Service.

In a letter sent to area newspapers in February, Ladd and representatives from the American Bird Conservancy and the National Wild Turkey Federation argued the project is an important step toward reestablishing habitat that a variety of wildlife depends on.

They pointed to a survey conducted in the Butler Hollow area in 1849 by one Ambrose Barton. At one point in Butler Hollow, according to their interpretation of Barton's records, the nearest tree was 64 feet away.

Longtime residents of Butler Hollow, however, question the accuracy of such records. They say stories handed down from generation to generation counter claims that there were many openings and very few cedar trees.

Those who live in the area say restoring the landscape to historical conditions is folly. Many believe the Forest Service's true motivation is money—timber sales on the Mark Twain National Forest, where the proposed project is located, brought in nearly \$4 million last year.

Jo Nell Corn, who lives in the town of Seligman near the Arkansas border, said her ancestors made abundant use of cedars, which were valued for their rot-resistance.

"I can remember the first time we didn't have a cedar for a Christmas tree," said Corn, whose ancestors settled in the area in 1850. "My mother thought we weren't having a real Christmas."

There is strong evidence that the original General Land Office surveys are not wholly reliable sources in making estimates of pre-settlement conditions.

A 2012 study by University of Missouri researchers found that surveyors often did not use the nearest trees as bearing trees for their blazes. That research found that "survey bias" may lead to underestimating the number of trees that were there by nearly half.

Recent studies suggest that prior to European and American settlement, much of the Ozarks was forested, but those forests were different than they are today.

A paper published in December in the journal *Ecological Restoration* compensated for survey bias in painting a picture of how the Ozarks appeared just prior to settlement.

The paper's authors determined the region was largely forested, but a higher percentage of the trees that grew there were big, old oaks

The canopy was largely closed—the leaves of one oak would often touch the leaves of the next—but the forest floor was relatively open. A good deal of sunlight reached the forest floor, according to the research, supporting lush growth of grasses and forbs.

The research suggests that 200 years ago a person walking through a typical Ozark forest would see thick pillars of fire-resistant old oak trees, fairly widely spaced, with grasses and forbs carpeting the ground. The forest would be shaded, but not deeply so. Looking up, the person would see patches of sky between the branches and oak leaves.

According to the researchers, Ozark forests prior to settlement contained roughly half as many trees as are found in current forests.

The paper also found that creating savannas and prairies, and then keeping them clear in the future, would be difficult.

"Not only is restoration of closed woodlands more attainable than very open forest ecosystems," the researchers wrote, "closed or nearly closed oak woodlands may have been more common than savannas and prairies, at least during the 1800s after European contact and before Euro-American settlement."

Jane Fitzgerald, an ornithologist with the American Bird Conservancy, said creating more openings in the region will help several species of birds, including whip-poor-wills, blue-winged warblers, prairie warblers and red-headed woodpeckers.

Fitzgerald is coordinator for the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture, a partnership between federal and state agencies and not-for-profit organizations that works to preserve habitat for birds in the region.

Her organization also supported a thinning and prescribed burning project in the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area in Kentucky and Tennessee. The Forest Service, which manages the recreation area, recently put those plans on hold after an outcry from local residents.

Fitzgerald said she is encouraged that the Forest Service and other land managers seem to be making thinning and prescribed burning a priority.

"I hope this is the wave of the future, because there are a lot of species—and not just birds—that are in trouble and depend on disturbed landscapes," she said. "And there's no disturbance anymore."

Backers of the Butler Hollow project said regular prescribed burning will be needed to maintain the open landscape. That's a concern to area residents, who fear smoke from the burning will pose a health risk and that the fires may get out of control. They also worry that the fires, especially if they are set in spring, will kill wildlife.

Snodgrass, who formerly worked as a naturalist at Roaring River State Park, which borders the Butler Hollow project area, said she's seen firsthand how easily prescribed fires can get out of control.

Several years ago, she helped oversee a prescribed burn in the state park. She said Forest Service and Missouri Department of Natural Resources workers left the fire unattended overnight.

"I hope this is the wave of the future, because there are a lot of species—and not just birds—that are in trouble and depend on disturbed landscapes. And there's no disturbance anymore."

-Jane Fitzgerald, American Bird Conservancy

"I said it could pick up at night and get onto private land nearby," Snodgrass said. "And that's just what it did. Their management doesn't always work."

Ladd, of The Nature Conservancy, said he understands why local residents would be concerned about the Butler Hollow project.

"A lot of the initial restoration can look quite unsightly," he said. "Time and again, though, several years down the road, people begin to see the benefits."

That doesn't assuage opponents who remain skeptical that the Forest Service will have sufficient resources and commitment to do the project correctly over the long term.

Corn pointed to a nearby area that the Forest Service burned several years ago.

"It looks like a nuclear bomb went off, and that's only 400 acres," she said. "I cannot imagine our forest looking like that."

Koloski said the Forest Service expects to have an environmental assessment for the project completed this fall. FN



Turkeys benefit from openings in forested landscapes. But a lack of meadows and glades in the forests of the Ozarks is problematic for the game bird, as well as other bird species such as whippoor-wills, blue-winged warblers, prairie warblers and red-headed woodpeckers.

Briefly

Land Swap Moves Rocky Mountain Resort **Forward** A massive housing development deep in the Rocky Mountains moved a step closer to reality this spring when Forest Service officials approved a land exchange necessary for the project to go forward.

For three decades, Texas businessman B.J. "Red" McCombs has tried to build a 10,000-resident resort community atop Wolf Creek Pass in southwestern Colorado. McCombs owns about 300 acres near the Wolf Creek Ski Area that is surrounded by the Rio Grande National Forest.

The swap gives the developer 204.4 acres that will connect the inholding with U.S. Hwy. 160, allowing access to the property. The Forest Service will receive 177.6 acres of wetlands and streams near the Continental Divide.

Conservationists have long battled the plan. They say the land McCombs wants to develop is prime habitat for threatened Canada lynx, and that the Forest Service has acknowledged that there would be an "appreciable" impact on Rocky Mountain elk. Dan Dallas, supervisor of the Rio Grande National Forest, cited a law that requires the federal government to provide access to private land that is surrounded by Forest Service land. Conservationists vowed to fight the development in court.



Agencies Clash Over Fish & Gold The Bureau of Land Management gave its final approval this spring for a major openpit gold mine in northeastern Nevada. The move came as another agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, considered whether a rare desert fish that lives next to the proposed mine site should be protected under the Endangered Species Act.

The BLM has acknowledged that construction of the mine could lead to the extinction of the relict dace. Last year, FSEEE petitioned the Fish and Wildlife Service to list the fish under the Endangered Species Act. In April, the agency found that there is "substantial scientific or commercial information" indicating that a listing is warranted.

Lee Ann Carranza, assistant field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Service in Nevada, said her agency has not ruled out an emergency listing for the dace, which would provide immediate protection. She said there is concern that building the mine could result in a "reduction of flow or cessation of flow" of water, leading to the demise of the dace. "We are going to continue to work with BLM and Newmont [the mining company] to eliminate or reduce our concerns," Carranza said. "We haven't been successful to date." FSEEE has appealed the BLM's approval of the mine.



Northwest Forest Plan Revision Redux The Forest Service has begun work on revising the landmark Northwest Forest Plan, which has served as the law of the land for the past two decades in the top timberproducing region in the nation. Agency officials recently concluded a series of public "listening sessions" in cities and towns around the region.

The Northwest Forest Plan was forged after a 1991 ruling shut down logging in the Northwest to protect threatened species while allowing sustainable logging from federal lands. The plan covers 19 national forests in Washington, Oregon and northern California as well as seven areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management, which is pursuing its own revision process.

Each national forest will revise its individual management plan. Ric Rine, planning director for the Forest Service's Northwest region, said earlier this year that the revisions are necessary because conditions have changed substantially since the Northwest Forest Plan was adopted.

"It's been 20 years and there has been a lot of science that has been developed," he said. "The Northwest Forest Plan didn't contemplate climate change. It didn't anticipate (the spread of) barred owls in spotted owl habitat."





Committee Wants More Logging on Tongass

Some forest stands currently protected on Alaska's Tongass National Forest should be opened to logging, according to draft recommendations by a committee charged with forging a new course for the nation's largest national forest.

Forest Service officials declared five years ago that the Tongass would transition away from logging old-growth forests over the next 10 to 15 years. After that, they say, logging on the Tongass will be allowed only in stands that have previously been cut.

The committee recommends some logging be allowed in currently protected areas, including the so-called "beach fringe," as a way of providing sufficient young growth to sustain a logging industry

in Southeast Alaska.

Conservationists were quick to criticize the plan. They say the Forest Service handpicked members for the committee who would develop recommendations favorable to the timber industry.

They also complained that the committee's focus on timber gives short shrift to other industries, such as fishing and tourism, which generate far more economic activity in the region.

The 15-member committee, which has met regularly over much of the past year, included no representatives from the tourism, recreation or guide service industries. It included one commercial fisherman.

David Beebe, president of Greater Southeast Alaska Conservation Community, complained in a letter to Tongass Deputy Forest Supervisor Jason Anderson that the committee had no representation from conservation groups long active in the region.

"What we have now is a transparent charade of diversity, a programmed outcome, and an insult to public process," Beebe wrote.

In its draft plan, the committee said opening more areas of young growth to

logging will result in less logging of oldgrowth forests.

Other committee recommendations include "providing discretion and flexibility to land managers in order to meet the goal of speeding the shift to young growth." The committee also calls for direct government assistance to companies adversely impacted by the phasing out of old-growth logging on the Tongass.

"The federal government should offer an option to buy-out these business' (sic) existing assets at fair market value, as a means of compensating these businesses for the new economic hardship and obsolescence imposed upon them," the committee's draft report says.

The report acknowledges that the infrastructure to process Tongass young-growth timber does not currently exist, and that markets for such products will have to be "gradually created."

Forest Service officials expect the committee's recommendations to be incorporated as one of several alternatives in a revised management plan for the Tongass. They expect to adopt that plan, which will guide the transition away from old-growth logging, sometime next year. FN

Questions Abound for Arizona Contractor

T he first phase of the largest forest restoration project ever attempted in the United States is a go—at least on paper. Now all eyes are trained on the private contractor charged with doing much of the work.

The 2.4 million-acre Four Forest Restoration Initiative, or 4FRI, is designed to be a national model, showing how mismanaged forests in the West can be brought back to health in an ecologically sound, and profitable, fashion.

Timber industry representatives, environmentalists, scientists and land managers agree—the pine forests of Arizona's mountains are dangerously out of balance.

"There are a vast amount of acres in the 4FRI area that are a sea of poles and dog-hair thickets," said Todd Schulke, cofounder of the Center for Biological Diversity. "There's no doubt in our minds that something needs to be done."

The first major chunk of the 4FRI project calls for thinning, prescribed burning and other work on nearly 600,000 acres on the Coconino and Kaibab national forests. The Forest Service gave its final approval for that portion of the project in April.

In coming years, restoration work is to be shifted to the eastern part of the 4FRI project area, on the Tonto and Apache-Sitgreaves national forests.

But an FSEEE investigation, published in March. showed that Good Earth Power, the company that holds the main

contract to conduct the 4FRI work, has made claims about its readiness not borne out by on-the-ground facts:

- In its February newsletter, Good Earth officials said they would have a mill up and running near the city of Williams by the end of March. But Williams city officials said the company had not yet applied for a building permit.
- Williams officials revoked a permit to allow Good Earth workers to burn wood chips at the site leftover from previous milling operations, after company workers let fires burn unattended in violation of the permit.
- Good Earth officials also said they would have a major composting operation up and running at the Williams site by the end of March. But Williams officials said the company had not yet applied for a rezone needed for the project to go forward.
- Good Earth was providing less biomass than expected to a power plant near Snowflake, Arizona, that is designed to burn woody debris and convert it to electricity.

Since FSEEE published the investigation, Good Earth has applied for a building permit. They also applied for a rezone for the Williams site, although in their latest newsletter Good Earth officials said they have decided to locate the composting operation at a soon-to-be-disclosed site in the Flagstaff area.

Meanwhile, other questions have been raised about Good Earth's claims.

In its April newsletter, the company said it planned to start its own trucking company due to a lack of trucks and hauling equipment in northern Arizona.

However, in a May letter sent to local, state and federal officials, longtime loggers and wood processors in the area said there are plenty of trucks available. Several told the Associated Press they had done work for Good Earth but not been paid.

Good Earth Power is a privately held company based in the Arabian Peninsula nation of Oman. It releases little information about its finances or the various projects it claims to have completed.

The company's website states that its "focus is in delivering projects that benefit human society as well as nature, ranging from the provision of clean renewable energy, to sustainable land development and the preservation of wildlife."

The website says Good Earth is involved in power generation and other community-development projects, largely in Africa. It gives no details about specific projects, however.

Good Earth apparently gains financial backing from the Zawawi Group, a conglomerate with ties to the Omani ruling family.

Members of the 4FRI stakeholders group, which has met regularly over the past several years to forge the 4FRI plan, say they are anxious for the forest restoration work to be done.

Everyone involved in the project agrees that the excess biomass clogging the region's forests will go away—either in out-of-control wildfires or in a managed fashion, by human design. The latter, of course, finds more favor.

Some are losing patience with Good Earth. Pascal Berlioux represents the Eastern Arizona Counties Organization on the 4FRI stakeholders group.

"We are not really interested in flamboyant promises of huge investments and rapid ramp-ups," Berlioux said. "The counties don't want promises. They want to see trees cut." FN





A thicket of trees on the Kiabab National Forest (left) is the type of forest stand that would be thinned under 4FRI. A thinned stand (right) is more likely to survive a wildfire.

2014 Annual Report Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics

Safeguarding Our Forests

Our 2014 program highlights included:

- Protecting old-growth forests. FSEEE successfully appealed a timber sale of fragile, high-elevation forests in the Rocky Mountains. And we battled to end the systematic destruction of old growth on the Tongass National Forest.
- Auditing the BLM. When unpermitted ranching hit the national spotlight, FSEEE hit the ground combing through BLM files to determine the extent and impact of unregulated grazing on public lands.
- Learning from success. We teamed up with one national forest that's getting it right. The result: our new documentary film, Seeing the Forest (see below).

Educating the Public

Our staff responded to public inquiries from around the nation providing guidance and advice on whistleblowing, citizen activism and on-the-ground public lands management. We published three editions of FSEEE's educational newsletter, Forest News, which was distributed through both print and electronic means to over 25,000 recipients. A former staff member, Matt Rasmussen, joined our team in June. His background in journalism resulted in the creation of Ground Truth, an online feature of original investigations and timely news bites. FSEEE staff also participated in a variety of public education events like the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference and forest education days for youth.

Advocating
Ethics

SEEE's membership in 2014 included than 6,000 active members. We issued

FSEEE's membership in 2014 included more than 6,000 active members. We issued several action alerts asking our members and the public to comment on proposed carbon dioxide regulations and forest legislation. Our weekly emails of Forest Service news along with periodic FSEEE updates and newsletters keep our members and the public informed about our work and pressing public lands issues. Staff also attended a number of Forest Service events where they provided public testimony regarding specific projects. In October, FSEEE's Executive Director traveled to the Olympic National Forest where he testified against plans to issue special use permits for military exercises over the forest.

Why do we have national forests? What are they for? For a quarter-century, the Forest Service has struggled to answer these questions. Here at FSEEE, we believe the answer is pretty simple. Forest Service employee Aldo Leopold summed it up well: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." To Leopold, the answer to these questions was not only a scientific matter. Aesthetics—what the land looks like—counts just as much.

In 2014, we began filming *Seeing the Forest*, a 30-minute documentary. The film tells the story of how the nation's most fertile national forest is being restored after 50 years of timber farming. There's a lot of good science in the video. Biologists are returning large logs to streams to reconstruct healthy fish habitat. Foresters are thinning Douglas-fir plantations to restore species diversity and forest structure. But, to

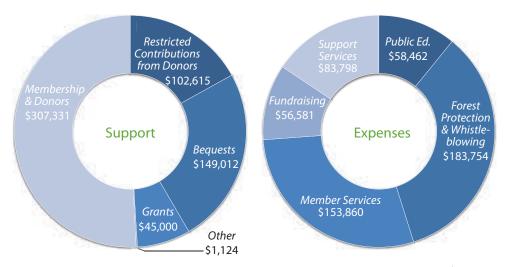


me, the star of the film is the beauty of this lush, coastal rainforest. The aerial views filmed from a drone flying just feet above an old-growth forest show a rarely seen tapestry of tree canopies interlocked above a salmon stream. The forest, as seen, enfolds and nurtures the stream below.

Thanks to all of you for embracing FSEEE and its mission. We couldn't help protect our public land bounty without your help.

—Andy Stahl, Executive Director

2014 FINANCIAL REPORT



Financial Highlights: Net Assests Begining: \$526,192 Net Assests Ending: \$594,819

FSEEE continues to be funded by the generous contributions from our members, whether it be through general membership dues and donations or contributions restricted to specific program work.

We would like to recognize the generous bequests received in 2014 from Paul Johnson, Randall Sanger and Gerald Hollingworth.

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FSEEE is a member of EarthShare Oregon and National. At both levels, EarthShare is a diverse federation of conservation groups that represents us in workplace donation campaigns. EarthShare promotes FSEEE and manages the administratrion of payroll contributions that allow individuals to have money deducted from their paycheck to support FSEEE's work. We use this money to safeguard our national forests in the most effective and efficient way possible. Federal employees giving through the Combined Federal Campaign can also designate their donations directly to FSEEEE.



Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics

PO Box 11615 • Eugene, OR 97440 (541) 484-2692 • Fax (541) 484-3004 fseee@fseee.org • www.fseee.org

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Top: FSEEE Staffer Jennifer Fairbrother hiking in the Columbia Gorge National Recreation Area,

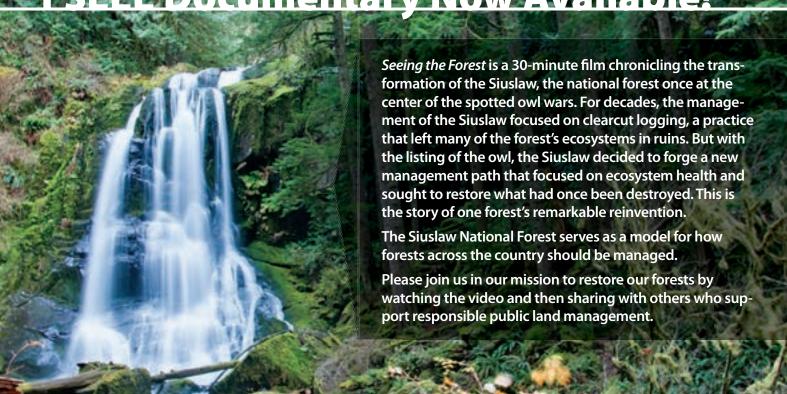
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