

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/14/2020 12:38:28 AM

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Comments: This 21 inch rule proposal, though cloaked in a voluminous pile of research papers, is yet the latest whittling down of nature being allowed to be herself as a forest. For over a century we have altered the forest landscape here in the eastern part of Oregon and have used the forest products because we've needed to use them. Over this very long time we have so many blocks of forest land that have already been cut that we have next to no pre-European invasion forest left here. What we have left, of what we are calling old, is also very small in acreage. But we do have lots of young trees, 100 years and younger. Use these younger trees, don't keep trying to go after the bigger trees when we have so little of them left, and they aren't even all that old .

There is the claim that a forest of older trees, but of a species mix that contains what are considered the more flammable species, needs to be thinned out to reduce the potential for a more intense fire. The problem with this reasoning is that a forest with the larger trees, growing at a spacing unmanaged by humans for the past 100 years is going to be a mesic forest, which creates its own higher relative humidity and lower temperature than the open forests. This is a fire defense.

These older trees, more closed in forests, from which the 21 inch trees are desired to be removed, are habitat for habitat specific insects, fungi, reptiles, birds, rodents, mammals and numerous plant species. This type of habitat that supports these mesic dependent species will lose these habitat specific species if the forest is opened up with the removal of 21 inch trees and smaller.

Take trees from the young forests we've already cut over numerous times and leave the little remaining forests that have trees 21 inches and larger because the people want forests to be natural forests and not just managed tree farms. We want to have the porcupines come back. By the way, is there still a bounty on porcupines? Do the bounty hunters still cut off their noses to get their bounty money? If so, does the bounty money come out of the Forest Service pocket or the Fish and Wildlife Service pocket? I hardly see badgers any more either, or fishers, or fresh water otters and I do a lot of hiking. If we keep altering our forests to be tree farms we will lose it all.

Enough is enough. Man doesn't know how to manage a forest. And we should be getting our trees from forests that have already lost their character as a forest and are just tree farms.