

NEWS

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Timber Industry Greenwashing Extended to Companies Logging Endangered Species Habitats

Portland, OR -- On the heels of similar claims from Willamette Industries, the Plum Creek Timber Company and industry representatives in Washington are painting Plum Creek's logging practices as "certified" and "sustainable." Conservationists responded by questioning how a company that is eliminating endangered species' habitats and old growth could be viewed as "sustainable."

"We are definitely concerned that the public is being misled," said Daniel Hall of American Lands. "Consumers should be aware that the industry's 'Sustainable Forestry Initiative' is far from independent, fails to protect the environment, and is not a credible certification system. Plum Creek's compliance is not the real issue -- virtually any timber company could meet SFI's vague parameters."

The American Forest & Paper Association considers all its members in compliance with the SFI program, which often lets companies set their own standards. These members include Pacific Lumber/Maxxam, Weyerhaeuser, Boise Cascade, Rayonier, and other companies that are logging thousands of acres of old growth and endangered species habitats. Some are receiving Endangered Species Act exemptions known euphemistically as "Habitat Conservation Plans" (HCPs).

Plum Creek's HCP in Western Washington plans for the destruction or degradation of over 20,000 acres of habitat for the threatened northern spotted owl, including 107 owl nest sites. Grizzly bear will lose 71% of their foraging and prey habitat, and a host of other species will lose 3 to 26% of their primary habitat areas. Under the plan, 47% of mature forest stands will be lost.

In Montana, Plum Creek is well known for liquidation logging -- stripping old growth, other forests, and selling prime habitat areas for real estate development. A company executive reportedly stated a few years ago that Plum Creek had no intention of following a sustained yield program. The

Company has also been cited for destroying fish habitat in Idaho, and has harmed Coopers hawk sites in Washington.

While Plum Creek's announcement carefully avoided using the term "certification," an industry lobbyist quoted by the Seattle Times referred to SFI as a "certification system." The accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers audited Plum Creek's compliance with SFI, leading to the claim of "independent" verification.

SFI lacks credible standards for sustainable timber management, protecting and restoring fish and wildlife habitats, and meeting other environmental goals. SFI's few concrete standards tend to mirror state forestry rules.

A far more credible, rigorous, and truly independent forest certification system has been established by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). "Consumers who want to know their wood products come from forests managed to exemplary environmental standards should look for the FSC label," said Mr. Hall. The FSC was established by environmental groups, social groups, and progressive foresters to provide a consistent, independent system for identifying environmentally, socially, and economically well-managed forests.

In the FSC system, regional standards are developed to interpret the international FSC Principles & Criteria and provide specific, performance-based standards and resource protections. The on-the-ground results of landowners' and foresters' management are then evaluated by third-party, FSC-accredited certifiers that have established forestry evaluation programs. Landowners and foresters must meet all basic standards and agree to schedules for correcting any minor problems.

For more information on Plum Creek's HCP, contact Daniel Hall at 503-978-0511 or <wafcfbp@teleport.com>

For more information on AF&PA's SFI program, visit <http://www.americanlands.org>.

For more information on the FSC, visit <http://www.fscus.org>.

American Lands works with conservation organizations and citizens nationwide to protect and recover our wildlife and wild places. Our Forest Biodiversity Program promotes improved resource conservation and restoration on non-federal forestlands in the west, including through research, education, and encouraging more effective public policies and market incentives.