

Harming Imperiled Fish, Wildlife, and Plants

Excerpts from “A Review of the American Forest & Paper Association’s Sustainable Forestry Initiative,” American Lands Alliance, November, 2003.

Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) has been logging habitat needed for the survival and recovery of California spotted owl, Northern goshawk, Pacific fisher and other species that depend on mature forests, including in areas identified by the US Forest Service as spotted owl “Areas of Concern.”ⁱ Even SPI has acknowledged its plans to substantially reduce older and larger tree classes over the next 40 years.ⁱⁱ The California Department of Fish & Game also found that various SPI logging operations would harm the California spotted owl, Northern goshawk, foothill yellow legged frog, mountain yellow legged frog, California red legged frog, willow flycatcher, Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily, and other rare plants.ⁱⁱⁱ

In Canada, Weldwood (a subsidiary of International Paper) is clearcutting mature and old growth forests that provide winter habitat and food sources for imperiled Western woodland caribou in Alberta.^{iv} TimberWest also continues to clearcut old growth and mature forests on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, that are important to the endangered Vancouver Island marmot, of which only 30 individuals remain. The Green Mountain marmot colony’s population dropped to three individuals after TimberWest’s recent logging of adjacent old growth.^v Interfor has also logged habitat sites for the highly imperiled marbled murrelet.^{vi}

The SFI’s requirement for the protection of federally listed species may also not mean much in practice. The US Fish & Wildlife Service found that sedimentation from logging, roading, and stream crossings in one SPI logging plan would harm threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout.^{vii} Weyerhaeuser, Boise Cascade, Plum Creek Timber Co., Pacific Lumber (Maxxam), West Fork Timber, and Simpson Timber Co. also have Incidental Take Permits allowing them to eliminate thousands of acres of habitat for threatened and endangered species. Weyerhaeuser’s permit for the Millicoma Tree Farm in Oregon, for example, allows the company to eliminate the last 16,000 acres of nesting/roosting/feeding habitat for Northern spotted owl on the 209,000 acre property.^{viii} Plum Creek’s permit for the I-90 corridor in Washington envisions the loss of over 20,000 acres of spotted owl habitat, and will have substantial impacts on other species.^{ix} Pacific Lumber’s plan allows substantial logging of imperiled species’ habitats outside of the Headwaters Forest’s larger old growth reserves, including habitat for as many as 340 highly endangered marbled murrelets.^x

Allegheny Wood Products has also been sued for logging in endangered species’ habitats, and reportedly covered-up field surveys that documented endangered species at a logging site.^{xi} Allegheny also purchased the scenic Blackwater Canyon, an inholding in the Mononahela National Forest, in 1997, and plans to log the area despite the Canyon’s importance to the West Virginia flying squirrel, the Cheat Mountain salamander, the Indiana bat, and the Virginia big eared bat.^{xii}

One survey found that only 0.3% of AF&PA member companies’ lands were designated as “special sites” for sensitive species and other special resources per the SFI standards.^{xiii}

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- ⁱ CNPS. 2000. Letter to California Dept. Forestry & Fire Protection: Public Comment for Timber Harvest Plan 4-00-68/CAL-10, Bailey Ridge. September 25, 2000. Foothill Chapter, California Native Plant Society. Sierra Institute for Environmental Resource Advocacy, Nevada City, CA, personal communication, June 2003. See also: Lippe et al (2001).
- ⁱⁱ Graf, M. 2000. Letter to California Dept. Forestry & Fire Protection: Public Comments on Sierra Pacific Industries' Timber Harvest Plan 4-00-73/ELD-39, Tear. October 13, 2000. On behalf of Center For Sierra Nevada Conservation, Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch, & Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center.
- ⁱⁱⁱ DFG reports indicate that SPI is: logging known and potential habitats for spotted owls, goshawks, willow flycatchers, and other species; having a substantial cumulative impacts on habitat for spotted owls, goshawks, and other species; failing to adequately survey for imperiled species; and failing to adequately protect known and potential occurrences of amphibians, rare plants, and other species. Graf (2000) also indicates that another SPI logging plan is likely to be harming California red legged frog. (DFG. 2002a. Letter to California Dept. Forestry & Fire Protection: Nonconcurrency with Review Team Chairperson's Recommendation to Approve Timber Harvest Plan 2-01-143 PLU(1) Pine Creek. March 12, 2002. California Dept. Fish & Game, Sacramento, CA. DFG. 2002b. Letter to California Dept. Forestry & Fire Protection: DFG First Review, 4-02-79/CAL-18 Gale THP. October, 22, 2002. California Dept. Fish & Game, Sacramento, CA. DFG. 2002c. Letter to California Dept. Forestry & Fire Protection: DFG First Review, 4-02-82/CAL-19 North Menzies THP. November, 6, 2002. California Dept. Fish & Game, Sacramento, CA. DFG. 2002d. Letter to California Dept. Forestry & Fire Protection: DFG First Review, 4-02-86/CAL-20 Lower Black THP. California Dept. Fish & Game, Sacramento, CA. DFG. 2002e. Letter to California Dept. Forestry & Fire Protection: DFG First Review, 4-02-73/CAL-14, Airola THP. October 2, 2002. California Dept. Fish & Game, Sacramento, CA. DFG. 2002f. Letter to California Dept. Forestry & Fire Protection: DFG First Review, 4-02-71/CAL-13, Mokey THP. September 27, 2002. California Dept. Fish & Game, Sacramento, CA.)
- ^{iv} Western woodland caribou are listed as endangered under the Alberta Wildlife Act. The Canadian Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada has also listed the caribou as "rare." (Tan (2003).)
- ^v Tan (2003).
- ^{vi} Friends of Clayoquot Sound. Personal communication, September, 2003.
- ^{vii} Lippe et al (2001).
- ^{viii} See, for example, Beak Consultants. 1994. Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Issuance of a Permit for Incidental Take of the Northern Spotted Owl, Millicoma Tree Farm, Weyerhaeuser Co. Beak Consultants, Kirkland, WA.
- ^{ix} See, for example, Raedeke Associates. 1996. Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Issuance of a Permit to Allow Incidental Take of Threatened and Endangered Species, Plum Creek Timber Company LP Lands in the I-90 Corridor. Raedeke Associates, Seattle, WA.
- ^x American Lands (1998) and EPIC et al (2003).
- ^{xi} Friends of Blackwater Canyon, Charleston, WV, personal communication, April, 2003.
- ^{xii} Friends of Blackwater Canyon, Charleston, WV, personal communication, April, 2003.
- ^{xiii} While the survey was conducted prior to the new SFI standards for imperiled species, the SFI required companies to protect threatened and endangered species at that time. "Special sites" may include unique cultural and geological features that are not necessarily habitats for sensitive species. The survey also found that some companies transferred limited amounts of sensitive lands to The Nature Conservancy. (Weyerhaeuser, R. & W. Price. 2001. Survey of Special Sites Owned and Managed by Members and Licensees of the American Forest & Paper Association. Summary Report. National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. Cited in NRDC (2001).)