



OPINION

Trump's BLM is going all-in on resource extraction

The agency's new plan for ecologically significant areas of western Oregon is not responsible forest management.

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The South Fork of the Alsea River runs through western Oregon. Old-growth Douglas fir and western red cedar forests can be found surrounding the river and falls area.

Chloe Goldade, BLM

Imagine the worst landlord you ever had. Then, make it worse. The landlord sells off the wood floor in your dining room, turns a herd of cattle loose on your front lawn and digs up your back yard looking for oil. Now, say hello to Trump's Bureau of Land Management.

The BLM is America's biggest landlord, responsible for over 245 million acres of our public lands. That's more than 10% of the total land in the United States, which means that the management policies of BLM have enormous impacts, especially in the West where it is by far the largest landowner.

The agency's website proclaims: "The Bureau of Land Management's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations." BLM's record at living up to that mission is at best debatable, given the agency's long accommodation of ranching, timber and fossil fuel interests. What's not debatable is that under this administration the BLM intends to go hog-wild on resource extraction.

There is no more extreme example of this than BLM's proposal to revise the Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon BLM lands.

These plans cover management of some of the most diverse and ecologically significant conifer forests in the world, vital for providing clean water, carbon sequestration, and essential habitat for endangered species including northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets, and coho salmon. Their irreplaceable importance was acknowledged in 1995's Northwest Forest Plan, which covered both BLM and Forest Service lands in the range of the northern spotted owl.

That Forest Plan established a network of Late Successional Reserves protected from logging, included an Aquatic Conservation Strategy to protect key watersheds, and

mandated a Survey and Manage program to provide the data needed for stewardship of at-risk species.

BLM never fully committed to these strong conservation protections, and the agency effectively withdrew its lands from the Forest Plan in its 2016 Western Oregon Plan Revision. Since then, it has repeatedly failed to live up to its own weakened standards. Now, it has decided that even those are too restrictive.

On February 19, the agency released its proposed new Resource Management Plan. It would open nearly 2 million acres to clearcutting with no protections for remaining old growth. It would completely eliminate Late Successional Reserves and would further reduce 2016's weakened riparian protections. It would open all currently designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern for re-evaluation, potentially eliminating the designations and opening them up for logging.

And the bottom-line goal? To quadruple the logging volume on Western Oregon BLM forests, returning these public lands to the "robust" levels of the 1960s and 1970s. Those days of rampant and unsustainable clearcutting led directly to the public outcry against the destruction of the Pacific Northwest's ancient forests, and to the necessity for the Northwest Forest Plan. Now BLM wants to turn back the clock as if that destruction never happened.

If the landlords of a big apartment building were proposing something radical — say, the demolition of the top 10 floors — they would certainly call a public meeting, right? They'd provide ample time for tenants to make their voices heard, right? Not if the landlord is the Bureau of Land Management.

The Federal Register notice specifies a mere 30 days for public comments on this radical proposal: All must be received by March 23 and can only be provided digitally or by mail. There will be no public meetings.

We, the people, to whom these forests belong, will be given no opportunity to look officials in the eye and demand that they provide scientific or legal justification for this wholesale abandonment of responsible forest management.

These magnificent forests are not fiber farms. They do not belong to the Bureau of Land Management, or to the logging companies waiting to move in and reap quick profits. They are held in trust for the American people. BLM's proposed new plan would destroy these forests, and that trust.

Still, we can act. The following are the only available ways to comment on the proposed Resource Management Plan:

- Through BLM's website: <https://eplanning.blm.gov>, Project Number DOI-BLM-ORWA-0000-2026-0001-RMP-EIS.
- Via Email: BLM_OR_Revision_Scoping@blm.gov.
- By snail mail: Attention BLM OR930: 1220 SW 3rd Ave, Portland OR 97204.

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