

Resolution to prohibit snag-felling on Forest Service lands to protect at-risk woodpeckers and cavity dependent wildlife

WSACC 2015

Whereas more than 90 species of wildlife in the northwest are associated with snags, including the following Washington State Species of Concern: white-headed woodpecker, black-backed woodpecker, American three-toed woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, Lewis's woodpecker, Vaux's swift, flammulated owl, and boreal owl, and

Whereas dead wood provides important habitat for forest carnivores including American marten and fisher, and rodents like northern flying squirrel, dusky footed woodrat, and Douglas squirrel that are prey for the federally threatened northern spotted owl and state sensitive northern goshawk and great gray owl, and

Whereas woodpeckers are ecological keystone species whose presence is directly linked with biodiversity and ecosystem health in western forests, and

Whereas snag-felling has been acknowledged as ecologically detrimental to these species by research scientists since the 1970s, and

Whereas the black-backed woodpecker has been petitioned for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act due to fire suppression and felling of snags in Oregon and California, and

Whereas the U.S. Forest Service is managed by taxpayer dollars and required to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of their actions on federally listed, proposed, or sensitive species, and

Whereas the U.S. Forest Service, the largest landowner in Washington, is tasked with managing indicator species that rely on snags like white-headed woodpeckers on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, and

Whereas the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest allows snag felling by visitors and woodcutters in active nesting territories of these aforementioned listed, sensitive, and indicator species, and

Whereas snag losses of up to 82% have been documented on portions of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest due to woodcutting, and these snag losses are similar to those following salvage logging and have likely contributed to territory abandonment in the white-headed woodpecker, American three-toed woodpecker, and black-backed woodpecker, and

Whereas snag felling on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest has been linked with mortality or nest failure in the white-headed woodpecker, American three-toed woodpecker, and black-backed woodpecker,

Be it resolved that the Washington State Audubon Conservation Committee recommends that all Washington State Audubon chapters actively oppose policies that permit snag-felling on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest in particular, and in the Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service (Region 6) in general. We call on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest and Region 6 of the U.S. Forest Service to ban on snag-felling by the public and enact fines for individuals found felling snags. Once these policies are enacted, we also call on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest to place

signage on at least all primary Forest Service roads (Numbered Forest Service roads ending in "00", like the 1500 Road, 1600 Road, etc.) informing the public of this policy. With small, temporary exceptions due to timber sales or similar activities, we call on Region 6 of the Forest Service to restrict home firewood gathering to downed wood only within 100 ft of clearly designated, maintained Forest Service gravel roads to protect downed woody debris that is important habitat for forest carnivores and small rodent prey species.