



Columbia Gorge Audubon Society
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A PRESS RELEASE from the Columbia Gorge Audubon Society:

Congress designated the White Salmon National Wild and Scenic River thirty three years ago, and since then it has become one of the most popular recreational rivers in the Northwest. However, US Forest Service management of this river has been questioned and criticized right from the start. The Forest Service has only purchased about 150 acres of the approximately 1,800 acres within the management boundaries. Furthermore, the Forest Service has failed to complete a land exchange that they admit was central to their river management plan, resulting in most of the forests within the Wild and Scenic boundaries being clearcut. Compounding this problem, since the failed land exchange, the Forest Service has not attempted to bring private timber lands within the river management corridor into public ownership. The Forest Service has likewise done little or nothing to prevent the short platting of properties within the management area, leading to inconsistent residential development. For these reasons - and others too numerous to name - the Forest Service deserves a failing grade for their management of this river.

Weyerhaeuser Corporation is now in the process of liquidating their holdings in the Mid-Columbia region. Copper West Real Estate is offering 240 sensitively located acres of Weyerhaeuser land within and contiguous to the White Salmon Wild and Scenic River boundaries. This land is being offered for "highest and best use" and with options on lot size; two hallmarks of forest lands soon to be converted to residential development.

It appears that Weyerhaeuser's exit plan is to market their forest lands for conversion, a scheme that will discourage timberland buyers, (they are less able to compete with "highest and best use" buyers) and encourage real estate speculators and developers. Since Weyerhaeuser would not be doing the conversion to development themselves, they would avoid paying back taxes for conversion and pass those taxes on to the residential lot buyers, who would be doing the actual conversion.