

## Public sale needed

Columbia Gorge Audubon Society has asked U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, and U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Butler, for congressional intervention and investigation of Forest Service neglect and mismanagement of the White Salmon and Klickitat National Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Weyerhaeuser is selling their timberlands in the Mid-Columbia through Copper West Real Estate, including 240 acres straddling the White Salmon National Wild and Scenic River, and they want development prices. According to Copper West, a residential developer has made an offer. Will this property be brought into public ownership as it should be, or will it be used for residential development? Here are some predictions:

Copper West and Weyerhaeuser want development value, but worry about bad PR that goes with marketing timberland for conversion to residential development along a Wild and Scenic River. Not something a "Tree Growing Company" should be doing. They will claim the Forest Service doesn't want to buy or will only pay fair market value and hunker down and see if this blows over.

Audubon's efforts move the Forest Service to talk with Copper West, but this looks like a "cover your behind" gesture to us. The Forest Service will be looking for excuses not to purchase this land. And they know them all, because they have been there, done that before.

We believe the developer will likely urge county commissioners to oppose bringing this land into public ownership so he can buy and develop it. And

## Our Readers Write

he probably wants county taxpayers to finish improving Oak Ridge Road to raise lot value.

This Weyerhaeuser property is a fraction of their land sale, but will have a huge impact on the White Salmon National Wild and Scenic River. The Forest Service and Weyerhaeuser need to take a breath and begin negotiating in good faith to bring this property into public ownership. Fear of public exposure is the only thing keeping this timberland conversion from happening. Trying to get these people to do the right thing is like herding cats to an annual bath. It would be hilarious if it weren't so pathetic.

**Dave Thies**

President, Columbia Gorge  
Audubon Society

Weyerhaeuser 240 AC' along the  
White Salmon NAT'L Wild & Scenic R.