

12-4-2019

## The Enterprise welcomes letters to the editor

# Two corporations, just one WS River

By DAVE THIES  
Guest Commentary

PacifiCorp and the Yakama Nation have agreed to a right of first offer on White Salmon River property below the former Condit Hydroelectric Project site in Klickitat County, but this agreement does not offer a solution for PacifiCorp's lands that are most vulnerable to residential development. PacifiCorp recognizes the public's interest in what happens downstream, now they need to recognize that the public would be appalled if they sold their upstream properties to developers. When PacifiCorp leaves our community, we hope their legacy will demonstrate that they cared enough about the eventual fate of all of their property along the White Salmon River to assure that it would not be sold to residential developers.

Meanwhile, the Columbia Gorge Audubon Society has met with Weyerhaeuser Corp. regarding the eventual fate of their 240 acres farther upstream. We explained why their marketing strategy can only result in residential development of this property because timber managers cannot compete against developers for land unless they are acting as a go-between for a developer or intend to develop themselves. Weyerhaeuser cannot wash their hands of responsibility for the negative effects that their marketing strategy would have on the White Salmon National Wild and Scenic River.

Weyerhaeuser asked us for a proposal and this is what we told them:

First, Weyerhaeuser needs to accept that this river corridor received its Congressional designation as Wild and Scenic for a good reason and that their property should qualify as a special place that they need to respect, just as they claim they would on their website.

Second, real respect goes beyond words. Weyerhaeuser needs to take the initiative to contact the U.S. Forest Service, which has management responsibility on the White Salmon National Scenic River, and explain that they would like to bring their land into public ownership to prevent residential development, to keep this land in timber production for future local jobs, to provide open space for hunting, and to balance this with conservation that will protect fish and wildlife habitat. The Forest Service will listen to the largest timber company in the United States.

Third, when intermediary buyers (who provide a "bridge" between buyer and seller) realize that Weyerhaeuser and the Forest Service are talking about bringing the 240 acres into public ownership, they should become interested in facilitating the deal. The Forest Service and this billion dollar corporation should be able to make this happen if they want to.

Fourth, it all starts with Weyerhaeuser withdrawing their 240 acres along the White Salmon National Scenic River from their sale of 4,000 acres in Klickitat County.

This is the only proposal that will work for both Weyerhaeuser and the river. Weyerhaeuser promised to consider it. We hope that they will embrace it.

*Dave Thies is president of the White Salmon-based Columbia Gorge Audubon Society.*