

The fact is, the White Salmon River is the most threatened tributary river in the Mid-Columbia region, and the primary threat is residential development. Washington is not Oregon. We do not have LCDC statewide planning. Klickitat County opted out of Washington's Growth Management Act and this county is notorious for allowing 2 acre lots along and around this river, especially for land situated as yours is with views of the valley and Mount Hood. The fact that the Klickitat County Road Department has greatly improved Oak Ridge Road, providing access to your property, speaks volumes, as they always are willing to provide infrastructure for development at public expense. Just down the road from your property, developers Don Struck (former county commissioner) and Des Verley are doing a residential development, and farther down the road SDS Corporation has put in a development style road through one of their properties down to the river. Six S Corporation owns land just north of your property and it extends to the river. The Stevensons use this company for development purposes. Ross Henry, of Copper West Real Estate, told us that Tom Stevenson has already made an offer on part of your property. Timberland conversions to residential development have already occurred nearby, and it is apparent that more is in the offing. The Weyerhaeuser property is centrally located in this area of potential development, and therefore is in a position to tip the scales one way or the other.

The marketing strategy of Copper West is part and parcel of converting timberland to residential development. They are offering options on lot sizes and are seeking the highest bidder for your property. As timberland buyers yourselves, you must understand that timberland buyers cannot afford to compete with developers for land. We explained to Tom and Scott that Weyerhaeuser cannot wash its hands of responsibility for what eventually befalls this land - even though you are not doing the conversion to development yourself - when your realtor demands development dollars for your property. This marketing strategy makes you culpable.

During a back and forth with Jim and Scott, it came out that Weyerhaeuser may sell some of your land to SDS. We have trepidations about such a sale. Given the fact that the Stevensons have been involved in development in the past - and it appears that this will continue, especially in the volatile land along this river - selling to SDS or Six S will likely result in eventual residential development, even if under the guise of a timberland sale for timber management. For instance, land can be managed for timber production to take advantage of tax breaks while development plans, phases, infrastructure, marketing strategies and a zone change is ready. Then, when all of the ducks are in a row, the sales can commence. When lots are sold, the back taxes involved in conversion are passed on to the lot buyers. We have seen this kind of behavior before; it is standard operating procedure hereabouts when conversions occur. Likewise, other private buyers with their own "conservation schemes" tend to come forward when sensitively located property along the river comes up for sale. Your realtor has probably been approached by some of these people. Are they fronting for developers, are they themselves developers, or are they sincere? Regardless, these schemes provide short term forest use and conservation "solutions" at best, but they degrade as the buyers' "other uses" of the land expand over time. Private land also restricts or limits public use. The Forest Service admits that acquisition of land is the only way that they can manage this Wild and Scenic River, and