Save the spotted owl from greedy clearcutters and corrupt government agencies

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
07 September 2008

Culture Change Letter #199

You really can help save the spotted owl from greedy clearcutters and corrupt government agencies. Eco-activists are normally outnumbered and underfunded, but do win sometimes, if public opinion is mobilized.

I ran into one of my favorite dreadlocked biologists today, who gave me a disturbing flier during a break in her renaissance flute concertizing. My blood began to boil, as I pictured the redwood forest's destruction being cooked up by the clearcutters and their friends in California government.

Added to the form letter I signed and gave her for delivery at the hearing in Sacramento on Wednesday morning was this line: "It is imperative that road building be ended in the forests for the sake of wildlife and future generations." (Or something like that; it's at the beach now while I'm still in cyber caffeinville. Make that a pilsner.) Please add anything to the form letter below; it makes it more authentic.

Send to board.public.comments@fire.ca.gov. If you are reading this after the 5 PM California-time deadline of Monday Sept. 8, please email after that to this address until late Tuesday: noel "at" wildcalifornia "dot" org. FACSIMILE: (916) 657-5386. Thanks on behalf of the poor owls and all creatures, including us, for we are all connected.

The following is the plea from the Environmental Protection Information Center to save northern spotted owl habitat. EPIC has fought for the redwood forests for 31 years.

Greetings EPIC Alert List Members,

Please help prevent dangerous rule changes that could further dismantle protections for Northern Spotted Owls and their habitat in California. California's Forest Practice Rules are already far too weak; now the Board of Forestry is poised to adopt the timber industry's vision for unregulated logging. Please take a moment to register your opposition today.

Under current rules, logging is allowed within 500 feet of an active nest. Not even a single acre of habitat needs to be retained outside of this core area. This does not provide adequate space for the threatened NSO to recover from decades of liquidation logging.

Now our state agencies plan to adopt new rules proposed by the California Forestry Association (corporate timber's lobbying group). These changes will alter habitat definitions and allow corporate contractors to conduct surveys that only state designated biologists could carry out before. These "Qualified Spotted Owl Consultants" will not only survey for the owls, but also determine the future of spotted owl habitat. The result is likely to be more logging and less habitat.

California's public agencies are obligated to act in the best interest of the public. It is not in the public's interest to promote extinction.

Recent studies indicate that Northern Spotted Owls (NSO) face even more challenges for survival than predicted when they were listed under the Endangered Species Act. These proposed rule changes fly in the face of the agencies' mandates:

1. It is the state of California's legal obligation to protect wildlife.

2. The rule changes will not prevent "take" of NSOs as the law requires, but will allow the timber industry to kill owls by destroying their habitat.

3. The Department of Fish and Game is improperly delegating their responsibility to protect wildlife to the California Department of Forestry and Fire (CalFIRE), which lacks biological expertise.

4. CalFIRE, in turn, is also improperly delegating the state's authority to private industry.

These rule changes are bad news for owl recovery. These changes will lead to increased loss of habitat at a time when the owls face rising threats to their survival from multiple sources. These changes are particularly inappropriate while the federal government is pulling the rug from under the species with a bogus recovery plan, cuts to critical habitat, and a

proposal to allow the Forest Service to more easily log owl habitat.

Please take a minute to review and edit the included sample letter and email it to board.public.comments@fire.ca.gov by September 8.

Sincerely,

Kerul Dyer and EPIC staff

Wildcalifornia.org

SAMPLE LETTER:

TO: Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

Attn: Christopher Zimny

Regulations Coordinator

P.O. Box 944246

Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

Submitted via e-mail- board.public.comments@fire.ca.gov

Return receipt requested

RE: EVALUATION FOR "TAKE" AVOIDANCE OF NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL, 2008

Dear Board of Forestry and Fire Protection,

I am writing to submit comments that strongly oppose the proposed rule changes concerning the "take" of the Northern Spotted Owl.

As a public agency, the Department of Forestry and Fire is obligated to protect the public's interest. It is not in the public's interest to promote extinction.

Because the Northern Spotted Owl faces threats to its survival from multiple sources, it is important that protections be strengthened, not weakened, to support their recovery. I am concerned that if these rules are changed as proposed, rare habitat available in California will be logged and the owls will suffer.

The Department of Fish and Game is improperly delegating their responsibility to wildlife by handing over their consultation function to the California Department of Forestry and Fire (CalFIRE). Under the proposed rules, CalFIRE would further delegate the state's authority to private industry itself. The newly defined Qualified Spotted Owl Consultants would allow private foresters to do the job of trained biologists. These changes create a dangerous vulnerability where the state has a responsibility to protect both wildlife and scientific integrity.

I understand that this is happening at a time when the federal government is dramatically reducing effective protections for NSO across their range, including their California habitat.

Sincerely...

Get the above letter in PDF to sign and fax:
wildcalifornia.org

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Get alerts from EPIC, Environmental Protection Information Center:

wildcalifornia.org

Your tax dollars at work (oy yoy yoy):

bof.fire.ca.gov