

Hanging by a Thread

Eagle Creek

Leprechaun Cascadia



Hanging out in "The Pod" high above the Eagle timber sale.

21 June 2000

On April 14, representatives of the Oregon Natural Resources Council, the American Lands Alliance and the Cascadia Forest Alliance walked into the office of Harv Forsgren, Region Six supervisor for the US Forest Service. This was to be the last meeting to determine the fate of the controversial Eagle timber sales in the Mount Hood National Forest. We approached Harv with the support of three national legislatures, two city councils, dozens of conservation groups and even the logging company itself. We presented him with a packet of evidence the size of a phone book. What he gave us in return was a federal decree more shocking than we ever could have imagined. Not only did Harv refuse to cancel the Eagle timber sales, he actually stated he would like to see the timber harvest on public lands increase, that he would advocate for logging in late secessional reserves and that he believes logging in roadless areas improves forest health. This comes from the man who controls all federal lands in the Northwest, a self described “conservation leader.”

Two days later I stood at the beginning of Forest Service Road 4614, access to 500 acres of threatened RARE II roadless area. With a 100-foot tape measure and a scientific calculator, I leaned on a locked heavy steel gate, punching numbers, grumbling loudly. The Forest Service built the gate in 1997 to block public access to the logging site. My opinion? The Forest Service cannot selectively administer admittance to public forests. If the road remains closed to citizens, it should be blocked to loggers as well.

May 7, 1 p.m. We hid in the brush 100 yards uphill from the gate, sorting climbing lines, carabiners and over 1,000 feet of four millimeter cord. “Goddammit!” I griped aloud. “Where is the center post (to the gate), the snow has melted, and it should be back by now. It’s part of the design, so why haven’t they put it back yet!” Vile weather was undoubtedly affecting my spirits.

Minutes later, as though by command, a Forest Service work truck arrived at the gate and loud metal clanging filled the forest. Bob crept quietly down to spy on them. Moments later he returned. “What the hell are they doing down there?”

“They’re putting up the center post,” he whispered back. I grinned. These things seem to happen more often than luck would account for.

At 9 p.m., the Forest Service parked at the gate and waited (for us?). Convinced they were on to us, my heart sank. Mysteriously, they drove away two hours later, and we sprang into action.

Outfitted in waterproof kayaking gear, I battled up snow-laden trees, set the anchors and rappelled back down to the ground. Sarcastically, I thanked the Goddess for unleashing a late winter’s storm on the night of our debut.

At 2 a.m., I stood on the cargo net platform in the middle of the road. Relentlessly assailed by cruel sleet, shivering uncontrollably, I yelled a command to the driver, “Up!” The car pulled forward and I rose skyward 20 feet, 40 feet, 70 feet... “Stop!” I screamed, and my ascent halted. The ground crew scrambled to tie off the support cords to the gate. The tow line slacked out, and I held my breath as the structure settled into place. I spent the coldest night of my life in sopping wet clothes.

The next morning I awoke a frozen astronaut, floating in this surreal contraption, suspended half-way between life and a bone shattering death. High winds whipped the platform in wild sickening circles. I found myself high in anxiety and low in courage. I prayed for my life. I cursed the Forest Service for forcing us to resort to these ridiculous suicidal tactics. I thought about how many mainstream people view our activities as some sort of recreational pursuit, and I cursed them as well.

What we are doing up here is important, and it is righteous. It is not, however, fun. The position we have taken to protect these trees is deadly serious. By upholding illegal laws such as the Salvage Rider, the Forest Service has provoked a life-threatening showdown with the citizens whose interests it should be protecting. The Forest Service has ignored science to justify logging in this sensitive watershed.

Despite the extreme risks of our situation, our volunteers are fearless. We have committed ourselves in mind, body and soul to protecting this pristine native forest. This is our drinking water supply, and it is our public forest!

Activists, citizens everywhere, we invite you to come participate in the Eagle Creek direct action. Check our new, cutting-edge road blockade design, "The Pod." Support our fight to stop one of the worst timber sales in Oregon. Together we can, and will, stop the rape of our public lands.

For more information, contact the Cascadia Forest Alliance, POB 4946, Portland, OR 97208; (503) 2414879; www.cascadiaforestalliance.org.



It's been along haul, but with lots of hard work and the help of some open-minded professors, Nate Madsen has completed his educational goal of a Bachelors of Science in Physical Science while sitting in a redwood in Northern California. Nate has been in his treesit for a year and a half.

photo courtesy friends of Nair

The Ted K Archive

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