

Sight Lines



NEWSLETTER OF THE SELKIRK-PRIEST BASIN ASSOCIATION

FALL 1991/WINTER 1992



HOW MUCH CAN IT TAKE? Massive clear cuts scar the Trapper Creek drainage in this view from above Green Bonnet Mountain. IDOL plans a huge new cut here.

SPBA Poses Historic Challenge to IDOL Logging State To Log Trapper Creek

FOR YEARS, heavy logging on state lands within the Trapper Creek drainage has raised concerns from Priest Basin residents.

Those concerns are well founded. Since 1967 the Idaho Department of Lands has logged off more than half of the acreage within the drainage — with damaging effects on soils, wildlife habitat and the fragile fisheries in Trapper Creek.

Now IDOL proposes yet another timber sale in the drainage, and SPBA is going before the Idaho Land Board

to argue that logging be stopped until the drainage has time to heal — the first challenge ever to a proposed sale.

In mid December, members of SPBA's Forestry Committee made the long journey to Boise to talk one-on-one with Land Board members.

The Board, which oversees management of state lands under a constitutional mandate to enhance the Idaho school endowment fund, is made up of the state's five highest elected officials: the governor, auditor, attorney

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Huck Bay Hearing Yet to Come

Delayed Hearing Finally Goes Before Planners

MORE THAN three months after it was originally scheduled, a hearing on the proposed development of Priest Lake's Huckleberry Bay has finally been set for 7:30 p.m. Jan. 30 at the Bonner County Courthouse in Sandpoint.

Although county officials had expected the hearing by the Planning and Zoning Commission to be held in October, delays in rounding up comments on a new site characterization report by the developer pushed the hearing back.

The January hearing may well be the culminating event for Huckleberry Bay, at which time the planning commission could approve or deny the adventure-some proposal by Spokane developer Don Barbieri's Huckleberry Bay Co. to build a large development on Priest Lake.

Barbieri is seeking to build 100 dwelling units — with 73 of them on the waterfront — a store, public boat docks, gas pumps and fire station. He's withholding several hundred acres for

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Announcing: A Way to Save Money and Help SPBA

WOULD YOU like to make a substantial financial contribution to the Selkirk-Priest Basin Association — yet save money yourself?

If that sounds like a riddle with an impossible answer, it's not. SPBA directors this month decided to participate in the Affinity Fund long-distance telephone service.

Now, SPBA members or friends who switch to the Affinity Fund long-distance service will see a full 8 percent of their telephone bill contributed back to SPBA.

And better yet, they'll almost certainly save money on their long-distance telephone bills — savings that range from 5 to 35 percent over most AT&T, MCI and US Sprint programs.

How is it possible that Affinity users can save money while seeing a large portion of their phone bill donated to SPBA? The answer is that by purchasing in volume, Affinity Fund obtains its service from the major carriers at a large discount ... and passes the savings on to its customers.

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Chairman's Message

Learning the Lessons of Our Past

THE NATIONAL Forest System was established around the turn of the century in reaction to rampant overcutting of the mid-western forests of Michigan, Wisconsin and other states. Leaders of the time recognized the importance of preserving large tracts of intact forest and keeping a balance in the environment.

Our American leaders had as a stark example the experiences of Europe, where the effects of excessive logging were well recognized by the mid 19th century. One of the prime concerns then, as today, was the effect of overcutting on watersheds. As the American Association for the Advancement of Science stated in a resolution passed in 1874:

"There is great danger that, if not provided against, the fearful changes may happen to our largest rivers which have taken place on large rivers of Italy, France and Spain, caused by the destruction of the forests from which came their tributaries. These forests had retained the water from the snows and rains of winter and spring, and supplied it gradually during the summer. Since their destruction, the rain falling in the rainy season comes down almost at once, bringing with it earth and stones, deluging the banks of the larger streams, but leaving a very insufficient provision for evaporation and against the consequent drought of summer. Thus the forests about the sources of our great rivers shall be cut away ... to the great injury of the country through which they flow."

Today here in the Priest River Basin we cannot ignore the lessons of the past. We can clearly see the many effects in our own area, including high summer water temperatures in the Priest River and the Lower West Branch, unstable stream channels, downcutting of streambeds as in Goose Creek, and perhaps even weather patterns. A mature forest returns about 30



percent of the precipitation to the atmosphere through evapotranspiration. With reduced cover, that 30 percent becomes runoff, short-circuiting the hydrologic cycle and overwhelming streams. Since flowing water travels out of the area quickly, the result can even be a drier summer climate than Nature evolved. These and other effects are not well understood, although their potential to cause radical changes, especially when viewed on global scale, is obvious.

Unfortunately, the ultimate end of these "cumulative effects" cannot be precisely predicted. The time scale for cumulative change may span generations, thus blurring the sharpness of the loss. If the cutthroat had disappeared from the

Priest River in the space of a year, something might have been done. If the old white pine loggers could have known the price of clear pine boards would rival that of fine cabinet-grade hardwoods, maybe the old trees Priest Basin would not have been made into matchsticks at a fraction of the value they could yield today.

Now is the time to slow down and make sure that our "culture of consumption" and desire for short-term profit does not push local and global ecosystems to a traumatic threshold. We are all responsible for the pressure on our natural resources, not just those people who are engaged in their extraction. We should have a greater fear of harming the natural environment — OUR environment — than losing our "mountains of things."

Bruce Brockway

Bruce Brockway
SPBA Chairman

Affinity Fund

(Continued from page 1)

The Affinity Fund was expressly designed to help nonprofit groups with fundraising efforts. Dozens of groups around the country are now participating, making Affinity one of the largest buyers of long-distance phone service.

"We're tremendously excited by this program," said SPBA's newly appointed development director David Boswell. "Affinity Fund provides SPBA members and friends a way to save money and at the same time contribute to the cause of environmental excellence in the Basin."

SPBA Executive Director Chris Bessler switched to the Affinity Fund earlier this year, and he reported "flaw-

less service" along with lower rates.

"Switching took only five minutes to fill out a service request form. I was using Sprint before, and actually the only change I have noticed is I get my long-distance phone bill from Affinity now. There is no change in dialing procedure, and the sound quality is crystal clear. Affinity has 24-hour operators, instant credit for misdirected calls, credit card calling and all that."

Bessler added that he has found an additional savings because Affinity bills in six-second increments, instead of rounding calls up to the next minute.

"Last month I had a call that cost 5 cents. I couldn't believe it," said Bessler. "With other companies I would have been billed for the first minute and paid 50 cents. This six-second billing is a

major plus."

SPBA members in any state can sign up for the Affinity Fund. There is a \$4 to \$5 fee, depending on location, to switch carriers. But Affinity offers this guarantee: If within 90 days you become dissatisfied for any reason, Affinity will pay to switch to the carrier of your choice.

In the coming months, SPBA volunteers will be calling members to tell them more about Affinity Fund and ask them to join. SPBA is also very interested in signing up businesses, and will be asking members to recruit friends who share their concern about the Priest Basin.

Anyone who wants more information or would like to sign up now can call Boswell in Spokane at 509/448-3020, or Bessler in Sandpoint at 208/263-3573. Or drop a note to SPBA. •

CeleBasin Crowd Makes Fundraiser A Success

NOT COLD NOR RAINDROPS nor unseasonable fall breezes could prevent some 200 Selkirk-Priest Basin members and friends from enjoying the Second Annual "CeleBasin" Sept. 8 at Elkins Resort on Priest Lake.

Despite uncooperative weather, the CeleBasin — SPBA's annual Celebration of the Basin — was a success, said SPBA Executive Director Chris Bessler.

The event is SPBA's version of an Earth Day celebration for the Priest Basin, featuring live music, a silent auction of quality merchandise, information booths, kids games, food and drinks, a door prize and raffle and more.

Due in part to the cool weather, attendance stayed about the same as last year's CeleBasin, but more tickets were sold and the silent auction was expanded. The upshot was CeleBasin raised a little more than \$4,100 for SPBA — about \$900 more than last year.

The big winner of the day was Lisa Hawdon of Priest River, who won the doorprize of a weekend at Elkins Resort and \$100. Marie Brockway won the raffle prize, a fishing trip for four with Rich Lindsey of Summit Adventures.

"Once again, thanks are certainly due to the many people who supported CeleBasin by buying tickets, donating the excellent silent auction goods, volunteering to help and, of course, coming to have some fun," said Bessler. Special thanks are due to Elkins Resort and Mike and Tammy Waggoner and their newly renamed band, Northern Lights.

SPBA directors and volunteers are already looking at ways to make next year's CeleBasin bigger and better, both as a fundraiser and a fun event for people to attend. If you have suggestions, write to SPBA, P.O. Box 181, Coolin, ID 83821.



Harry Batey on SPBA Board

HARRY BATEY, A CHARTER member of the Selkirk-Priest Basin Association, has been appointed to the association's board of directors.

The appointment is in a way a homecoming for Batey, 69. He was the last chairman of the old Priest Lake Coalition, a precursor of SPBA, and has been actively involved in SPBA since its inception.

Batey has had a home by the Thoroughfare at the north end of Priest Lake since 1952. He was professor of chemistry at Washington State University from 1951 to 1985. Among his lifetime of experiences, he was a B-17 pilot in England during World War II and flew 35 missions over Germany.

After Batey retired from WSU he and wife Kate moved to their Priest Lake home full time. They winter there, too, at which time their only access is by snowcat.

Batey said he looks forward to sitting as a SPBA Director simply because "it's a worthwhile cause. I led a busy and active life and I can still do all sorts of things. This is something I want to do to try to save the lake."

Public Comments Sought

County to Rewrite Comprehensive Plan

AFTER YEARS of stop-and-go efforts, Bonner County has launched a year-long process to rewrite the county comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance.

This winter county commissioners and members of the planning and zoning commission have held a series of public hearings and workshops aimed at producing a major revision of the zoning ordinance. SPBA has been monitoring the process, and submitted five pages of detailed comments on a draft of the ordinance.

The ordinance is the document which enforces the goals of the comprehensive plan. Planner Sandy Cobb said she wanted to rework the ordinance first because of the immediate need to increase the fee schedule for work performed by the planning department, plus streamline the entire subdivision and permitting process with the aim of reducing the work load on the department. The department is badly understaffed; with less than half the staff of the Kootenai County planning department, Bonner County last year processed 248 new home permits — only 12 fewer than Kootenai.

The ordinance, when approved, will be revised once the comprehensive plan is rewritten. The comprehensive plan is the major document to guide planning decisions in the county, and Cobb has crafted a lengthy public involvement process that is already under way. The planning department recently sent out a survey with tax bills to every property owner in the county, and about 4,000 have been returned.

Now the department is forming citizen subcommittees in seven areas of the county to consider the comprehensive plan; there will likely be subcommittees for Priest Lake and Priest River-Blanchard areas. Cobb will accept until the end of January nominations from people interested in sitting on these subcommittees. The subcommittees will identify goals and objectives for their areas, and planning department staff will use this information to draw up a draft of the new plan.

In the spring the planning commission will hold a series of workshops to help draw up a draft of the plan, which will then be submitted for public hearings before the planners and the county commissioners in July and August. Cobb hopes the new plan can be enacted by October.

SPBA members and friends are encouraged to watch the local media for notice of these workshops and hearings, and to contribute their comments. •

The Spring issue of Sightlines will include a detailed look at the comprehensive plan.

Huck Bay

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unspecified future development, which may include a golf course, resort and associated amenities.

SPBA directors and volunteers are now vigorously preparing for the hearing. SBPA has retained environmental lawyer Chuck Sheroke of Coeur d'Alene, established the Huckleberry Bay Legal Fund, and urges citizens to send in comments and attend the Jan. 30 hearing.

Much of the hearing will likely be devoted to the site characterization report prepared for Barbieri by the environmental consulting firm Intermountain Resources. The report claims the high-density development which Barbieri proposes is within the carrying capacity of the land.

Yet many of the comments offered by state agencies question portions of the site characterization report.

The Idaho Fish & Game Department stated the report and conceptual land use plan "fails to adequately address impacts to wildlife habitat or populations." The Idaho Department of Water Resources said the sewage retention lagoon "is not adequately sized" and estimated volumes of sewage "may be on the conservative side." The Division of Environmental Quality asked for installation of an additional monitoring well, survey work and a description of additional groundwater characteristics.

The most comprehensive comments came from the engineering firm Budinger & Associates of Spokane, which was contracted by the county to provide an independent analysis of the report. Engineer F.C. Budinger responded that "the report offers very subjective opinions regarding the suitability of the site for land application of waste effluent. The scope of the report appears to be limited to general discussions for planning purposes, and apparently is not intended to quantify the critical items."

While Budinger said he "tend(s) to concur with the authors and their conclusion," he poses many questions:

- Budinger raises several concerns about the soil types on the Huckleberry property, and especially questions the method of making borings by a well

Sheroke Retained as Legal Counsel

MORE THAN 20 SPBA members and friends have contributed \$1,190 to the Huckleberry Bay Legal Fund since its inception in October, and SPBA is putting the contributions to good use with the hiring of Coeur d'Alene attorney Charles Sheroke.

Sheroke, who specializes in environmental law, will work on Huckleberry Bay prior to the Jan. 30 hearing, and longer should SPBA be forced to carry a challenge forward.

Sheroke is a dedicated environmental lawyer and agreed to perform the work for SPBA at half his usual hourly rate — plus two gallons of huckleberries. SPBA Legal

Committee Chairman Jules Gindraux has already paid the huckleberry debt.

"As for the Legal Fund, we offer sincere thanks to those who have contributed," Gindraux said. "We're going to carry this forward as long as this giant development on Huckleberry Bay threatens Priest Lake.

"And that means we badly need donations," he added. "I can only say that your contribution to the Legal Fund is one way you can take a concrete action to help save Priest Lake."

See the *Alert!* in this issue, or mail your donation to: SPBA, Attn: Huckleberry Bay Legal Fund, P.O. Box 181, Coolin, ID 83821. •

driller to examine soils. "As such deposits are difficult to identify, even with auger drilling and undisturbed sampling, it is suggested that the soil be examined with deep backhoe pits."

- In evaluating the effects of sewage disposal on the groundwater, and ultimately the lake, Budinger suggests obtaining more detailed hydrologic data.

- Budinger points out that the model for the land application system is a site in western Washington, yet the differences between the two sites are not known. He questions whether the native vegetation will provide the "evapotranspiration and plant uptake" required to prevent nutrients from reaching the lake.

Although Budinger concludes that "the report provides an effective, albeit subjective, evaluation of the site and its potential for safe sewage disposal," he adds an important qualifier: "I believe that decisions as important as these should be based upon qualitative factual data, rather than expert opinions."

SPBA directors noted that with the county's own expert analyst calling for more substantive data, the planning commission may table the final decision on Huckleberry Bay to allow for more comprehensive soil testing at the site.

"As a minimum, that would certainly be necessary," said SPBA Director Gordon West. "But all the soil testing in the world still won't address the big issue behind Huckleberry Bay: Such a large development in an undeveloped site will destroy the natural character of

Priest Lake. The county comprehensive plan clearly states that new developments must locate in areas of compatible uses. On that basis alone, the time to say 'No' to Barbieri is now — not after a bunch of new reports."

West said it is not the sewage treatment plant per se which is objectionable, but rather the creation of a huge new load of nutrients near a shallow bay. No one can deny the development will degrade the lake environment; ultimately the only argument Barbieri can make is degradation will be held to an "acceptable" level.

"But what's acceptable?" West asked. "Given the fact that the lake is extremely clean, small amounts of nutrients can have large effects. Priest Lake is not Coeur d'Alene Lake, which is so polluted from heavy metals it's questionable the fish are safe to eat. And the Priest is not Pend Oreille Lake, where two years of tests have conclusively shown the near-shore areas are suffering marked degradation from sewage and pollution.

"Priest Lake is our chance to do it right," West said. "It's not easy, but the job of the planning commission is just that — to plan, to shape and channel the growth of Bonner County in ways that maintain a natural environment most other parts of the nation lost decades ago. We can understand Barbieri's desire to make a lot of money off a big development, but the citizens for whom the planning commission speaks should not have to sacrifice Priest Lake for that." •

The Struggle for Huckleberry Bay

A FULL-PAGE AD appearing in the May 24, 1984 edition of the Priest River Times extolls a grandiose plan by a Hong Kong-based corporation to develop the Huckleberry Bay and the Two Mouth Creek drainage at the upper end of Priest Lake. Included is a 20-year scheme to build a recreation-based city larger than present-day Sandpoint.

The essence of the plan was to offer some of the most pristine water and land in the American West as a playground for the wealthy jet set. In the deal of the century, a divided Idaho State Land Board agreed to a land swap to give the corporation a contiguous block of land comprising more than eight sections.

Once done, the deal was on. The planned residential resort community promised seasonal populations in excess of 10,000 persons, and commercial activities with their attendant environmental disasters on the magnitude experienced at such locations as Vail, Colorado and Lake Tahoe, California.

A ground swell of opposition arose from local citizens who were confronted with the stark reality that the Priest Lake region would forever be changed and the fragile environment of the area seriously degraded.

The prospect of an endless armada of boats, cars and people creating an urban zone requiring taxpayer-funded services and the effluents and social problems of a city located in the Huckleberry Bay area was an affront to sound planning and protection of a fragile ecosystem.

Local citizens found strength and unity of purpose to hold the line on those who would degrade and pave over the wild beauty and natural setting of the watershed. Ultimately, through the efforts of citizens, the Priest Lake Coalition and its successor group, the Selkirk-Priest Basin Association, and the elected officials of Bonner County, the proposal was denied — but not for long.

From the ashes of the first scheme came the Goodale Barbieri Development Company and its subsidiary, the Huckleberry Bay Company (HBC) to try again, albeit with a more modest effort

employing a bite-at-a-time approach.

In 1988, the HBC proposed to resurrect the 20-year plan impacting the area with up to 800 dwellings on 1,000-plus acres with attendant commercial and recreational activities — complete with an 18-hole golf course. Opposition to the scheme has resulted in a continued reduction of the developer's plans and two smaller subdivisions, Sandy Shores and Canoe Point, which were shoe-horned in piecemeal.

The present application is calling for 100 dwelling units on 400 acres sited near the lake. The plans for the remaining 700 acres have not been revealed by HBC at this time, but will likely call for hundreds of additional dwelling units and commercial services plus resurrection of the golf course.

After numerous postponements since October, the present large-scale development plan is now scheduled for discussion and decision by the Bonner County Planning and Zoning Commission Jan. 30. The commission's decision will probably be the critical regarding the future of large-scale Huckleberry Bay development schemes.

The SPBA has consistently spoken against the large-scale development plans for Huckleberry Bay, and continues to stand against the most recent proposals for two major reasons.

First, the imposition of hundreds of new living units and attendant commercial and recreational services in the upper Priest region simply runs counter

to the recognized needs and social policies of the times. Protection of the environment and particularly of the few remaining areas of unique natural beauty, wildlife habitat and clean water are serious concerns of most Americans. The condition of the environment, its exploitation and degradation are repeatedly identified among the major issues that trouble people the most in the nation.

Polls of the American public consistently reveal an overwhelming majority of the people want protection of the few remaining natural areas for future generations.

There is scarce little remaining in the nation that can match the quality of Huckleberry Bay and the Upper Priest Basin. Gross human impacts there can only degrade the region. The plans of the HBC as revealed thus far fail to reveal, assess or accommodate the cumulative environmental consequences of a continual influx of population to the Upper Priest Basin area. However, such consequences can be assessed elsewhere in the nation where development has taken place. The common result is despoliation of the very qualities of the environment that draw people in the first place.

The second reason SPBA opposes a large development at Huckleberry Bay is the inadequacies of the plan that has been presented by the HBC. Before subjecting such a unique and fragile watershed to rampant development, the public and their agencies of government have every right to know just what is planned.

Foremost in this regard is the plan's conformity to the county comprehensive plan. Simply put, the HBC project doesn't fit. The existing county plan requires any new development to be compatible with surrounding land uses, in order to cluster human development within designated areas of the county and retain rural qualities of undeveloped areas. By any measure, the development HBC seeks to establish is hopelessly out of character with the surrounding environment of forest land, animal habitat and watershed.

“ *There is very little remaining in the nation that can match the quality of Huckleberry Bay. Gross human impacts there can only degrade it.* ”

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Struggle

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Further, the documents submitted by the HBC are conspicuous by their brevity and lack of information. The HBC makes no attempt to assess the cumulative impacts of hundreds and potentially thousands of new residents and businesses, including the costs to county taxpayers to sustain police, fire and educational services. Also absent is mention of the cumulative impacts on the flora and fauna, impacts on the feeder streams in the Two Mouth drainage and ultimately on the Priest Lake itself when sharp population increases take place.

Other aspects of the HBC plans are less than candid when they assert the area is to be served by a fire department. The HBC contribution is a garage to place a fire truck in - no truck, no personnel, no equipment, simply a garage. The HBC claims the beaches of Huckleberry Bay to be public, yet their plans provide no provision for public parking, facilities or access corridors to the beach. Lately, what the company calls the public portion of the beach has been reduced to 100 feet in depth, from 200 feet in the original provisions of the plan. However, the length has been extended to include the rocky areas of the bay.

In sum, the HBC plan for a large-scale development as presented in their planning documents is seriously flawed in that it:

- Is in opposition to the national need and desire to protect the environment;
- Fails to conform to the County Comprehensive Plan;
- Fails to provide a cumulative environmental impact analysis;
- Fails to reveal the full extent of their intentions; and
- Fails to provide the means to bring about claimed benefits to the public.

The Selkirk-Priest Basin Association Directors urge SPBA members and all citizens who want to maintain the splendid character of the Priest Lakes region to write the Bonner County Planning Commission and the Bonner County Commissioners to express concerns. If possible, plan to attend the Jan. 30 hearing, to be held in the Bonner County Courthouse, to express your concerns.

See The Letter Drop for addresses.

Trapper Creek

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general, superintendent of schools and secretary of state.

During their December visit, Forestry Committee members made presentations before the individual Land Board members plus Stan Hamilton, director of the Department of Lands. The presentations aimed to provide the Board with information on the effects of past logging and to protest the pending Lower Green Bonnet timber sale, which plans to remove another 3.3 million board feet of timber from 284 acres in the drainage.

The sale went before the Board for approval Jan. 14, as this issue of *Sightlines* went to press, and SPBA's Forestry Committee members again travelled to Boise argue against it.

Trapper Creek flows into the northeastern tip of Upper Priest Lake. It was nominated as a "stream segment of concern" in the first go-around of Idaho's fledgling environmental anti-degradation laws.

At that time SPBA Forestry Committee Chairman Barry Rosenberg sat on the local working committee charged with deciding the best management practices for the drainage. Although Rosenberg argued strenuously that the "cumulative effects" of logging be considered, the Department of Lands has pushed ahead with plans to log the drainage.

Now, however, SPBA stands ready to challenge the short-term decision making that threatens to permanently damage

Trapper Creek.

"This sale might have been appropriate 20 years ago, or maybe 25 years in the future, but not now," said Rosenberg. "It's time to let the damage heal, for the trees to grow back — not to cut more, and build more roads."

A statistical "snapshot" of the damage already wrought in Trapper Creek is alarming:

- Out of 8,290 commercial acres in the drainage, the number of acres that have been roaded and logged amounts to 4,260 timbered acres cleared. This rate of logging equals a 45-year rotation. Approximately 79 miles of road have been built, amounting to four miles of road per square mile of land. A rule of thumb for hydrologists is that a drainage with 25 percent of the land cleared within 25 years and a density of three miles of road per square mile will experience significant water quality degradation.

- According to studies by the Department of Environmental Quality, Trapper Creek is carrying twice the sediment load of Myrtle Creek. Further logging — and the erosion and sedimentation it creates — could seriously jeopardize Trapper Creek's fisheries. The drainage is home to one of the few viable populations of genetically pure adfluvial westslope cutthroat trout fisheries in Idaho; it is also a fishery for bull trout, whose viability is threatened statewide.

- The plan also calls for cutting old growth. Although IDOL has a policy to liquidate old growth to make room for "vigorous new growth," such a policy flies in the face of research which shows old growth is essential to a healthy forest ecosystem. It is necessary for biological and genetic diversity, and SPBA believes it is dangerous for IDOL to eliminate options proving essential to forest health.

- Some of the proposed sale will be plainly visible from Priest and Upper Priest Lakes.

"Simply put, the scale of logging in Trapper Creek is excessive by any prudent land manager's standard," said Rosenberg. "Enough is enough."

SPBA is asking for dedicated donations to help defray expenses in challenging the Lower Green Bonnet sale. Please see the "Alert!" flyer in this issue of *Sightlines*, or mail your donation to SPBA, Trapper Creek Fund, P.O. Box 181, Coolin, ID 83821.

Although IDOL has a policy to liquidate old-growth timber, this flies in the face of research that shows old-growth essential to a healthy forest.

SPBA Appeals Timber Sale

Group asks smaller cut in the Roger and Mosquito creeks

A DECISION by the Forest Service to log 7.5 million board feet of timber from the Roger and Mosquito Creek drainages has been appealed by SPBA.

Members of SPBA's Forestry Committee, after long and careful review, reluctantly decided to appeal the alternative chosen by District Ranger Al Collotzi, on the basis that it poses serious threats to water quality and wildlife habitat in the area.

At the core of the appeal is the concept of "Cumulative Effects," or CE for short. CE analysis adds together actions of smaller significance to determine if they will create a result of great significance.

In the case of the Roger and Mosquito drainages, at risk from CE are wildlife species dependent on interior habitat (roads and logging decrease interior habitat), the westslope cutthroat trout (a rare fish in the Lower West Branch drainage that has been declared a "sensitive species.") and stream stability.

Pinpointing thresholds for environmental effects is not an exact science. There is a large grey area where, depending on the specialists' knowledge, the reliability of computer models, the concern and skill of the logging contractor and the vagaries of Mother Nature, disasters might occur.

In preparation to make a decision to log an area, the Forest Service must do an environmental analysis of potential impacts and prepare a range of alternatives (from "no action" to nearly shaving it clean), and from this information the district ranger chooses the alternative he likes best, ostensibly meeting multiple use objectives and complying with environmental laws.

The alternative picked by Ranger Collotzi, involving 397 acres and 7.5 million board feet — which is 182 percent of the volume targeted in the Forest Plan — predicted sediment levels and water yields high in the "grey area" and above. CE in the Lower West Branch were deemed to be "not significant," the impacts on the cutthroat trout were ignored, and the loss of interior habitat was called insignificant.

However, the condition of the Lower West Branch is listed as "fair to poor," and is "in disequilibrium"; the viability of the cutthroat trout is threatened throughout Idaho; and interior habitat would be reduced from 13 to 12 percent of the Lower West Branch drainage. (A recent sale, Twelve Mile, reduced interior habitat from 14 percent to 13 percent and three upcoming proposals would each remove another 1 to 2 percent.)

In addition, two roads were planned through the only old-growth unit in the area, and a "seed tree" cut was planned next to it, effectively eliminating it as the kind of habitat needed by interior-dwelling creatures.

Members of the SPBA Forestry Committee expressed these concerns to Collotzi about one week before the end of the 45-day appeal period, and requested the Forest Service withdraw Alternative E and choose Alternative C, which calls for logging 2.6 million board feet without building new roads. The effects of Alternative C, which are still not adequately analyzed, were expected by committee members to be low in the "gray areas."

Collotzi declined to withdraw Alternative E and tried to adjust it relative to SPBA's concerns, by adding more mitigation measures (including larger stream buffers, road mulching and some logging prescription changes). Nonetheless, Forestry Committee members felt the threats to water quality and wildlife were still excessive.

The committee therefore proceeded with the appeal. One week after receiving it, Collotzi withdrew Alternative E and reissued another, more modified Alternative E. This version removed roads from the old-growth unit and changed more logging prescriptions, but maintained the volume at 7.5 million board feet, and SPBA felt the cumulative effects were likely to be excessive and the sale would continue to degrade the whole ecosystem. The Forestry Committee has therefore completed a second, more explicit appeal, calling for either withdrawal of Alternative E Modified, to be replaced by Alternative C, or the development of an Environmental Impact Statement to fully disclose the impacts of implementing Alternative E Modified.

"This is just too much timber cutting considering all that has gone before," said Forestry Committee Chairman Barry Rosenberg. "What the Lower West Branch needs is time to heal — not more logging."

Added committee member Gordon West: "Most of the problems with Alternative E stem from aiming at timber quotas, not multiple use. We hope the hundreds of hours SPBA spent researching the appeal will help educate the industry and the public on these issues. I think the appeal document itself will enable the Forest Service to do better analysis in the future."

The Spokane chapters of the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club were co-signers on the appeal. •

Huckleberry Bay. Don Barbieri's giant development on Huckleberry Bay is coming up for a final hearing, and now is the last chance to submit a meaningful comment on the issue. Your comments should be addressed to: Bonner County Planning and Zoning Commission, 127 S. First Avenue, Sandpoint, ID 83864. To help more, attend the hearing Jan. 30, or contribute to the Huckleberry Bay Legal Fund. See stories, pages 1, 4 and 5.

THE LETTER DROP

Priest Lake Water Quality Study. The Idaho Legislature this session will decide how much money to allocate for a two-year water quality study of Priest Lake and creation of a management plan. See story page 8; above all, legis-

lators need to know the study should be fully funded! Key members to write: District 1 Sen. Tim Tucker and Reps. Jim Stoicheff and Monica Beaudoin; District 2 Sen. Mary Lou Reed; Senate Resources and Environment Committee Laird Noh; and Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Kitty Gurnsey. Address your letters to the individual legislators, Idaho State Legislature, Capitol Building, Boise, ID 83720.

Andrus Urges Funding for Priest Water Quality Study

GOV. CECIL ANDRUS is recommending that the Idaho Legislature fund the first year of a water quality study aimed at producing a management plan for Priest Lake.

But Andrus is calling for only \$168,000 — far below the \$286,000 the citizen advisors on the Priest Lake Management Plan team requested.

In his address Jan. 6 launching the 1992 Legislature, Andrus called for the funds "to create a management plan for one of Idaho's crown jewels — Priest Lake. The cost at \$168,000 is a bargain."

SPBA Chairman Bruce Brockway said he was "well pleased" the governor has recommended funding for the study. "However, at this point we don't know what the governor is basing his budget figure on, and we naturally are going to press for full funding for the study."

"The governor is completely correct to call Priest Lake a crown jewel," Brockway added. "The water quality study and management plan are essential to keep it that way, and they must be adequately funded."

SPBA will now focus on legislators to wrangle sufficient funding. One key legislator, Laird Noh, chairman of the Resources & Environment Committee, is already monitoring the process.

Noh wrote to SPBA in November to defend the addition of a paid timber industry consultant to the PLMP team, an action which SPBA criticized. However, Noh added that "the Committee which I

chair will certainly be reviewing progress and supporting as best we can the funding for the planning effort."

The PLMP team was created last year after the Legislature passed a bill authorizing the water quality study of Priest Lake, plus a management plan to maintain the lake's high water quality.

The team has met only once so far, Sept. 8 on Kalispell Island.

Planned as mostly a social gathering so team members could get acquainted, there was one important item on the agenda: approving the budget request.

Ed Tulloch of the Division of Environmental Quality presented two proposed budgets, both approximately \$286,000, for team members to evaluate. Although many on the team had expected to be able to participate in drafting the budget, they were constrained to choose one of the presented options as the deadline for submittal was Sept. 10.

The options were similar in that both would be directed by the DEQ. However, in budget No. 1, DEQ staff would do most of the field work, while budget No. 2 would contract most of it out. Some team members felt contractors — most likely from universities — would bring more expertise to the study, but the final vote was 5 to 4 in favor of budget No. 1.

SPBA Director Gordon West sits on the team. Two members, Dean Stevens and R.G. Wright, were unable to attend the meeting due to schedule conflicts. •

See The Letter Drop, page 7.

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Our newsletter, funded entirely by member contributions, keeps you informed of natural resource issues within the Priest Basin, and offers regular updates on the efforts of SPBA to promote environmental excellence. Now is time to give to the environment which sustains us all.

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SELKIRK-PRIEST BASIN ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 181
COOLIN, ID 83821

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SELKIRK-PRIEST BASIN ASSOCIATION

ALERT!

We need your support for two issues of historic importance to the Priest Basin.

- **The struggle for Huckleberry Bay continues.** On Thursday, Jan. 30, the Bonner County Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a hearing on the proposal by developer Don Barbieri's Huckleberry Bay Co. to site a large recreational development on Priest Lake's lovely Huckleberry Bay. SPBA believes the development will destroy the rural character of northern Priest Lake; poses serious threats to water quality and wildlife habitat; and fails to comply with the goals of the county Comprehensive Plan to channel development into areas of compatible use. But the fight for the integrity of Priest Lake does not come cheaply. SPBA has retained Coeur d'Alene attorney Charles Sheroke as legal counsel for the case, solicited expert witnesses, and is incurring expenses for travel, mileage, postage and telephone calls.
- **SPBA poses its first-ever challenge to logging by Idaho Department of Lands.** While the Forest Service has come under increasing scrutiny for logging that is destructive to soils, water and wildlife, the IDOL continues to pursue a policy of liquidating the old forests under what managers claim is a constitutional mandate to produce maximum financial benefit for the school endowment fund. Now IDOL wants to log more timber in the already over-cut Trapper Creek drainage, and SPBA is fighting the proposed logging before the state Land Board. SPBA argues that the cumulative effects of logging will be highly destructive of soils, watersheds, fish and wildlife within the Trapper Creek drainage — and that such short-term profiteering off state endowment lands fails to meet the Constitution's mandate that these lands be managed for the maximum *long-term* benefit. That means we must restrain logging now so that soils and watersheds can sustain our forests for future generations to use. Extra expenses incurred by SPBA include travel to Boise to argue the case before the Land Board, postage, telephone calls and research expenses.

If you want to help the Priest Basin, now is the time!

Both of these issues will not only decide the immediate future of precious areas within the Priest Basin — Huckleberry Bay and Trapper Creek — but they'll also set important precedents that guide future decision making by our public officials. What can you do to help? Plenty:

- **Get informed.** See the stories in the current issue of our newsletter, *Sightlines*.
- **Speak up!** Write our public officials and let them know your opinion. If possible, attend the Jan. 30 hearing on Huckleberry Bay. It's at 7:30 p.m. in the County Courthouse, Sandpoint.
- **Contribute to SPBA's dedicated funds.** The Huckleberry Bay Legal Fund has already collected more than \$1,100 — but more is badly needed. To take on the IDOL, SPBA has now established the Trapper Creek Fund, and donations are also needed for this expensive fight.

Priest Lake needs your help now more than ever.

If you want to support SPBA efforts in either one or both of these issues, simply note which fund you are donating to. Your contribution will be dedicated to expenses incurred on the issue specified.

Send your contribution to:

Selkirk-Priest Basin Association
Attention: (Dedicated fund of your choice)
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