

Knowing of your interest in federal land management, I wanted to inform you of yesterday's decision by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to reopen the comment period on the agency's proposed revisions to the critical habitat designation for the marbled murrelet. The marbled murrelet was listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in October of 1992, resulting in the designation of over three million acres of "critical habitat" in Oregon, Washington, and California. Last summer, FWS proposed to revise the critical habitat areas for this bird, potentially resulting in the removal of 254,070 acres from the critical habitat designation.

The listing of the marbled murrelet and the northern spotted owl in the early 1990s decimated our once-thriving Northern California timber industry by severely restricting timber harvests and other multiple-use activities on our vast public lands. Declining forest management has left our forests increasingly overgrown and loaded with fuels. Last year's fire season saw the destruction of thousands of acres of these forests, undoubtedly including habitat used by the murrelet, spotted owl and other creatures, and much more remains at-risk to catastrophic wildfire in the future. The removal of the current designation would provide far greater flexibility for increased management of our forests.

Importantly, there was already an original 90-day comment period on this proposal that ended last September. I am concerned that reopening the comment period for an additional 30 days is unnecessary and will only serve to delay implementation of the proposal. With the next fire season just around the corner, we need every opportunity to get forest management back on the landscape and reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire, and we need to do so without further delay. I believe the best way to protect the marbled murrelet and other species is through effective forest management activities that will prevent the destruction each year of thousands of acres of habitat by fire.

You may submit comments on this proposal through March 13th. For additional information please visit: <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/ecoservices/mamupch.html> . Comments can be submitted online at <http://www.regulations.gov>

(follow the instructions for submitting comments), or by US mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R1-ES-2008-0079; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

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