

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, March 11, 2016

**GROUPS SUE TO PROTECT SELWAY AND MIDDLE FORK CLEARWATER
WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS**

Boise, IDAHO — Today two Idaho conservation groups, Idaho Rivers United (IRU) and Friends of the Clearwater (FOC), filed suit in federal court in Idaho to protect the Selway and Middle Fork Clearwater Wild and Scenic Rivers from massive clear-cutting approved by the Forest Service on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest.

The groups are challenging the Forest Service's approval of the Johnson Bar Fire Salvage Project, which would log 34 million board feet of timber from 2,104 acres within the watershed of the Selway and Middle Fork Clearwater Wild and Scenic Rivers. The project includes massive clear-cutting, extensive roadwork covering just over 108 miles, and at least 13 helicopter landings including within the designated Wild and Scenic Rivers corridor.

The area consists of steep, highly erosive soils, which drain into the Selway and Middle Fork Clearwater Rivers and their tributaries. These watersheds are designated critical habitat for endangered Chinook salmon, steelhead and bull trout; the dramatic increase in sediment threatened by the timber sale activities pose serious impacts to these imperiled fish and their critical habitat.

The two groups claim in the suit that the Forest Service's approval of this project violates the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which required the agency to adopt a comprehensive river management plan some three decades ago – yet the Forest Service has failed to do so. Moreover, the Project violates additional requirements that commercial logging is not allowed within the Wild and Scenic Rivers corridor.

“The Selway and Middle Fork Clearwater Rivers are some of the very finest river jewels in our nation, and Congress recognized that when it protected them under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act back in 1968,” said Kevin Lewis, Conservation Director at IRU. “Rather than follow its legal duty to protect the Wild and Scenic River corridor, the Forest Service is allowing significant degradation to occur without disclosing the true scope of the impacts to the public.”

The suit also asserts that the project approval violates the National Forest Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act by “failing to comply with Forest Plan standards, ignoring well-established science that contradicts their pre-determined outcome...and failing to adequately consider the cumulative impacts of the Project.”

“The steelhead trout in the Selway River Basin are significant in that they are truly wild and unaffected by hatchery production. This timber sale violates the requirements to protect the Selway's crucial steelhead habitat,” said Gary Macfarlane, Friends of the Clearwater.

IRU and FOC are represented in this case by Advocates for the West, a Boise-based nonprofit environmental law firm, and Deborah Ferguson of the Boise firm Ferguson Durham, PLLC.

[A copy of the complaint can be found here.](#)

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