

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Friends of the Clearwater releases CLEARCUT KINGS report**

#### ***U.S. Forest Service's Northern Region stands alone in approving supersized clearcuts on national forests***

Missoula, MT and Moscow, ID - Today Friends of the Clearwater (FOC), a nonprofit conservation organization based in Idaho, released a report on its investigation into the practice of logging “supersized” clearcuts on national forests in the U.S. Northern Rockies bioregion. Supersized clearcuts are over 40 acres in extent, for which exceptions to normal regulatory maximums must be approved by a U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester.

The report, entitled “[The Clearcut Kings: The U.S. Forest Service Northern Region and its obsession with supersized clearcuts](#)” finds that from 2013 until March of 2021, the Forest Service’s Northern Region approved 93,056 acres (roughly 145 square miles) of supersized clearcuts, an area about twice the size of the District of Columbia. To illustrate, a person with an average walking speed of three miles per hour would need two eight-hour days to traverse the perimeter of a contiguous square clearcut of that size.

This new report also finds that none of the Forest Service regions adjacent to the Northern Region approved any supersized clearcuts over that time period. The national forests of the Northern Region encompass mostly Montana and northern Idaho, with slivers in adjacent states.

“Despite a common belief that clearcutting on national forests is no longer in vogue, the Forest Service’s own information shows it’s extremely widespread in the Northern Region, and that logging huge clearcuts here has gone viral,” states FOC’s Montana Policy Director Jeff Juel. “Even roadless areas are not off-limits to supersized clearcuts,” he added.

As the report also reveals, not once over that time period had the Northern Region rejected a forest supervisor’s request for even a single supersized clearcut. The current Regional Forester is Leanne Marten, named to her position in July 2015.

Regional Forester Marten has approved huge clearcuts despite the impacts to endangered fish and wildlife habitat, forcing citizens to go to court. In response to a lawsuit from FOC and Alliance for the Wild Rockies, on August 4th a federal judge in Idaho halted logging on a timber sale in the Lolo Creek watershed on the Clearwater National Forest, in Critical Habitat for the Threatened steelhead trout. The timber sale features 23 supersized clearcuts, adding up to 2,123 acres. Eight of those clearcuts would be over 100 acres.

The Nez Perce National Forest's Hungry Ridge timber sale would clearcut a total of 7,144 acres (over 11 square miles), including 28 supersized clearcuts totaling almost 5,000 acres, destroying over 500 acres of old growth in the process. In April, FOC, represented by Advocates for the West, filed a Complaint in a federal court to halt that timber sale, for reasons including violating multiple Forest Plan old-growth protection standards.

The Kootenai National Forest's Black Ram timber sale calls for clearcutting 1,783 acres in Threatened grizzly bear habitat and in Critical Habitat for the Threatened Canada lynx. The Forest Service would create 20 supersized clearcuts, adding up to 2,016 acres. Seven of those clearcuts would be over 100 acres.

But Regional Forester Marten's clearcut champion would be the proposed Buckskin Saddle timber sale on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. Marten approved 51 supersized clearcuts in the eye-popping amount of 11,864 acres, including the granddaddy of them all—one contiguous 2,256-acre clearcut (3.2 square miles). Five other supersized clearcuts would exceed 400 acres each.

“It is appalling that Regional Forester Marten is routinely supersizing clearcuts in inventoried roadless areas, in old growth, and in habitat for species listed under the Endangered Species Act,” states FOC's Membership and Development Director Paul Busch. “We are giving the Biden Administration this report, and will be pointedly asking them to end such abuses,” he added.

“Scientists say standing forests are critical for sequestering carbon and mitigating the consequences of climate change. Yet the Northern Region is selling off our trees in supersized swaths so timber companies can make a quick buck,” states FOC Staff Attorney Katie Bilodeau. “The Forest Service has absolutely no regard for climate science, our future, or the livability of our planet,” she added.

*Please find our report at this [link](#).*

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