

16 November 2009

Hancock Forest Management (HFM) Logging Update (vicinity Crystal River Ranch)

Wendy Scholl and I walked the proposed timber harvest area on 9 October. The area currently under application for harvest is confined to Section 36, which is South of CRR. There is, however, at least one seasonal stream that starts in Section 36, and terminates in Section 25. We believe this is on Lot #8, which is the last property on the West side of Mountainside Drive. It appears Hancock has "buffered out" all streams. If so, they will not harvest within these gullies, which should minimize effects to CRR. All that being said, we don't think anyone can say for certain what effects timber harvesting will have in this area.

Based on the information Wendy and I gathered, I submitted a formal response to Forest Practices Application #2413684 (Project name: Northway) on 12 October. The letter focused on potential threats to public safety resulting from the proposed timber harvest.

I spoke to Jerry Johnson, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forester, on 13 October 2009. He is responsible for ensuring that timber companies follow state Forest Practices rules. He recently walked the proposed harvest area, and confirmed that Hancock is operating within Forest Practice rules. In Jerry's view, Hancock has taken a very conservative approach in terms of buffering out areas that could cause environmental or public safety concerns. He encouraged CRR to start a dialogue with HFM to discuss our concerns about current and future timber harvest plans vicinity CRR.

I spoke to Grady Steere, Hancock Forest Management Forester, on 15 October. He received a copy of my letter from DNR on 14 October, and Hancock is reviewing it. He stated it is too early to determine if, or when, the proposed timber harvest in Section 36 might begin. We discussed the value of starting a dialogue, and both agreed it was a good idea.

I received a written response from Bruce McDonald, DNR Forester, dated 19 October 2009 regarding my comment letter for Application #2413684 (Project name: Northway). To summarize, DNR modeled the effects of Rain on Snow events, and found no significant risk. Hancock is operating within established Forest Practice rules.

Wendy Scholl and I met with Grady Steere, Senior Forester and Mike March, Harvesting Operations Manager of Hancock Forest Management, on 11 November 2009. We discussed planned timber harvests targeted for Spring-Summer 2010 in Section 36, south of CRR. This location is in a basin extending south starting at the PSE substation, and does not include the ridge above Mountainside Drive properties in Crystal River Ranch. Key points include:

1. Hancock currently has no future plan to harvest trees above CRR Mountainside Drive properties. Due to the steep terrain above homes, a harvest application for the ridge above Mountainside Drive (Section 25) would likely require a geological assessment, State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review, etc.
2. In August 2008 Hancock utilized an independent state licensed Consulting Geologist, John LAManna to review the planned harvest areas and their identified buffered areas.
3. In Section 36, Hancock will have 50 foot buffers (no harvest areas) next to each of the seasonal drainage streams. They are not required to buffer any seasonal streams per Forest Practice rules.

4. In Section 36, Concave slopes over 70% will also be buffered. The purpose of this buffering is to decrease landslide risk.

5. Current regulations allow a 40% timber harvest in the basin of Section 36. The planned Hancock harvest applications would take 15% to 20% of the 25 yr+ old trees in the basin.

I submitted a formal response to Forest Practices Application #2413717 (Project name: Green Valley) on 12 November. The letter focused on potential threats to public safety and infrastructure resulting from the proposed timber harvest.

On 16 Nov 2009 I spoke with Bruce McDonald, DNR Forester, to clarify a few points from his 19 October letter. We discussed multiple topics, including my concern regarding the potential for increased surface water flow resulting from the harvest units in Section 36, just south of CRR. I described how additional water flowing from this large basin could directly or indirectly affect CRR private and community property. He described how Forest Practice Rules and policy memos are used to model Rain on Snow events. Based on historical data, the purpose of this modeling is to decrease the chance that timber harvest activities will result in a significant increase in surface water volumes resulting from Rain on Snow events. I am concerned that since these models are based on historical data, they do not take into account the possible effects of changing global weather patterns.

More to follow as additional information becomes available.

For additional information, or to discuss this important issue, please feel free to contact Curt at cmchalet@yahoo.com or Wendy at wscholl@gmail.com

Curt Simonson & Wendy Scholl
