

The Battle of Millicoma

A report from the Cascadia Forest Defenders

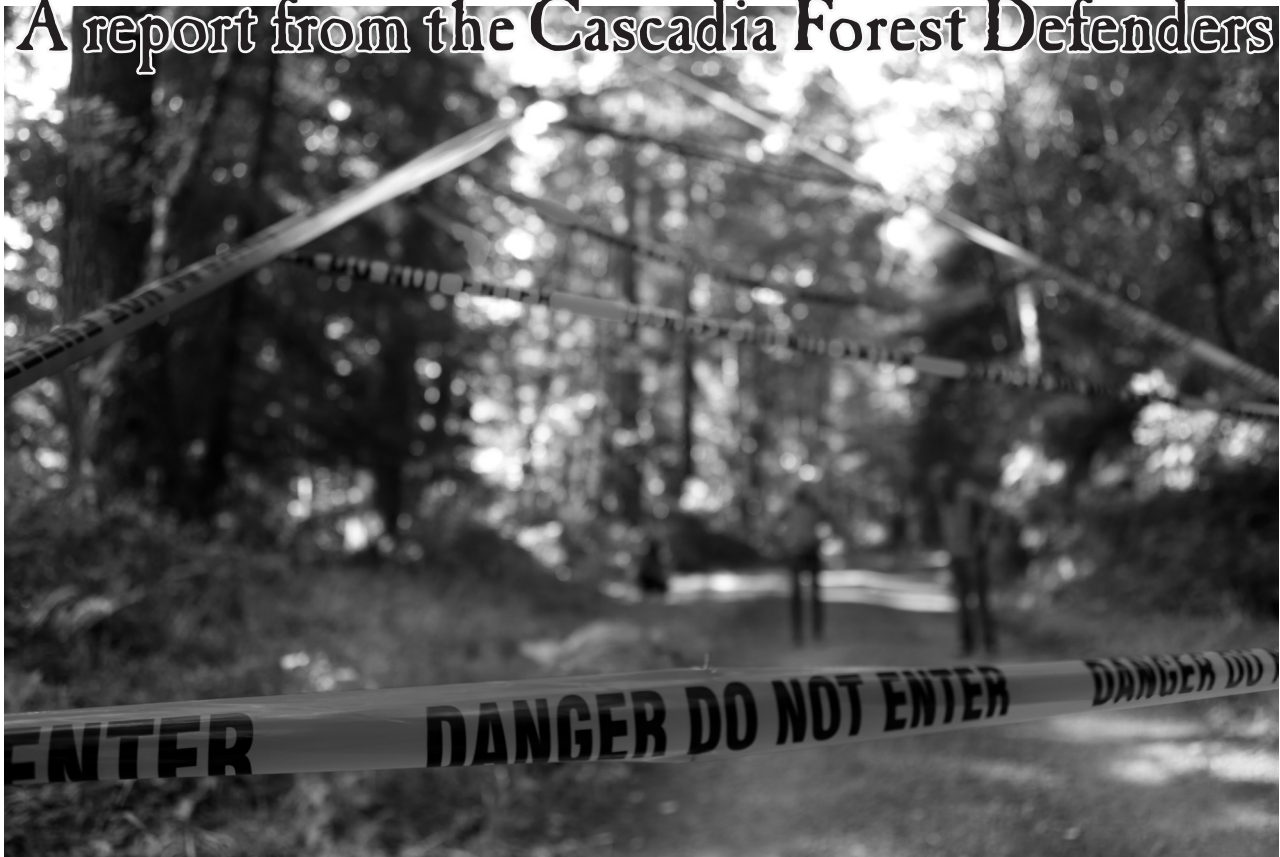


Photo by Trip Jennings

Elaborate roadblockades give the timber industry and their government lackeys a pain in the ass once again in the Elliott State Forest.

BY THRUSH

To tell of what happened after this summer's Cascadia Forest Defenders action camp in the Elliott State Forest, there should be a bit of background for those who haven't heard the story of the post-Rendezvous action in 2009.

Before the Rondy in '09, few people had even heard of the Elliott State Forest, even though it is home to the most atrocious logging practices on public lands in Oregon. The timber sale that was chosen had only one road in, and that was blocked by a gate. On the last night of the Rondy, a group of EFers! worked to erect a blockade of epic proportions. There was an enormous bi-pod, and a sky-pod anchored to the gate, as well as barrel lock downs and a flipped-over van. The blockade lasted three days and resulted in 27 people being arrested. [For a full description see "Cascadia Free State Held For Three Days" in Mabon '09 and "Free State Analysis" in the 30th Anniversary Part I of the EF! Journal.]

Two years and a lot of tactical conversations later, Cascadia Forest Defenders (CFD) decided to throw an action camp in the Elliott and make that our new primary campaign. Auspiciously, there was a State

Land Board meeting the first day of camp, where the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) was going to tell the Board why it is such a great idea to nearly double the amount of clear cutting happening in the Elliott, from 500 acres to an annual increase of up to 1000 acres per year. So we showed up with some friends and a couple of banners and stated exactly why the idea was full of crap, shooting holes in their arguments in both personal experience and scientific jargon. The rest of the camp took a focus on backwoods direct action, keeping oneself safe in the forest, backwoods stealth, climbing, and of course, swimming. Our goal was to come out of this camp with an action that would kick off a continual campaign to end all clear cutting on the Elliott and public lands in Oregon.

The plan that came out was admittedly a little ambitious. There was one road that accessed four timber sales we were looking at, with one in particular that we were not willing to give ground on. So the last night of camp, three affinity groups went out to set up separate blockades that locked down over four miles of road on all the separate sales.

On the north end, a platform was anchored to traverses that criss-crossed the road, making it

impossible to drive that end of the road without dunking the platform. In front of that were four large slash piles. At about 10:30 a.m. a bulldozer came tearing up the road without warning and plowed through the slash piles. Despite attempts by direct support people to stop the bulldozer, it tore through the pod's support lines and dunked the platform. With luck no one was seriously injured. One bit of satisfaction was that, somehow in the process, the bulldozer's windows mysteriously got broken.

The south blockade, named Ladies' Night, was an all women-and-trans planned, executed, and occupied blockade. It started with the most epic slash pile ever seen, constructed at the end of a narrow bridge. Then, shortly up the road was a platform approximately 100 feet in the air that was anchored through a culvert in the road, blocking the road from any entrance. Since neither blockade would work without the other, and with less people each day, we decided to pull Ladies' Night on the second night and consolidate both gear and people.

Hill Top was where we were digging in. This was the third blockade. It blocked the only landing spot for the Elk Horn Ranch Timber sale—a planned clear-cut of huge native forest on steep slopes, leading directly into a critical fish-bearing river. Before the blockade was a large trench in the road and three slash piles. The blockade itself was a dunk platform 105 feet high anchored through 30 feet of steel piping to unoccupied “sleeping dragons” (concrete-filled tubes) anchoring the support rope into the road.

ODF came by the first two days and photographed the blockade. On the second day, a group of state troopers with video cameras escorted the head ODF forester to Hill Top. They told us we had until noon the next day to leave, then handed over a cease-and-desist order and a map with one area in the Elliott circled that we could be in.

Not only did we have a deadline, but they knew exactly what we had. So in an attempt to throw them off, we shot lines with what little daylight we had left. We decided to rig a static platform to give the blockade some aerial support, and with the hope of setting up something that might be more long term. Then while the rigging was happening, mountain beavers went to work digging at the trench. The little beavers managed to dig up a section of culvert in the road creating a trench that was approximately four feet by four feet and spanned the width of the road.

We had learned some lessons from two years ago. More arrests doesn't mean your blockade stays up longer. So all of us who

weren't in trees headed out to scheme the next steps.

First, they didn't allow any media or legal observers past the trench. Then, they partially filled the ditch in, and bulldozed the slash piles. Next they brought in the biggest cherry picker they could get, which almost wasn't enough. To re-anchor the lines they went above the piping, then the cherry picker went up to the sit. They limbed every branch below the platform. With access to the platform they got the sitter down, then attempted the same with the blockade. The sitters there climbed higher than the cherry picker could reach and demanded to talk to media. The cops finally agreed and the sitters got their story out directly into the news. However, with the picker at their platform and all of their supplies stolen, the blockade was gone. The last sitters were evicted.

That happened on a Thursday, the following Monday a bike brigade rode straight to the ODF office outside of Eugene with a list of demands. The cyclists brought

“Why we're fighting for the Elliott”; Photo by Trip Jennings



the party, and held it strong outside their offices, reminding them that when we said we were back, we meant to stay.

That same day was also the end of the Trans and Womyn's Action Camp (TWAC), a week long camp created to hold space for marginalized identities within the environmental, animal, and social justice movements. TWAC threw down with glitter, sparkles, and a vengeance, in what has been called "the sassiest thing to ever hit Molalla, Oregon!" Three individuals locked down inside the ODF offices outside of Portland and a dance party held strong outside the offices. They held the office from 10 a.m. until closing.

Since the protests in 2009, we've seen a shift in public reaction. While there was little-to-no support immediately following that blockade, the momentum eventually resulted in a Eugene-based environmental nonprofit taking on the Elliott as one of their main campaigns. This year, the show of public support was dramatically different. For instance, as soon as the blockades were announced we had multiple groups spreading the news and offering to organize food for the sitters. Before 2009 direct action forest defense wasn't happening in the Elliott; that action sparked motivation. Since then there has been active forest defense each year and the capacity is growing.

The blockades are down for the moment, but our commitment and tenacity are higher than they have been in years. We're back in the Elliott and we're not going anywhere.

See you in the woods...

To contact CFD go to FORESTDEFENSENOW.COM

Photo by Trip Jennings



TWAC

2011 Report Back

BY LEWDDITE UPRISING

This year's third annual Trans and Womyn's Action Camp (TWAC) culminated in an occupation of the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) office in Molalla—basically, it got taken the fuck over! In solidarity with the resistance in the Elliott State Forest, TWAC brought the fury and glitter in a way that the environmental movement has not yet adopted. Picture a business-as-usual day at the ODF, a quaint little office in small-town Oregon, about to get bombarded with the most queer-as-fuck, sex-positive action ever!

Lady and trans folk, with support from our allies, occupied the office in pink fishnets, underwear, and so much sass and glitter. Three folks locked down while the queerest takeover swallowed the hallways and main front desk. When the bomb squad, Homeland Security, and 75 percent of Clackamas County's law enforcement threatened arrest, all but three of the occupiers left and moved the party to the front. People draped themselves around poles in front of the office, sissy-bounced, and temporarily stopped a logging truck, causing a road closure. Chants included "Beavers and Divas are our natural allies" and "We're a bunch of queer fucks, we don't want your clear cuts." Three arrests followed suit (the arrestees are now dubbed the Rebel Bitchez) and the office remained shut down for the rest of the day.

Basically, TWAC threw down hard in solidarity with friends holding it down in the Elliott. Bottom line, industrial violence will be met with glittery rage—you fuck with the forests, you fuck with our friends, you fuck with TWAC.

See you queers in the woods next year!

For more info: TWAC.WORDPRESS.COM