



Press Release **January 31, 2005**

Utah Environmental Congress and High Uintas Preservation Council **file a lawsuit in Federal District Court** **to halt large timber sale in the Uinta Mountains**

The Utah Environmental Congress (UEC) and High Uintas Preservation Council (HUPC) filed a lawsuit Friday afternoon against the Ashley National Forest (ANF) to stop the massive Trout Slope West timber sale. Located near the ridgeline of the Eastern Uinta Mountains, this 9.2 million board foot timber sale (enough to fill about 8,500 log trucks) would remove some of the most valuable old growth forest that is left in the heavily forested eastern Uinta Mountains.

A product of the last 30 years of intensive clear-cut management, this area that provides key habitat for elk, deer, goshawk, three-toed woodpecker and lynx, is already heavily fragmented. See attached image of part of the project area from the air.¹ The patchwork of existing 40 acre clear cuts is evident by the light colored patches. The remaining quality old growth forest is the leave-strips between these clear cuts. This timber sale focuses on removal of the old growth remnant forest between these clear cuts. The ANF's Forest Plan and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) both impose limits on the size of clear-cut openings. Removal of these leave-strips of uncut forest would result in huge clear-cut openings, violating clear-cut size limitations that have been in place since Presidents Ford and Reagan.

HUPC and UEC also claim that old growth standards have been violated. By relying on data that has nothing to do with old growth, the Ashley NF failed to do any required inventories of old growth to determine if it would still meet its old growth standards after cutting the approved areas. The standards state that 5% old growth in stands of at least 160 acres must be maintained. Joel Ban, UEC attorney stated, "Failure to maintain or measure this minimum amount of old growth, which is critical for game and non-game wildlife, is a serious deficiency."

"High value deer and elk summer range and hiding cover will be destroyed at the landscape level by this timber sale. The EIS prepared for this project is illegal because it neglected to account for the existing impacts of many of these recent clear cuts in addition to the fragmenting impacts of this timber sale" said Kevin Mueller, Executive Director of the UEC. Mueller adds, "Downstream water quality is already impaired, and increased erosion from this timber sale will only further harm water quality."

HUPC and UEC also point to the Ashley NF's failure to use and analyze the effects of this sale on keystone Management Indicator Species (MIS) population trends – another requirement of the Forest Plan and NFMA.

For more information, please contact Kevin Mueller with the UEC at (801) 466-4110.

¹ USGS Digital Orthophoto Quad, or "DOQ", image of the western part of the Trout Slope West Timber Sale area. North is to the right on this image.

