



**PROTECTING THE
HISTORIC BACKCOUNTRY
AT COOPER SPUR ON
THE NORTHSIDE OF MT.
HOOD**

**Proposed Solution
September 11, 2008**



The public land of the United States is an important part of the natural heritage of all Americans to be held in trust for this and future generations. Public land provides open space, clean water, important habitat for native plants and animals, wilderness, wild rivers, a last stronghold for many endangered ecosystems, and opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The North side of Mt. Hood is a priceless backcountry recreation gem, and contains many historic structures from the late 1800s and early 1900s. The area also has a small ski area, about 50 acres in size, and the historic Tilly Jane trail. These lands are part of a key migration corridor for deer and elk, and they form the zone of contribution for the Crystal Springs drinking watershed.

In 2001, local residents grew concerned about a proposal to trade away Hood River County's Crystal Springs' drinking watershed to Mt. Hood Meadows for development. The Hood River County Board of Commissioners proceeded with the controversial trade despite strong public opposition. Mt. Hood Meadows also purchased the Inn at Cooper Spur and, separately, the Cooper Spur Ski Area – and proposed to build a large four season destination resort on the land. All told, Meadows proposed development on well over 2,000 acres of land on the historic North side. Around the same time, the Forest Service proposed a logging project on well over 1,500 acres of land in the area in the name of forest health.

The Hood River Valley Residents Committee worked to educate the public about the impacts of these proposals and formed alliances with recreation clubs like the Mazamas and the Oregon Nordic Club, local homeowners in the area and groups like the Mountain Shadows Homeowners, local citizens groups like the Friends of Mt. Hood and the Friends of Tilly Jane and volunteers from local conservation groups like the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Oregon Natural Resources Council. The groups opposed the controversial land trade, advanced an alternative vision to unsustainable development and worked for real forest stewardship instead of an old growth logging project that would have increased fire risk. (www.cooperspur.org)





In 2003, Congressmen Walden and Blumenauer held their first summit at Timberline. In May of 2004, the HRVRC won an appeal concerning the controversial land trade (www.crag.org). In the summer of 2004, Senator Wyden advanced his vision for Wilderness around the mountain, including Wilderness for the Cooper Spur area. Later in the summer of 2004, the two Congressmen held a second Summit on the mountain to discuss the public's vision for Mt. Hood.



In May of 2005, the Forest Service withdrew its controversial logging project at Cooper Spur. In July of 2005, the HRVRC reached agreement with Meadows that would allow for the North side at Cooper Spur and the upper reaches of the Crystal Springs to be permanently protected as Wilderness. In July and August of 2005, the HRVRC met with other stakeholders and the two Congressmen at Timberline and, then, met again on their hike around the mountain above

Eliot Glacier to discuss the proposed settlement. In the fall of 2005, the Congressmen held another two summits, in Hood River and Portland, where the settlement was publicly discussed.



After over four years of legal battles over the first trade, public outcry and then, ultimately almost 15 months of mediation, the parties involved in the dispute over the North side reached an agreement that would permanently protect the North side of Mt. Hood as Wilderness, protect the Crystal Springs Watershed as a watershed protection zone and preserve the historic, natural and scenic setting of this special place. In 2005, the Forest Service withdrew its controversial logging project in the watershed and on the historic North side of Mt. Hood.

The stage was set for permanent protection of the North side. The parties have agreed that Meadows would offer up equal value land on the North side of Mt. Hood in exchange for land within the Government Camp community revitalization zone on the south side of Mt. Hood. Government Camp has about 120 acres within its community boundary that is zoned for low-density residential use. The community is already developed, and the land is primarily second growth and is dominated by signs of past development, including roads, trails and timber harvest. The land on the North side is marked by old growth habitat, habitat for endangered species, migration corridor for big game, a drinking watershed, and provides historic backcountry recreation at its finest. Some of the land on the North side has been impacted by past logging, yet is in the Crystal Springs Watershed zone of contribution and has been identified for rehabilitation and restoration.



Old growth groves in Tilly Jane Roadless Area would be protected



The member groups of the Cooper Spur Wild & Free Coalition (CSWF – www.cooperspur.org) have worked hard to achieve the permanent protection of the North side and this proposal achieves that vision. The CSWF member groups include the Mazamas, the Oregon Nordic Club, the Hood River Valley Residents Committee, the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club, Oregon Wild, the Portland Audubon Society, BARK, the Friends of Tilly Jane, the Oregon Wildlife Federation, the Oregon Canoe and Kayak Club, the Ptarmigans and the Friends of Mt. Hood. These groups have offered their support for the proposed solution, and many other local citizens have also joined in supporting it.

Proposed Solution for Cooper Spur Protection.

The local residents group agrees with the principle that public land should be retained in public ownership and only traded in circumstances that meet the highest environmental standards. Throughout the process that led to this concept, the Hood River Valley Residents Committee has worked to honor that principle.



The proposed solution seeks to permanently return 620 acres to public ownership that was traded to Meadows, turn over another 158 acres of private land that is surrounding by public land into public ownership, and permanently protect an additional 1,350 acres of public land that was part of a ski permit area and threatened with ski area development. The bulk of the land that would be returned to the Forest Service is within the Crystal Springs zone of contribution and forms part of the historic backcountry elements on the North side of Mt. Hood. In exchange, Meadows will receive 120 acres of land within the Government Camp revitalization plan. In sum, the land in Govt. Camp will be traded to protect over 2,000 acres of land on the North side of Mt. Hood as Wilderness.

Public Interest Goals Promoted By Proposed Solution

This trade promotes the protection and restoration of biological and ecological values. Specifically, the North side will be permanently protected as Wilderness, and the remainder of the public land in the Crystal Springs Watershed will be protected as a watershed protection zone. The North side of Mt. Hood is home to a number of historic backcountry structures and it provides a backcountry recreational experience as well as important biological and ecological values. The conservation groups who negotiated the proposed solution obtain protection through Wilderness designation for the Tilly Jane roadless area and all the eligible lands on the North side. The land on the South Side that is being traded out of public ownership is already part of a local plan for community revitalization, and there is significant existing development adjacent to this land.



Valuable High-Elevation and Sensitive Land

The Proposed Solution takes environmentally sensitive lands out of private control and transfers it to public ownership. The proposed public land exchange as a whole is highly environmentally beneficial. These are environmentally sensitive because they involve:

- Drinking watershed for 25% of Hood River County residents.
- Old-growth forests and roadless areas 1000 acres or larger
- Key migratory habitat for big game, deer and elk.
- Designated historic areas for backcountry recreation – Cloud Cap Tilly Jane Historic Area.



For a number of years, the local residents have been working with many other organizations to advocate for the permanent protection of these lands into a set of Wilderness additions on Mt. Hood. The trade will permanently protect the backcountry recreation area on the North side of Mt. Hood and minimize cumulative impacts on the landscape by taking public land out of private ownership. The trade will protect ecological, cultural and recreational resources, as well as protect a primary drinking water source for local residents and key migration corridors for big game.

Public Participation

The proposed solution was born through years of hard work and through consultation with diverse stakeholders and people who live around the mountain. The proposed solution was put forward after thirty years of disputes over the fate of the North side of Mt. Hood. The Hood River Valley Residents Committee, Hood River County and Mt. Hood Meadows have obtained the strong support of the Governor of Oregon and the members of the Oregon Congressional Delegation for the proposed solution. All of the local groups involved in the Cooper Spur Wild & Free have publicly acknowledged their support for the proposed solution. The Hood River Valley Residents Committee includes many local residents and landowners in the Crystal Springs and surrounding area and there is strong local support for this solution. Unlike other controversial swaps that have been proposed in other parts of the Country, the proposed solution is part of long-standing effort to protect the North side of Mt. Hood. (www.cooperspur.org)

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