

UNDER CANVAS SITE VISIT REPORT

FWSR opposes the Under Canvas development. Water is one of the main issues of concern, since the amount permitted to be pumped from an exempt well cannot possibly be sufficient for this development, let alone for any habitat restoration or fire suppression. There is certainly increased danger of wildfire with this development, and fuel reduction practices to protect the tents may damage wildlife habitat by removing understory. The impact on the neighborhood is unacceptable, and the overall traffic impact on the community is likely to be serious not only on Oak Ridge Road but in Husum and along the highway as well. This parcel is a wildlife corridor. Increased bear/cougar/bobcat/human interactions normally end badly for the wildlife. The site visit added two other concerns. Extensive invasive vegetation will need to be removed. It seems likely that chemical means will be necessary. There is an area of white oak habitat, useful to Western Gray Squirrel, which may be damaged during improvements to site access.

We acknowledge that Under Canvas plans no development in the roughly 30-acre area inside the Wild & Scenic management boundary and no river access from on site. However, we are not aware of any plans to permanently protect this area by transfer of ownership of this 30-acre area to the USFS.

SITE VISIT REPORT

FWSR board members Lisa Hamerlynck and Bill Weiler attended a site visit with Caitlan Cullen of Under Canvas on June 18. Here are their observations and thoughts.

The site is steeper and more inaccessible than one can tell from aerial imaging. The views of Mt. Hood are spectacular, apparently a major factor in the selection of this site by Under Canvas. There is no view of the White Salmon River

There is an approximately 30-acre area of flat ground where the tents and central facilities would go. This area was clear-cut about ten years ago. It was replanted, but almost none of the planting survived. In addition, there has been little to no regeneration of native forest. This area also includes stumps and other logging debris. The parcel is in the free-range cattle zone, and there is evidence that cows on site are damaging exposed soils. Over all, the ecological condition of the site is severely degraded.

The site is south-facing, and it is likely that, left to itself, the site would transition into oak habitat rather than conifers. There is an existing pocket of Western Gray Squirrel habitat, which may be impacted by the construction of the road into the site.

There is extensive invasive vegetation, including on the area intended for development. Poison oak is a major understory/ground cover species. The access to the WS River is extremely steep, not obvious, and uninviting due to poison oak and Himalayan Blackberry. Certainly, at least in the area of development, these invasive species would need to be removed, by physical or chemical means.

Despite the devastation of the clear-cut, there are some positive ecological features on site. There is a pond near the NW boundary of the W&S management area. It is about ¼ acre in size. It appears to have been human modified or created from a natural spring/wetland, and it now provides a unique upland water source for wildlife as well as habitat for frogs and newts. A pileated woodpecker was sighted near the pond.

Snags, standing dead trees, and crowded understory provide important habitat. A black bear was seen at the beginning of the site visit, and it's likely that the parcel is an important wildlife corridor from upland areas to the river. Development would certainly increase the potential for undesirable wildlife/human interactions. Wildfire management, including clearing of the understory, would be a negative impact for wildlife.

The site visit was primarily to see the condition and features of the site. There remain multiple other issues – water supply and traffic impacts among them – which will continue to merit attention.