WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

Protecting Cliffs

Date: August, 1999

Application: All west-side forested ecosystems covered by the Habitat Conservation Plan, including the Olympic Experimental State Forest Planning Unit.

DISCUSSION

This procedure describes the management strategies for activities that are next to or around a cliff ecosystem. Cliffs greater than 25 feet high and below 5,000 feet in elevation are potentially sensitive habitats. Cliffs are necessary for the life cycle of many species of plants and animals. A cliff is defined as a steep, vertical, or overhanging rock face. Specifically, cliffs provide unique geomorphic features for nesting and roosting opportunities for some bat species, peregrine falcons, and other raptors. The main objective for protecting cliffs and the associated wildlife species is to minimize disturbance.

The cliff protection strategy will incorporate an evaluation of each cliff's contribution to the landscape's habitat objectives and a site-specific plan for all management activities, including rock mining, if appropriate, in or around a cliff. Management activities will be designed and conducted to minimize disturbance and microclimate changes.

Action

1. If cliffs are present within the boundaries of any proposed management activity, incorporate the following conservation measures into the management activity:

    (a) Consult with region or division biologists to evaluate cliffs that are greater than 25 feet tall and below 5,000 feet in elevation, during the planning for harvest activities to determine if the cliff is likely used by wildlife (i.e., Are fissures/overhangs present that would be suitable for bats? Are ledges present that might be suitable for nesting raptors? Are perch trees present adjacent to or above the cliff?). If use is likely, provide adequate protection measures that include, but are not limited to, the following:

        i. Protect the integrity of cliffs (e.g., during felling and yarding, logs should not be allowed to disturb the cliff face).

        ii. Retain trees on cliff benches and along the base and top of cliffs judged suitable for nesting raptors, especially potential perch trees along the top of cliffs.

iii. Avoid damage to significant cavities, fissures and ledges.

iv. Evaluate all cliffs that are in excess of 80 feet in height and below 5,000 feet in elevation for peregrine falcon use (see PR 14-004-340).

v. Protect all cliffs with known peregrine falcon aeries according to Forest Practices regulations and the commitments contained in PR 14-004-340.

vi. Avoid rock mining from cliffs for road construction, provided construction material can be acquired from alternate locations in a practicable manner, and is consistent with other objectives of a comprehensive landscape-based road network planning process. When mining is not avoidable, obtain region manager approval.

vii. Do not mine rock from cliffs with peregrine falcon aeries.

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