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Plans to log near Cooper Spur draw criticism

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By Peter Sleeth

A group of environmental, recreation and land-use advocates asked the U.S. Forest Service Friday to reconsider plans for a group of timber sales near the Cooper Spur Ski Area because a [potential new resort in the area could cause additional environmental damage.

The Polallie-Cooper timber sales involve three separate logging projects. Because the Cooper Spur Ski Area may soon be expanded with new ski runs, and a destination resort with a gold course nearby, the groups said all activities in the area need to be reconsidered.

Local chapters of the Sierra Club and the hiking club, The Mazamas joined six other groups to reevaluate the timber sales.

"The Forest Service needs to step back and look at the effects of all four of these projects," said Greg Dyson, executive director of BARK, an environmental group. "The Forest Service needs to be truthful with the public and truthful with itself about the combined effects of these four major projects all hitting the mountain in a relatively short time frame."

Kim Titus, the district ranger in the Hood River Ranger District, was not available for comment Friday, a spokeswoman said.

The timber sales are primarily thinnings to help reduce fire danger in the area, with some clear cutting.

The owners of the Mount Hood Meadows Ski Resort want to convert the tiny Cooper Spur Ski and Recreation Area into a resort unlike any other on the mountain. In addition to expanding the ski area with ski lifts and new runs, a nearby destination resort could have as many as 450 homes, hotel rooms and condominiums, an ice rink, golf course, stores and restaurants.

The plans have drawn opposition in the Hood River Valley from some residents who want ski development kept on the south face of Mount Hood, where all but the Cooper Spur ski area are located.

The inclusion of the Mazamas – a climbing and hiking club based in Portland – changes the character of the struggle on Mt. Hood. Typically, environmental groups opposed to national forest logging have made up the resistance to new timber sales. The Mazamas generally stay on the sidelines.

The group decided to join in the opposition to any destination resort in the area because of the damage it would do to the relative isolation of the north and west sides of the mountain, a spokesman said.

You can reach Peter Sleeth at 503.294.4119 or by email at petersleeth@news.oregonian.com.