



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 10, 2015

CONTACT: Sharla Arledge, Public Information Officer  
(208) 334-0286 or [pio@idl.idaho.gov](mailto:pio@idl.idaho.gov)

### **Idaho public school timber sale on hold because of litigation**

(LEWISTON) – Road construction and logging on an Idaho County fire-burned timber sale worth \$2 million for the Idaho public school endowment fund is on hold because of legal actions by Idaho Rivers United (IRU) and an adjacent private landowner.

A federal judge granted today a request to stop harvesting activities on the Selway Salvage Sale until the court decides on a lawsuit in which IRU and the landowner are suing the U.S. Forest Service over access to the sale property. The salvage operations were scheduled to begin Monday, July 13.

“We respect the rule of law, and will continue to pursue all legal remedies to ensure this public school endowment forest and the water that surrounds it stay healthy so the forest can provide financial benefits for this generation and future generations of Idaho school children,” Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) Director Tom Schultz said.

Delay in completing the project this year will increase the risk of bark beetle and other insect infestation that will damage salvageable timber and significantly reduce its value. It also will delay reforestation work necessary to protect against soil erosion of fire-damaged areas.

“We are concerned that, even if expedited, final resolution of this case will not occur in time for work on the salvage project to begin, much less be completed, before the spring and summer of next year,” Schultz added.

The Selway Salvage Sale was auctioned June 19 for a net value of approximately \$2 million. It would remove 6.8 million board feet of timber near Lowell in Idaho County that burned in the Johnson Bar Fire in 2014. The timber sale was put together by a team of foresters with support from an engineering geologist, fisheries biologist, and forest hydrologist.

In May IRU and the landowner sued the Forest Service to block access to the endowment lands on a public road that borders the landowner’s property. The stretch of road, approximately 700 feet long, provides the only access to the timber sale. The plaintiffs contend the Forest Service must issue a special use permit before IDL can use the road. In June the State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) and IDL intervened in the suit to oppose the IRU and the landowner’s claim and to support the Forest Service’s position that no permit is necessary.

More than 2.4 million acres of State endowment land – including one million acres of forests – are managed under a constitutional mandate to maximize long-term financial returns to public schools and other beneficiaries. The lands are managed by the IDL under the direction of the Land Board, comprised of the governor, attorney general, secretary of state, state controller, and superintendent of public instruction.

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