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## Safe Harbor for Owls and Timber

By Heidi Walters

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It's hooting season on the Van Eck Forest, notes a March 1 post on the Pacific Forest Trust's blog. But — the gist of the post — if the biologist doing the hooting discovers any new spotted owls, the PFT, which manages the privately owned Van Eck under a working forest conservation easement, won't face more regulatory restrictions because in December it secured a "safe harbor agreement" with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

You remember the Van Eck: those 2,163 acres of timberland between McKinleyville and Fieldbrook into which notable polycelebs have invested some of their carbon guilt. We wrote about this too.

The safe harbor agreement allows the PFT to do its thing — enhance spotted owl habitat and still harvest timber — without having the USFWS breathing down its neck. And it's an unusually long one: 90 years. During that time, up to five pairs of spotted owls will be allowed to move in as their habitat expands, according to the July 2008 notice in the Federal Register of the PFT's application for the agreement. The forest has one pair now. From the Fed Reg:

*...the Agreement provides that if more than five northern spotted owl activity centers should become established on the property during the 90 year term, the Applicant would be allowed to remove such additional activity centers during the Agreement period.*