

Board of Forestry Meeting
REMARKS BY GOVERNOR TED KULONGOSKI
Friday, October 22, 2004

Good morning. It's a pleasure to be here this morning. I'd like to first thank Chairman Hobbs and the members of the Board of Forestry for the opportunity to speak with you today.

You have taken on a very difficult challenge. I know that – and greatly appreciate the time, energy and enthusiasm that all of you have demonstrated as members of this Board.

Each of you has a busy life and many other responsibilities to deal with. But that has not stopped you from putting in long hours on some very tough issues.

Please, keep up the good work and know that I appreciate the many contributions you're making to Oregon's environment, economy and quality of life.

Chairman Hobbs invited me here so that we can talk about our exchange of letters on the management of Board of Forestry lands.

But for me, today's meeting is part of a larger conversation about forest policy – and the absolutely critical role the Board of Forestry must play in creating and implementing that policy.

State forest policy is very much in the news right now. As everyone in this room knows, there is a major ballot measure dealing with the Tillamook Forest – and a lot of TV ads – for and against – relating to the ballot measure.

I'll have more to say about Measure 34 in a moment. But the point is this: The public is now hearing about and engaged – to an unusual degree – in the issue of how best to keep our forests healthy.

This is all for the good. The more the public learns about – and discusses – healthy forest management, the better. The question is: Who is best qualified – and most prepared – to lead this discussion? My answer is – the Board of Forestry.

That's what the Board of Forestry was originally created to do. And that is what you must continue to do.

Yes – to properly manage Oregon's most important natural resource, we need a highly qualified State Forester and excellent staff. Fortunately, we have both.

But we also need a group of citizen volunteers appointed by the Governor, confirmed by the Senate – and tasked to develop policies for the long-term protection and utilization of our forests.

So my message to you is simple: Be bold. Be open. And keep your eye on the big picture.

The need for an active and strong Board of Forestry has not changed. What has changed is some of the challenges facing our state forests.

Today, we have hundreds of rural communities all over the State, surrounded by – or adjacent to – forestland. At the same time more than seventy percent of our population now lives in urban areas along the I-5 corridor.

As our population continues to grow and change – so do ideas about how our forests should be managed and used.

Our forests mean jobs. They mean habitat. They mean recreation and solitude. Forests are both part of our economic future – and a link to our pioneer and native past.

Over the last three decades, these passionate – and sometimes competing – views of our forests have led to an "us versus them" mentality in many parts of our state. And for that we have *all* paid a price.

That price includes catastrophic fires and high unemployment – especially in some of our rural communities. The fires have destroyed endangered species habitat, degraded watersheds, affected air quality and turned magnificent backcountry recreation areas into black char.

High unemployment has hurt local schools, allowed community infrastructure to deteriorate and pushed the cost of higher education beyond the reach of many citizens.

We have to get past this costly conflict over our forests and craft the public policy model that you described in your strategic plan, *The Forestry Program for Oregon*.

As you point out, ensuring sustainable forests in Oregon requires that we understand that the social, environmental and economic benefits of forests are not only important – but also interconnected.

For example, if we don't protect soil and water, the land's economic value will be eroded.

Enhancing fish and wildlife habitat provides recreational, scenic and other social benefits. Being able to generate revenue from forests lets us afford environmental protection and social amenities.

And if we don't have strong social acceptance of our forest policies, the public will demand new policies – and new ways of managing our forests.

That said, you have also recognized that not every single acre has to provide the same mix of benefits in the same proportion. Our policy, spelled out in statute, says that the primary use of private forestlands is for growing and harvesting of timber.

Oregon law also says that lands owned by the Board of Forestry should be managed to produce the "Greatest Permanent Value."

Federal lands, on the other hand, are to be managed under a complex allocation of Wilderness Areas, Roadless Areas, Late Successional Reserves, the Matrix Lands and others.

With this diverse set of priorities, clearly expressed and fully implemented, Oregon has the opportunity to show the rest of the world what it means to achieve sustainable forests. But only if we can overcome some serious impediments.

The first is the unsatisfactory implementation of federal land use allocations. For example, the status of Roadless areas. If I may, let me make myself clear on this issue. After decades of debate, I thought we had resolution of this issue. Unfortunately, I was wrong. What was once clear, today has become unclear.

The current administration is seeking to repeal, directly or indirectly, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule which is presently in effect. I oppose the administration's attempt to repeal the current rule. I continue to believe that commercial entry into the IRA's will break up the integrity of the forest ecosystem of large contiguous roadless areas, which in turn, will lead to severe environmental damage to these sensitive areas. I also believe that entry for commercial salvage into the IRA's will threaten future potential wilderness designation of these areas.

If the administration continues to pursue the repeal of the current Roadless Area Conservation Rule, I believe the proposed rule is unworkable and is not in Oregon's long term economic interest nor does it meet our objective of managing for sustainable forests in Oregon.

If states are truly being asked to help resolve this issue, we must have the authority to implement management decisions that comply with our objective of sustainability. Asking Oregon to create yet another planning process for federal lands without any real management responsibility or budget control is simply an unproductive use of the state's time, energy and resources.

Another example: Late Successional Reserves have not been adequately managed or protected. As a result, large areas of important habitat have been lost to fires like the Biscuit and B & B.

The managers of LSR's must understand that old growth forest habitat is a critical part of a healthy forest ecosystem and must be part of the long term future of any forest managed under principles of sustainability. All of us must also understand, that the word sustainability also includes some timber harvest in Late Successional Reserves to develop old growth conditions.

At the same time the Matrix Lands have never produced more than a fraction of the timber sales that were specified in the federal government's Northwest Forest Plan.

Part of the problem has been lack of funding. But a bigger cause of inaction has been the constant conflict over federal policy.

This conflict is rooted in the presumption that the economic, environmental and social values of these lands are mutually exclusive.

This is simply not true.

Barriers to sustainability are not confined to federal land. They exist on private forestland too.

We have to help private landowners stay competitive in the global marketplace by making sure that Oregon's forest regulations support environmental, economic and social values.

I know that you met yesterday with the Environmental Quality Commission to ensure good coordination on water quality issues. This is an important step forward.

If we don't provide landowners thoughtful, science-based approaches for achieving environmental goals, then we're certain to put the economic contributions of these private lands at risk.

But the place where much of your attention is focused right now is – appropriately – state-owned Board of Forestry lands.

In northwest Oregon, the vast majority of public land is owned by the state. As such, these lands can more easily be used in ways that promote environmental and social values than surrounding private lands.

Again, as your *Forestry Program for Oregon* acknowledges, different lands can compliment each other, and your current plan for Board of Forestry lands recognizes this.

Nevertheless, many people believe that the current plan does not go far enough in protecting environmental and social values. So they're trying to accomplish with the ballot what they believe is not being accomplished by this Board.

Specifically, voters are being asked to approve Ballot Measure 34. I am strongly opposed to Measure 34 – and I urge my fellow Oregonians to vote no.

Let me give a little history.

Last year the Legislature came up with the second worst idea for managing the Tillamook Forest – doing it themselves.

I stood firm against House Bill 3632, which would have opened up the Tillamook to much more timber harvesting.

But managing our forests by ballot measure is even worse. This year it happens to be Measure 34.

Next year is could be an initiative that only pays attention to economic benefits – while ignoring environmental and social values.

This is not the way to manage and protect our state forests.

The Board of Forestry – working with professional resource managers in the Oregon Department of Forestry – is in the best position to guide the management of these lands on behalf of the citizens of Oregon,

. . . not the people who are trying to pass Measure 34 – and not members of the legislature and their supporters

Measure 34 and House Bill 3632 only serve to perpetuate conflict.

Both advance the notion that economic, environmental and social benefits are mutually exclusive.

And both run counter to – and ignore – the goal of creating sustainable forests.

As the Board of Forestry, you can lead Oregon toward its goal of sustainable forests. To reach that goal, I recommend that the Board take the following important steps

First – create a unified vision of how federal lands should contribute to the sustainability of our state forests. And don't be reluctant to share that vision with the public – or timid in coming up with proposals to make this vision a reality.

Make your vision action-oriented – and comprehensive. Don't stop at the first or second steps. Go all the way to the *last* step, including implementation. I believe states must be more actively involved in the implementation of policy on federal lands.

Second – maintain Oregon's position as a global leader in the use of sound, science-based, carefully considered forest practices on private lands. That includes giving landowners the opportunity to add value to their private land in exchange for helping to achieve sustainability.

If forestry in Oregon is going to remain a globally competitive enterprise, then landowners have to realize full value for their performance.

That's why I would like to see the Department of Forestry and the Oregon Economic Community Development Department work together to encourage a strong manufacturing base for forest products – while creating family-wage jobs in rural areas.

We should also provide incentives for landowners to contribute to the environmental and social value of their land – in ways that actually add value to their land.

For example, creating a way to market the environmental benefit of carbon sequestration to combat global warming. Or increasing marketplace recognition for Oregon's approach to forest practices.

Third – make the Tillamook and Clatsop state forests models for how public land management can truly integrate social, economic and environmental values into a sustainable forest management system.

As I indicated in my letter, you have the opportunity to put the concept of "adaptive management" to work as you develop policies for the management of these forests.

That means carefully folding new and better science into the forest management plan – so that the plan evolves and improves over time. This is a much better approach than rigid formulas – and it will help us get past the current either/or arguments.

The point is not to shut the door on the strongly held views of stakeholders. The point is to listen and integrate their views – especially when those views are based on sound science and promote sustainability.

Let me say a little more about adaptive management – and why it is the best way out of the conflict about our forests. In the two years I've been Governor, I've heard calls for more reserves; for more harvesting; and for less harvesting.

A new panel looking at Salmon Anchor Habitat has split – with half the members saying discontinue the practice and the other half saying maintain it.

There are some legislators who want the Forestry Department to spend more of the timber revenue receipts on recreation and others – including the E-Board – who say don't spend any of those dollars on projects like the Tillamook Interpretive Center.

This kind of division is a recipe for continued gridlock, conflict and unhealthy forests.

That's why I believe the Board of Forestry must be the place where all points of view find an audience – and the stakeholders that bring these points of view to the table have confidence that their ideas will be carefully considered.

Adaptive management makes this consideration – and integration – of new ideas and new science possible. Right now this Board approves a plan and the presumption is that all decision-making is over – that the plan is set in stone.

This forces people to look for alternative ways to pursue their interests – primarily through the initiative or legislative process. What we need instead is a carefully constructed adaptive management process that is under the direction of the Board of Forestry – *and well understood by the public.*

In other words, Oregonians must understand that adaptive management – under the guidance of a

Board of Forestry and with the full engagement of stakeholders – affords them the best opportunity to find – and agree on – the Greatest Permanent Value.

So my message to stakeholders is this: If you value the productive capacity of our forests; if you value the wildlife and watershed benefits of our forests; and if you value the forest as a place of quiet solitude – then adaptive management, led by the Board of Forestry, is the best way to preserve these critical long range values.

Our forestlands do not belong to any one generation. They belong to every generation – past, present and future. Our challenge is to balance the economic, environmental and social values that are dividends we earn from living in a place with some of the world's most magnificent forests. That is the best way to sustain our forests for posterity.

Finding that balance is never easy. It requires a deep science-based knowledge of our forests, visionary thinking, and experienced forest management. In other words, it requires the Board of Forestry.

This is your job – and I have absolutely no doubt that you are up to the challenge.

You have my sincere appreciation for the work you do, and you will have my full support as you move ahead in developing policies to maintain the health, beauty and economic viability of our forests.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to appear before you. And thank you for all of your hard work.