Chapter 1
Purpose, History, and Planning

The *Elliott State Forest Management Plan* (FMP) provides management direction for all Common School Forest Lands (CSFLs) and Board of Forestry Lands (BOFLs) that are managed by the Coos District. This includes Elliott State Forest proper, and scattered tracts of state forest lands in Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties, with a combined total of 97,022 acres. However, for the purposes of this FMP, all lands managed by the Coos District are referred to as the "Elliott State Forest." This FMP supersedes and replaces the previous FMP that was completed in 1994 (Oregon Department of Forestry 1994a), while taking a similar comprehensive, multi-resource approach to forest management.

This FMP includes a description of each forest resource, information about its current condition, and the management methods to be applied. The goals and strategies of this FMP are designed to achieve a proper balance between all forest resources through a system of integrated management (e.g., generating revenue through harvesting of forest products, while concurrently maintaining and developing desirable fish and wildlife habitats and forest biological diversity).

This chapter introduces the FMP, with a brief history of the relevant forest lands and a general description of Oregon state forest planning. Main headings in this chapter are:

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Location

The Elliott State Forest is located in the Oregon Coast Range. The nearest cities to the southwest are Coos Bay and North Bend; Reedsport is the nearest town to the northwest. The forest is a contiguous block of land approximately 18 miles long (north to south), and approximately 16 miles wide (west to east). The Umpqua River is located immediately north of the forest. To the west, the Elliott extends within six miles of the ocean. On the east, it extends approximately 21 miles inland. The contiguous Elliott State Forest covers 93,282 acres, mostly located in Coos and Douglas Counties.

In addition to the main block of the Elliott State Forest, the Coos District manages 3,740 acres of scattered CSFLs located in Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties. These scattered tracts are distributed across a broad geographic area ranging from the California border to just north of the Umpqua River, and from the Pacific Ocean to Sutherlin in the interior Umpqua River valley.

Land Ownership

State forests consist of CSFLs and BOFLs. The State of Oregon acquired the two types of land by different methods, and both land types are owned by different entities within the state government. The CSFLs are owned by the State Land Board, and BOFLs are owned by the Board of Forestry (BOF). Each land ownership has its own set of legal and policy mandates. These mandates are discussed under “Land Base and Access” in Chapter 2, and also in Appendix D. The guiding principles in Chapter 3 provide more information about how state forests of both ownerships are managed under this FMP.

Most (90.6 percent, or 87,934 acres) of the state forest lands in the Coos District are CSFLs, and the remaining 9.4 percent (9,088 acres) are BOFLs.

History of the Elliott State Forest

Introduction

The Elliott State Forest has the honor of being Oregon's first state forest. Officially established in 1930, today it is well known for producing high-quality timber, habitat for fish and wildlife species, and recreational opportunities.

Prior to its official creation, 84 percent of the Elliott State Forest was national forest land administered by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). All other non-federal forests in Oregon were predominantly owned by private landowners.

Two catastrophic events in Oregon over the past 150 years have affected the Elliott State Forest: the Coos Bay Fire of 1868, and the Columbus Day Storm of 1962. However, the healthy, growing forest and thriving wildlife populations that exist today demonstrate the Elliott State Forest's ability to recover from catastrophic disturbances. Despite the fire and windstorm, the Elliott State Forest currently has the oldest timber stands found in any of Oregon's state-owned forests.

Prehistory and History to 1868

Native Americans, including the Coos and Umpqua tribes, originally lived in and near the area that is now the Elliott State Forest (Beckham 2001). Trappers were the earliest Euro-American presence, moving up and down the coast between northern California and Fort Clatsop in Astoria, Oregon from the 1820s to the 1840s.

The United States received clear title to the Oregon Territories from Great Britain in 1846 with Oregon established as a Territory in 1849. Early settlements in the Elliott area began in the 1850s, with the establishment of Scottsburg at the beginning of the gold rush. Coos County was formed in 1853, and Empire City was declared the county seat. Oregon became a state in 1859. After the discovery of gold in southwest Oregon in 1851, land and resource conflicts led to the Rogue River Indian Wars. By 1860, almost all Native Americans in the region had died from violence, starvation, or disease, or had been displaced to reservations.

Early descriptions of the Elliott State Forest area mention vast stands of Douglas-fir, western hemlock, western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), Port Orford cedar (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*), and large stands of Sitka spruce. Settlers mentioned stands of red alder (*Alnus rubra*), willow (*Salix spp*.), and maple (*Acer spp*.) along the rivers and streams.

Coos Bay Fire of 1868

The earliest known fires in the Elliott area include two large fires of unknown size, one along the Elliott's eastern edge in 1770, and the other along the northeast portion of the Elliott State Forest in 1840. These fires left untouched most of the area that is now the Elliott State Forest.

In contrast to the earlier fires, the historic Coos Bay Fire of 1868 burned 90 percent of the area that is now the Elliott State Forest. It is believed that this fire started near Scottsburg from a settler's clearing fire, in an area known as Greenacres. The fire burned westward along the north bank of the Umpqua River until it jumped the river near the mouth of Mill Creek. From there, it blazed in a southwesterly direction, burning nearly all of the Elliott State Forest area except for the southeast portion and small parts of the northwest portion.

Generally, the fire stopped only when it reached the sand and the water of Coos Bay. However, in two locations—one to the north near Reedsport, and one to the south by Coos Bay—evidence suggests that large stands of fire-resistant Sitka spruce contributed to the slowing and halting of the fire. In addition, in the southern area of the Elliott State Forest, a younger stand that matured after a 1770 fire helped to slow the fire's spread in that direction.

The Coos Bay Fire severely burned approximately 300,000 acres of forest, some of which was estimated at 300 years old. Within 20 years, however, most of the burned area supported thick stands of young Douglas-fir.

Acquisition as a State Forest

The origin of the Elliott State Forest dates back to 1859, when the Oregon Territory became the State of Oregon. At that time, the Admissions Act granted to Oregon two sections (16 and 36) in every township, or equivalent lands if those were unavailable, for the financing of public schools. This land grant, known as the Common School Trust Lands, comprised approximately 3.5 million acres.

Between 1859 and 1912, all but 130,000 acres of forested lands in Oregon passed out of state ownership. The state sold most of the lands to fund the building of schools and pay teachers' salaries, but some lands changed ownership through fraudulent land deals. Approximately 70,000 acres of the remaining lands were scattered inside the newly established national forests in Oregon, with 37,000 acres located in eastern Oregon, and 33,000 acres in western Oregon.

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) was created in 1911 for the purpose of controlling forest fires. The 1925 State Legislature passed a law allowing the BOF (part of the ODF) to accept gifts or donations of forest land. In 1939, the State Forests Acquisition Act created procedures for the BOF to acquire tax-delinquent forest lands from the counties, manage the land, and return most net revenues to the counties. In later years, amendments fine-tuned the distribution of revenues and legal direction for forest management on these lands (Fick and Martin 1992).

To turn the isolated parcels of CSFLs into one manageable block of state-owned forest land, State Forester Francis Elliott and Governor Oswald West decided to trade the state parcels inside the national forests with the federal government for one large block of federal land. This block of land became Oregon's first state forest.

Congress amended the 1911 Weeks Law "... to allow for the exchange of lands and timber ... for any lands situated within the exterior boundaries of a National Forest, so

long as those lands were found to be chiefly valuable for the purposes of the law." In 1927, President Calvin Coolidge signed into law a bill allowing the proposed exchange.

In July 1930, just weeks before the final deeds were acquired, Francis Elliott died. Following his death, and as a special honor recognizing his commitment to establishing the first state forest, the BOF named the land parcel the Elliott State Forest.

The new Elliott State Forest was to be managed as a demonstration forest, to show private landowners the value of investing in forest management. However, the year the Elliott State Forest was officially dedicated, 1930, was the first year of the Great Depression. Although the Oregon Legislature placed the State Forester in charge of administering the forest, he was given no funds to complete the work. Despite the forest's potential to produce timber, formal management did not commence.

The State Forester assigned his few employees, who were all firefighters, to survey the boundaries of the Elliott State Forest. He then garnered the aid of the Civilian Conservation Corps, a Depression-era federal work program, to build ridgetop access roads. The Civilian Conservation Corps built 30 miles of roads by the time World War II interrupted the program. The State Forester dropped plans for more roads when the program ended.

In 1940, Coos County deeded to the BOF 6,500 acres of tax-delinquent forest land located next to the Elliott State Forest. Nearly 1,800 acres of BOFLs are also located in Douglas County, most of which was deeded by the county in the 1930's and 40's. In return, the counties were to receive two-thirds of the revenue from these lands.

Management by the State

Before the 1950s, the timber market was sluggish, and timber prices remained low. The ODF facilitated only two timber sales, at the request of a mill owner who paid approximately $2 per thousand board feet (MBF) for stumpage. By the end of World War II, demand and prices for timber increased significantly.

In the 1950s, timber management became a greater priority for the State of Oregon. In 1955, the Oregon Legislature created a revolving fund for monies collected from timber sales of CSFLs within the Elliott State Forest. This fund made intensive management of the forest possible. Forest management began with the inventory of all south coast state timberlands, and the establishment of an ODF timber management office in Coos Bay. By 1958, the inventory was complete, and Coos District timber sales finally reached the calculated allowable annual timber sale level of 36 million board feet (MMBF).

In the 1960s, the Elliott State Forest expanded again when the state acquired 7,700 acres of public domain lands owed to the state through school indemnity claims. These lands are known as "lieu lands" because the federal government offered them to the state to compensate for original land grants that had conflicting claims. For example, some grant lands were located within federal ownerships and were unlikely to be surveyed.

In 1962, the historic Columbus Day Storm had a major effect on the management of the Elliott State Forest. In just a few hours, the storm's high winds blew down an estimated

100 MMBF of timber. Most of the blowdown was in the western half of the forest, where few roads existed because the trees were younger. Salvaging the timber before it rotted required the building of many miles of roads at a hectic pace. Nearly one-third of the 550 miles of road that exist today in the forest were built at that time to obtain the blowdown timber. Foresters cut an additional 200 MMBF of timber to access the blowdown, increasing the total to 300 MMBF of timber harvested in a short amount of time.

In 1968, the Coos District was managing the 85,000-acre Elliott State Forest and another 11,000 acres in scattered isolated state parcels. A focused land exchange effort began in the 1970s, in which many of these isolated parcels were traded for privately owned land within or next to the forest. A total of 7,000 acres of CSFLs was added to the main block of the Elliott State Forest, resulting in a contiguous forest that is easier to manage.

Most of the mature trees in the forest are 100 to 130 years old. Douglas-fir is the dominant species, with minor amounts of western hemlock, western redcedar, red alder, and bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*). The Elliott State Forest contains an estimated 2.7 billion board feet of timber.

In addition to the economic benefits, the Elliott State Forest also provides excellent recreational opportunities. Many people visit the forest each year to camp, picnic, swim, hunt, fish, or enjoy other recreational activities in the forest environment.

The ODF has not developed any campgrounds, picnic tables, or fire rings in the forest. However, this makes the forest more popular with those seeking dispersed recreation.

In the early 1990s, foresters continued to learn more about the non-timber resources within the Elliott State Forest. Surveys located northern spotted owl and marbled murrelets, two species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), and forest managers established protection for sites occupied by these species. The planning process as detailed in this FMP holds the key to future management of the Elliott State Forest.

Planning for State Forests

CSFLs currently are managed in accordance with the Oregon State Constitution, the 1859 Admissions Act, and the State Land Board's Asset Management Plan (Department of State Lands and State Land Board 1995). The ODF looks to statutory and administrative rules for management of BOFLs.

In addition, the Department of State Lands (DSL) Asset Management Plan (Department of State Lands and State Land Board 1995) states, as part of the management prescriptions for managing CSFLs:

> *Forestlands are to be managed primarily to produce a sustainable, even-flow harvest of timber, subject to economic, environmental and regulatory considerations, according to specific plans developed by forest managers. These plans will be prepared by the land manager (e.g., Department of Forestry) or the Division [now the Department of State Lands] and approved by the Land Board.*

Management planning for Oregon state forests involves five main elements. As shown in Figure 1-1, planning begins with broad-scale, long-range planning, which may include a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). Intermediate-level planning is performed at the level of ODF administrative districts, and is documented through district Implementation Plans (IPs). Annual Operations Plans (AOPs) and budgets are designed to achieve the objectives of the IPs for short-term periods (1 or 2 years).

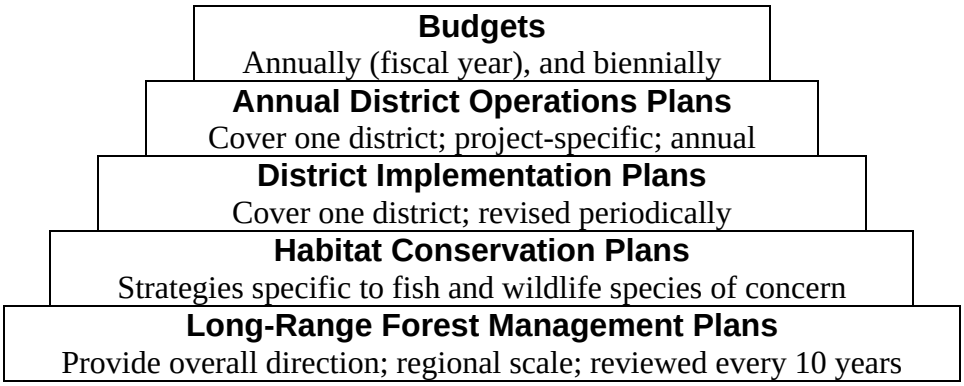

Figure 1-1. Five Elements of Planning for Oregon State Forests

The Long-Range Forest Management Plan

A long-range FMP such as this one offers overall direction for managing the state forests in the planning area, and provides for a comprehensive, integrated approach to management planning. This FMP presents the overall goals and strategies for managing the vast resources of the Elliott State Forest, and advances a specific set of strategies for integrating the management of several key resources—timber, fish, wildlife, and forest health. These strategies are based on the premise that forest resources are not mutually

exclusive (i.e., requiring trade-offs against each other), but are interrelated resources that can be managed to achieve multiple benefits.

The following legal and policy mandates and information sources guide the development of the goals and strategies in long-range FMPs for state forests:

- Oregon Constitution mandates and the 1859 Admissions Act for management of CSFLs
- Federal laws, including the ESA
- Statutory and administrative rules
- Oregon Supreme Court rulings
- Advice from the Oregon Attorney General
- Policies of the State Land Board, the BOF, and the State Forester
- Agency obligations under the state ESA
- The DSL Asset Management Plan (for CSFLs)
- Guiding principles for the FMP
- Resource assessments and available resource data
- The most current scientific information available, supplemented by input from a comprehensive independent scientific review
- Consultation with the Forest Trust Lands Advisory Committee (required by statute)
- Advice and recommendation from other state and federal natural resource agencies
- Input from comprehensive public involvement in the planning process

Forest Management Planning for Common School Forest Lands

The State Forester is authorized to manage the Elliott CSFLs under Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 530.500. A CSFL agreement among the State Land Board, ODF, and DSL sets forth the requirements for developing long-range management plans for CSFLs, which are then approved by the State Land Board.

According to the agreement, "the overriding objective for Common School Forest Lands shall be maximizing revenue to the Common School Fund over the long term, as determined by the Land Board. In addition, the plans shall also maximize (to the extent consistent with the primary revenue objective) other public values which the Land Board determines will obtain the greatest benefit for the people consistent with conservation of the resource under sound techniques of land management."

The agreement describes elements that must be included in the long-range FMP, such as management goals, a land classification system, a determination of the annual sustainable harvest level, and a monitoring program.

Forest Management Planning for Board of Forestry Lands

The statutory mandate for management planning of BOFLs is found in ORS 526.255. This law requires the State Forester to report to the Governor and legislative committees on "long-range management plans based on current resource descriptions and technical assumptions, including sustained yield calculations for the purpose of maintaining economic stability in each management region." In 1998, the BOF adopted a set of administrative rules that provide further direction to the State Forester in planning for the management of these lands. Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 629-035-0030 states:

> *In managing forest lands as provided in OAR 629-035-0020, the State Forester shall develop Forest Management Plans, based on the best available science, that establish the general management framework for the planning area of forest land. The Board may review, modify, or terminate a plan at any time; however the Board shall review the plans no less than every ten years. The State Forester shall develop implementation and operations plans for forest management plans that describe smaller-scale, more specific management activities within the planning area.*

The rules also require that the following key elements be included in the FMPs.

- **Guiding Principles** — These include legal mandates and BOF policies. Taken together, these principles shall guide development of the FMPs.
- **Resource Descriptions —** These include assessments of the resources on state forest lands. Resources on surrounding lands are also considered, to provide a landscape context.
- **Forest Resource Management Goals —** These are statements that express what the State Forester considers desirable to achieve for each forest resource within the planning area (consistent with OAR 629-035-0020).
- **Management Strategies —** These strategies describe how the State Forester will manage the forest resources, and what management techniques the State Forester may use to achieve the goals of the FMPs.
- **Asset Management —** This section states general guidelines for asset management, which provide overall direction on investments, marketing, and expenses.
- **Implementation, Monitoring, Research, and Adaptive Management** — These sections provide general guidelines for these items.

The administrative rules specify that the State Forester shall be guided by the following stewardship principles in developing and implementing FMPs:

- The FMPs shall include strategies that provide for actively managing forest land in the planning area.
- The FMPs shall include strategies that:
    - Contribute to biological diversity of forest stand types and structures at the landscape level and over time: a) through application of silvicultural

techniques that provide a variety of forest conditions and resources; and b) through conserving and maintaining genetic diversity of forest tree species.

  - Manage forest conditions to result in a great likelihood of: a) maintaining and restoring properly functioning aquatic habitats for salmonids, and other native fish and aquatic life; and b) protecting, maintaining, and enhancing native wildlife habitats, recognizing that forests are dynamic and that the quantity and quality of habitats for species will change geographically and over time.
  - Provide for healthy forests by: a) managing forest insects and diseases through an integrated pest management (IPM) approach; and b) utilizing appropriate genetic sources of forest tree seed and tree species in regeneration programs.
  - Maintain or enhance long-term forest soil productivity.
  - Comply with all applicable provisions of ORS 496.171 to 496.192 and 16 United States Code (USC) § 1531 to 1543 (1982 & supp 1997) concerning state and federally listed threatened and endangered species.

- The FMPs shall include strategies that maintain and enhance forest productivity by:
  - Producing sustainable levels of timber consistent with protecting, maintaining, and enhancing other forest resources.
  - Applying management practices to enhance timber yield and value while contributing to the development of a diversity of habitats for maintaining salmonids and other native fish and wildlife species.
- The FMPs shall include strategies that use the best scientific information available to guide forest resource management actions and decisions by:
  - Using monitoring and research to generate and apply new information as it becomes available.
  - Employing an adaptive management approach to ensure that the best available knowledge is acquired and used efficiently and effectively in forest resource management programs.

Habitat Conservation Plan

Some state forestlands may be covered by HCPs under the federal ESA. HCPs contain more specific conservation strategies for fish and wildlife species of concern, especially those listed as threatened or endangered. Two federal agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries (NOAA Fisheries) (formerly known as the National Marine Fisheries Service), may issue Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) for species covered by an HCP. Forest land ITPs are typically issued for at least 50 years, which is the minimal time required for development of habitat with older forest characteristics. HCPs on Oregon state forests use an adaptive management approach. Management flexibility is designed into the strategies to respond to new science and changing conditions, along with public input and scientific review.

District Implementation Planning

The long-range plans provide overall management direction and establish specific strategic approaches for meeting resource management goals. Most ODF districts also develop IPs, which describe in more detail how the management strategies will be applied in that district. These IPs delineate forest management activities for a 10-year period, and are revised at least every 10 years. However, new technical information or changing conditions may call for updates to individual district IPs within a shorter time frame. Chapter 6 of this FMP describes the process and information that will be included in the current IP for the Elliott State Forest.

Annual Operations Planning

Annual operations planning are the fourth level of planning. Each state forest district prepares an AOP, which describes the location and nature of management activities that are proposed for a given fiscal year. These documents are the most detailed level of planning conducted by the ODF.

District staffs develop initial AOPs that are then reviewed by resource specialists from program and area staff to ensure consistency with the relevant district IP, as well as with the goals and strategies of the FMP. Resource specialists involved in AOP review include the geotechnical specialist, silviculturist, forest engineer, wildlife and fisheries biologists, and recreation coordinator; others are enlisted on a case-by-case basis.

The district submits final AOPs to the program staff in Salem for review and comment, and ultimately, approval by the district forester. The district forester considers any written comments from resource specialists and the public before approving or denying an AOP.

Budgeting

Budgeting is accomplished at two levels: fiscal year and biennial (two-year). The Department prepares biennial budgets every two years and submits them to the Legislature, through the Governor's Office, for legislative approval. Biennial budgets are designed to provide sufficient spending authorization to implement the FMPs.

Because the state forests program operates on a fixed percentage of the revenue received from management of BOFLs, and is reimbursed from the Common School Fund (CSF) for management costs on CSFLs, actual expenditures from year to year are managed through preparation of fiscal year budgets. Annual budgets contain a detailed assessment of the actual resources needed to accomplish the AOPs. Periodic revenue estimates are used to project the level of expenditure that can be supported for a given fiscal year, within the overall biennial authorization. If revenues are lower than what was anticipated during the biennial budgeting process, an individual fiscal budget may reflect lower expenditure levels.

Looking Ahead

The *Elliott State Forest Management Plan* is a comprehensive view of the history, ecological development, and resources of one of Oregon's most productive forests. Through careful short- and long-term planning, wise stewardship, and adaptive management, the Elliott State Forest is expected to sustain economic, social, and environmental goals of Oregonians well into the future.