

## Oregon Board of Forestry, Federal Forestlands Project

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. Why are we doing this? Is there a serious problem, or opportunity, that needs to be addressed?

Forests are extremely important to Oregon. They provide critical family wage jobs in rural communities, important wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and financial support for our roads and schools. Of Oregon's 62 million acres, 28.5 million acres are forested. Of those acres, 57 percent are federal forest lands – approximately one-quarter of Oregon's total land base. East of the Cascades, 72 percent of Oregon's forestlands are federally-owned. We cannot chart a sustainable, productive future for Oregon's forests without considering federal forestlands.

Oregon's forests provide a mix of values. They are an important part of our traded-sector employment and provide critical habitat for endangered species. Governor Kulongoski described the problem we face in an address to the Oregon Board of Forestry (Board). "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 is described in *The Forestry Program for Oregon*."

"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." (October 22, 2004)

These issues are a high priority for Oregon and the work of the Board is an important step that will provide a foundation to increase the state's role in federal forest policy-making, planning, and management. Citizens of the state are deeply affected by the management of federal forests and deserve a stronger voice from their State Government. In order to be more effective, State Government needs a common set of goals and to speak with a single voice.

**2. Are the Oregon Board of Forestry and its Advisory Committee the right entities to address the problem?**

The Board and this Advisory Committee are the appropriate places to have this discussion. Developing forest policy for Oregon is what the Board was originally created to do. The Board is 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.

In 2005 the Legislature passed Senate Bill 1072 into law with bipartisan support. That bill encourages the Board, in consultation with the Governor, to create a forum for interagency cooperation and collaborative public involvement regarding federal forest management issues. It is important to hear ideas and concerns from a broad range of interests, so that collaborative solutions can be developed that will represent the views of the majority of Oregonians.

In October 2004, the Governor directed the Board to “create a unified vision of how federal lands should contribute” to sustainability, and to “make that vision action-oriented and comprehensive – following through to the last step, including implementation.” For this process the Governor has told the Board to “be bold, be open, and keep your eye on the big picture.”

**3. How was the makeup of the Advisory Committee determined? What interests are represented? Is the process fair and balanced?**

While federal lands are generally managed for a national constituency, there is a complicated governance relationship that divides responsibilities on federal forestlands between the state and federal government. The federal government has general management authority, but the state has constitutionally reserved rights and congressionally delegated authority to manage the wildlife and water. State and local governments also provide protection for health and safety and access from our highway system. In exchange, through payments to local governments, Oregon shares in the revenues produced from federal forestlands. This money provides a very important revenue source that is used to support roads and schools. Historically, revenues for schools and roads were provided through harvesting timber, but more recently the funding has been through appropriations from the Secure Rural Schools Act which is due to sunset in 2006. That funding may no longer be secure. Oregon needs a “place at the table” in charting the future of federal lands.

The structure of this Advisory Committee reflects both the governance structure and important interests that might be affected by changes to federal forest policy. The committee members that represent the governance structure were selected through a processes developed in consultation with the governor’s office and the representatives of other interests were selected from names suggested by Oregon’s congressional delegation. The group includes representatives from the Oregon Fish and Wildlife and Oregon Environmental Quality Commissions, plus county commissioners. The major

interests represented include labor, industry, conservation, and the tribes. State and federal agencies will provide staff support and information for the Advisory Committee.

A neutral third party mediator/facilitator has been hired to conduct the Advisory Committee meetings. The Advisory Committee will strive to make decisions by consensus. Consensus means that all members agree that they have had an opportunity to share their opinions, the decision was arrived at fairly and openly, and that they can and will support the decision – even if it is not their preferred choice. When the Advisory Committee makes consensus recommendations, the Board will adopt the recommendations as written, if possible. If the Board does not adopt them as written, the Board will provide an explanation for any changes to the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

In the event the Advisory Committee cannot achieve consensus on an issue or recommendation viewed as important by an Advisory Committee member, the Advisory Committee will articulate the areas of agreement and disagreement and the associated reasons for the differences of opinion, and, if possible, ways to address the differences. In the absence of consensus, the Board will weigh the information received from the Advisory Committee, consider additional public input, and develop its own recommendations.

The Advisory Committee will work with the Board over the next two years, with the Board tentatively scheduled to adopt a guidance document and send it to the governor in early 2009. The document will state Oregon's interests at the national level, where federal forest policy decisions are made, and also will be used as input in specific management planning conducted by each national forest.

#### **4. What opportunities does the public have to be involved in the process?**

There are several places that the public will have opportunities to provide input into the process. Committee members will be asked to keep their constituents informed and engaged as appropriate. A process of joint fact finding will be used where all Committee members will bring technical information and the views of their constituents and others with similar interests to the Advisory Committee process. The Advisory Committee will also receive public input at selected meetings.

As sections of the guidance document are produced, they will be sent to interest groups and interested individuals for review and comment. Those comments will be provided to the Board of Forestry in preparation for work sessions the Board will hold on the documents. The public will also be invited to testify at the work sessions before the Board makes final decisions on adopting the committee's recommendations.

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