



Oregon Forest Industries Council

### State-owned forests

## State forests should be sustainably managed to benefit schools, counties and rural communities.

### Overview

The state of Oregon owns and manages about 3 percent of the state's forest land – approximately 780,000 acres. The two largest blocks are the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests in northwest Oregon and the Elliott State Forest near Coos Bay. The Tillamook and Clatsop are “county forest trust lands” which are managed on behalf of the counties by the Board of Forestry. The Elliott is managed by the Land Board and is the largest asset of the state's Common School Fund, which supports K-12 schools.

The state imposes substantial additional restrictions on the management of these lands, compared to what is required on private forestland under the Oregon Forest Practices Act. As a result, timber harvests on state forests are far below biologically sustainable levels (only half the annual growth is harvested). The difference between what could be achieved sustainably under the Forest Practices Act compared to projections under the state's management plan is more than \$100 million dollars in lost revenue to the counties and the state each biennium. And this does not count the hundreds of new jobs and associated tax revenue that could be created through higher harvest levels. Nor does it count the shot in the arm that could be provided to struggling rural communities.

This disparity is the result of several principles embedded in the state's management plan. These include: (1) long rotations (the age at which trees are harvested and replanted), (2) unnecessarily extensive requirements for leave trees along streams (including very wide buffers on very small streams), and (3) an ultra-cautious approach to compliance with the Endangered Species Act (even though the state's legal risks and obligations are the same as private landowners).

To correct this disparity, the trust land counties brought forward a bill (**HB 2975**) in 2007 that would have recognized timber production as the “primary use” of state forests. It died in a House committee following a veto threat from the Governor. A similar bill passed the House with broad bipartisan support in 2003.

### Position

The Oregon Forest Practices Act ensures protection of air and water quality and fish and wildlife habitat on private forestland. It is no paper tiger. Minimum annual compliance costs exceed \$55 million. In the absence of any compelling rationale to the contrary, OFIC does not believe state forests should be managed to a different standard – particularly in light of the benefits to the counties, schools and rural communities that could otherwise be provided.