

A bill to create jobs while reducing Oregon's carbon footprint from 60 million tons a year to 50 million tons by 2025 is percolating in Salem in preparation for the 2018 legislative session. It's called the Clean Energy Jobs bill, also known as SB 1070, a cap-and-trade system similar to California's.

Surprising new Forest Service monitoring data showing that Oregon's forests, overall, absorb 36 million tons of CO₂ annually has come as a wake-up call to policy makers about the incredible amount of carbon absorbed by Oregon's tremendous forests. Our strategies to reduce atmospheric CO₂ must address forest management policy.

The new realization about the influence of our forests on our state's carbon footprint provides an opportunity for former forest policy adversaries to find a common pathway forward out of the tiresome stalemate over timber management practices which has come to sound like the fabled argument between the blind men over the proper way to describe an elephant.

We've seen precious little agreement over forest policy since Bill Clinton sweet talked industry and agency folks into sitting down at the negotiating table with scientists and environmentalists to hammer out the North West Forest Plan 25 years ago. Management decisions play out in the courts, to nobody's satisfaction.

A focus on the workings of the forest carbon cycle- along with the promise of a significant new source of income from the sale of carbon credits- supports a new, unifying frame of reference for understanding forest processes which can harmonize chronically polarized viewpoints and forge a new consensus over forest policy- and it can start with the Giesy Plan for the Elliott State Forest.

Wayne Giesy is an industry old-timer who first proposed his simple strategy for a cease fire in the timber wars 30 years ago. The Giesy Plan, first, protects the streams and waterways; it then divides the remaining forest equally between protected reserves and areas devoted to industrial management. The Giesy Plan served as the template for John Kitzhaber's Oregon Plan as well as for timber legislation from both Defazio and Wyden. An updated version of the Giesy Plan applied to the Elliott State Forest is gaining traction in Salem and shares surprising similarities with ecologically based, carbon-oriented proposals for Elliott management policy.

After setting aside the agreed-upon 20% of the Elliott land base for riparian reserves for coho salmon, under a carbon-oriented, modified Giesy Plan the remaining Elliott timberland could be divided into not two, but three 22,000-acre pieces: one for industrial-style logging and another for expanded older timber reserves surrounding the nests of spotted owls and marbled murrelets, as Giesy suggested. An additional third sector should be dedicated to building a world-class forest carbon research institution to push the frontiers of understanding of the workings of forest carbon cycles, including production of the highest quality (and highest value) carbon credits. This institute would manage the forest's carbon reserves, monitor ecological and economic effects of all management activities, conduct public education and outreach, and carry out the kind of wide-ranging adaptive management investigations into different approaches to timber harvest promised but never carried through under the North West Forest Plan. Research would include study of job creation possible from non-timber products available when a forest is managed as a functional ecosystem rather than a single-purpose lumber factory. It could combine work in those new markets with carbon reserve creation and monitoring work, and integrate both with a wildland forest fire training academy to create a

new kind of forest workers' career path. We can call the new institution the Elliott State Educational and Experimental Forest.

Such varied income streams create a strong financial picture. Revenue from intensive logging will satisfy the returns needed for the Common School Fund while the sale of Elliott carbon credits, if provided for with proper foresight in SB 1070, can finance the building of a world class Oregon forest carbon research institution and, over time, complete the buyout of the forest from the Common School Fund.

New opportunities and risks in our ever-changing, mighty forests of the west challenge us to rise to the occasion and come together in the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the cycles of life in the forest represented by the mysterious processes of carbon flux. An Elliott State Educational and Experimental Forest authorized in the Clean Energy Jobs bill takes Oregon's forest stewardship to a new level.

A longer, referenced version of this essay is available on these websites: <http://oregon2.sierraclub.org/many-rivers>
<http://world.350.org/eugene/>