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## Background Brief on ...

# Forestry

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Oregon's forests cover about 30.47 million acres, almost half of the state's land base.

Oregon's forest resources are rich and diverse and include some of the most productive forests on earth. Forests are integral to the state's identity, its economy, and its quality of life, providing clean water, wildlife habitat, timber products, jobs, revenue for public services, recreational and tourism opportunities, and more. Oregon's forests also are important in addressing climate change. Forests have a role in mitigating global warming, because of their capacity to store carbon. In addition, changing climate affects forests in many ways, such as increasing vulnerability to fire and insect attack.

While many states have experienced substantial conversion of forestland to development, agriculture, and other uses, Oregon has maintained its forestland base. However, given Oregon's growth and changes in forestland ownership patterns, fragmentation or loss of working forestland is a growing concern for many Oregonians.

Oregon's forest resource includes urban forest, trees in neighborhoods and other developed landscapes that have benefits including property value enhancement, wildlife habitat, and retention of storm runoff.

Oregon leads the nation in lumber production. Although harvests have dropped sharply on federal lands and jobs and industry infrastructure have been reduced, the forest sector remains important, particularly in rural communities, providing 190,000 direct and indirect jobs and 11 percent of Oregon's economic output.

### **Oregon's Forest Practices Act**

Oregon Revised Statutes 527.610 to 527.770, 527.990(1), and 527.992 make up the Oregon Forest Practices Act. The Act provides for sustainable timber harvest consistent with environmentally sound management of water, soil, air quality, fish, wildlife, and scenic resources. The Act's requirements include leaving streamside buffers and reforestation after harvest.

### **Oregon's Forest Policy**

As expressed in the Board of Forestry's *Forestry Program for Oregon*, state policy holds that keeping forests sustainable requires balancing economic, social, and environmental values. These values

have often been thought of as conflicting, but are in fact interdependent.

Maintaining environmental values protects the forest's health and productivity, which is the basis of providing all benefits. Economic benefits of forest ownership are necessary to retain forest use in the face of growing pressure to convert to other uses, and to pay to protect and enhance forest productivity. Social values, such as recreation, outdoor education and timber revenues for public services, help to engage the public and build support for sound forest management.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

As Oregon continues to grow, there is an increasing need for forestry services relevant to urban and suburban residents. Issues include an orderly, environmentally sound transition from forest to developed use and addressing concerns that may arise among neighbors or local entities when commercial forestry is practiced near homes and built-up areas.

Large expanses of forests, primarily federally owned land in eastern and southern Oregon, are in poor health and vulnerable to large, unusually severe fires. Reducing fuels and restoring health across millions of acres of these forests is a challenge.

However, the condition of these forests does pose an opportunity: use of woody biomass to restore forest health, provide a renewable energy source, and stimulate local economies that have suffered as federal timber harvests have diminished in recent years.

Recognizing the importance of federal lands, Governor Kulongoski directed the Oregon Board of Forestry and the Department of Forestry to increase their involvement in federal forest policy, planning and management. For instance, the board has convened an advisory committee to help it define a vision of how federal forests can best contribute to Oregon's well being.

Private forestlands are vital to Oregon's

landscape, but keeping these lands in forest use is increasingly challenging. Carbon credits and conservation easements are among many tools that may encourage private landowners to keep their forests as forests.

Residential development in forests, climate trends, and other factors has contributed to escalating costs and challenges of protecting forests from fire. Landowners share protection costs on private lands with the state, to a greater extent than in other states. The best means of preventing large, costly fires is increased investment in prevention and fire suppression readiness.

### **Oregon Department of Forestry Overview**

The agency's major activities include:

- Providing fire protection on approximately 15.8 million acres – primarily Oregon's privately owned forestlands, but also state-owned forests and a limited amount of other publicly owned land
- Administering the Forest Practices Act
- Providing guidance and technical assistance to landowners
- Research and monitoring
- Managing state-owned forestland for a mix of environmental, economic and social benefits (Oregon has five state-owned forests: the Tillamook, Clatsop, Santiam, Elliott, and Sun Pass, as well as other scattered state-owned holdings)
- Helping cities, community groups and other entities to manage urban forests

### **Oregon Board of Forestry**

The board's seven members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The board appoints the state forester and oversees the department and general forest policy of the state.

### **Staff and Agency Contacts**

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State Forests Timber Revenue on County-deeded Lands Revenue to Counties for Fiscal 2007, 5-Year, 10-Year Averages				
County	Acres	2007	5-Year Average	10-Year Average
Benton	8,194	\$2,143,721	\$1,602,949	\$1,463,377
Clackamas	7,266	\$449,331	\$487,122	\$774,204
Clatsop	146,964	\$18,408,274	\$19,613,225	\$15,365,012
Columbia	6,459	\$1,288,396	\$940,053	\$795,473
Coos	7,220	\$470,557	\$297,751	\$199,824
Douglas	8,625	\$345,920	\$192,836	\$350,964
Josephine	2,482	\$13,926	\$2,801	\$17,757
Klamath	26,912	\$1,246,063	\$942,771	\$1,026,409
Lane	24,734	\$982,028	\$1,719,752	\$1,453,602
Lincoln	15,488	\$599,615	\$1,079,707	\$1,620,204
Linn	21,353	\$2,400,178	\$3,697,961	\$3,580,577
Marion	18,329	\$4,697,828	\$2,597,533	\$1,848,952
Polk	6,122	\$234,037	\$285,819	\$341,454
Tillamook	310,624	\$14,677,782	\$13,100,055	\$10,890,791
Washington	46,886	\$9,348,502	\$5,762,229	\$4,940,496
<b>Total</b>	<b>657,658</b>	<b>\$57,306,158</b>	<b>\$52,322,564</b>	<b>\$44,669,096</b>

