



## Board votes to increase harvest on state forests

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By JEFF BARNARD / Associated Press

GRANTS PASS, Ore. — Pressed by counties and the timber industry, the Oregon Board of Forestry has voted to increase logging in state forests in the northwestern corner of the state.

The 4-2 vote Wednesday in Salem came despite a staff report that increasing the timber harvest from the Tillamook and Clatsop state forests was likely to degrade salmon habitat.

The changes, expected to take effect over the next two years, increases timber production as the focus on 70 percent of the 518,000 acres and reduces fish and wildlife habitat to 30 percent. The split had been 50-50.

Board chairman John Blackwell, who voted in favor of the changes, said time had shown that the current management plan does not work.

The forests were burned and heavily logged in the 1930s and taken over by the counties for taxes, then turned over to the state with a promise that two-thirds of the logging revenues would go back to local counties and schools.

In 2001 the Oregon Department of Forestry adopted a management plan designed to restore old growth characteristics to the forest and improve fish and wildlife habitat, while still turning out logs, but the timber output never measured up to expectations.

The forests cover important salmon streams and are a popular outdoor recreation area for the Portland area.

The changes are expected to eventually produce 196 million board feet of timber annually, a 5 percent increase from current levels.

That is not as much as Tillamook County Commissioner Tim Josi had hoped for, but a move in the right direction.

"It is important to us that these forests remain working forests," he said. "Right now the balance has shifted quite a ways away from timber production towards other values that impact the viability of our communities."

Josi said with log prices and homebuilding at rock bottom levels, the increased logging would not significantly increase revenues for counties and schools, or jobs in the industry, in the short term, but they looked forward to long-term improvements.

Noah Greenwald of the Center for Biological Diversity said conservation groups were certain to sue, arguing the increase in logging would harm threatened coho salmon and northern spotted owls.

"Increasing the cut is not supported by science," he said.

While the board debated the issue in the Oregon Department of Forestry headquarters in Salem, conservationists and fishing guides rallied outside against the changes.

"Some of the best salmon runs in the lower 48 states come out of these streams," Bob Van Dyke of the Wild Salmon center said in a statement. "So those are good reasons for multiple use up there."