



## More trees will be cut to raise revenue

*Oregon Department of Forestry changes management plan to reduce older forest structure*

***By Cassandra Profita, The Daily Astorian***

*April 23, 2010*

The Oregon Board of Forestry voted 5-2 Thursday to cut more timber from the Clatsop and Tillamook state forests.

The decision was supported by Clatsop County leaders, who say timber revenues have fallen far short of expectations since the 2001 Forest Management Plan was adopted to balance social, economic and environmental benefits of the forests.

But environmental groups strongly opposed more logging, saying the new plan is not based on sound science and will have too many negative impacts on wildlife and habitat.

To allow for more timber harvests, the forestry board lowered the amount of older forest the state must preserve, and they increased the allowances for clear-cutting. The resulting level of timber harvest would put state forests at 72 percent of the output they would get under an industrial forest management model.

The board also replaced a federal Habitat Conservation Plan to protect threatened and endangered species with a localized Species of Concern strategy. The new strategy will protect listed species on a site-specific basis and will not require as much land to be closed off to timber harvest. For the Tillamook and Clatsop state forests, there is a list of 40 species identified for protection.

State foresters manage land for 15 forest trust land counties that receive a share of timber revenue because they deeded cutover or burned lands to the state many decades ago. Now that the forests have begun to grow back, timber sales in state forests produce revenue for local schools, governments and taxing districts.

Last year, the Oregon Department of Forestry delivered \$42 million in revenue payments to the 15 trust land counties, including \$16.3 million to Clatsop County and \$11.5 million to Tillamook County.

The state had a goal of setting aside 40 to 60 percent of the landscape for older forest structure. On Thursday the board lowered that long term-goal to 30 to 50 percent while setting a 20-year target of preserving 20 percent of the landscape as older forests. The forests are now expected to reach 30 percent older structure in 80 years.

By opening more land up to harvest, economic returns from the forest - which have lagged behind 2001

projections by \$38.5 million on the Clatsop and Tillamook forests, according to one recent professional estimate - can now approach 70 percent of the 2001 estimates.

Recent modeling estimates for the Tillamook and Clatsop state forests show that a goal of 30 percent older forests would result in an annual timber harvest of approximately 196 million board feet. This represents a 7 percent increase over the recent 5-year average harvest level of 183 million board feet.

Clatsop County Manager Duane Cole said it's hard to know exactly what that means as far as increases to county revenue, but he suspects a 7 percent increase in harvest level will loosely correspond to a 7 percent increase in timber revenue. The Clatsop State Forest represents about half of the county's acreage.

The additional funds could become seed money for a new county jail, Cole said, or it could allow the county to make purchases of items such as sheriff's cars that have been on hold because of budget constraints.

"If they are going to ramp up a little bit, maybe we'll be able to make those purchases," he said.

Jewell resident Carolyn Eady, who sits on a state forests advisory committee for the Board of Forestry and provided input during the development of the 2001 plan, said Thursday's vote wouldn't have passed under a former rule that required consensus decisions - meaning all board members had to agree.

She said projections of timber revenues in the 2001 forest management plan were "never intended to be concrete," and the changes to allow more logging will have environmental consequences.

"It's sad to me because our forests have been clobbered by storms, and I think the Clatsop Forest will be impacted the most," she said. "Our forests have been the healthiest and have grown the best."

Clatsop State Forest already has 20 percent older forest structure, she said.

"We were doing quite well," she said, "but now we have to put the brakes on and start cutting a lot of complex structure in order to meet new goals. ... People will notice as they drive around the county, and I think it will have a lot of environmental impacts."

Bob Van Dyk of the Wild Salmon Center challenged the scientific underpinnings of the plan changes and noted that state forests lack permanent protected areas for salmon, older tree stands and clean water.

"State law requires the state forest plans to protect and restore fish habitat," he said. "The high levels of clear cutting allowed by this change need an independent scientific review before being implemented."