



Enviros say state broke the law

County backs Board of Forestry decision to increase logging

**By Cassandra Profita
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Eleven fishing and conservation groups say the state broke the law in its recent decision to increase logging on the Clatsop and Tillamook state forests.

The Oregon Board of Forestry ignored scientific concerns and approved intensive clear cutting that is likely to harm salmon habitat, they say.

And, in a petition filed Friday, they're asking the forestry board to reconsider.

The board's April decision to reduce the amount of older tree stands and change its strategy of protecting habitat for threatened and endangered species wasn't based on sound science, threatens habitat and doesn't follow state law, the petition says.

The decision had strong backing from Clatsop and Tillamook county governments, which receive a 64 percent share of the timber revenue generated from the state forests.

Bob Van Dyk, forest policy manager for the Wild Salmon Center, said under state law the board of forestry is supposed to follow its "greatest permanent value" rule in making decisions about state forests, and that rule requires decisions to be based on the best available science. In this case, he said, the board did not follow that requirement.

Dan Postrel, director of agency affairs for Oregon Department of Forestry, said the reconsideration request is unusual, and the agency is still looking at its options for responding.

If the board denies the petition, Van Dyk said the next step would be to take the agency to court, but the petitioners haven't decided yet if they will go that far.

Earlier this month, the Oregon State Land Board - made up of Gov. Ted Kulongoski, Secretary of State Kate Brown and State Treasurer Ted Wheeler - agreed with conservation groups that the Board of Forestry needs to do a scientific review of the changes to the Forest Management Plan before increasing logging. The land board, which oversees some of the land in question, said once the science review is complete, the Forestry Board should adjust its management plans accordingly.

Clatsop County Manager Duane Cole said the county supports the logging increase because it is

balancing the three primary values of the state forests: environmental, economic and social values.

"This plan does balance all three of those needs," said Cole. "Oftentimes, we forget our county here benefits greatly from the timber industry and from healthy forest management. ... Our forest management keeps families together and keeps people working in our county."

Part of the state law governing forest management requires the Forest Management Plan to "maintain, enhance, and restore" salmon habitat. The petitioners argue that state scientists' 2009 analysis of the logging plans found that increased clear cutting would result in high risk watersheds for salmon.

The groups included on the petition are the Sierra Club, the Wild Salmon Center, The Center for Biological Diversity, Oregon Wild, Native Fish Society, Coast Range Association, Audubon Society of Portland, Trout Unlimited, Northwest Guides and Anglers Association, Pacific Rivers Council, and Association of Northwest Steelheaders.