

Council of Forest Trust Land Counties

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Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources

For the record, I am Tillamook County Commissioner David Yamamoto...also Chair of the Council of Forest Trust Land Counties. I want to thank you for this opportunity to have a discussion of the many challenges faced by the Forest Trust Land Counties.

Let me start with just a brief overview of state forest lands managed by the Oregon Dept. Of Forestry. The Oregon Department of Forestry manages 729,859 acres of Board of Forestry (BOF) lands for which the Council of Forest Trust Land Counties (CFTLC) have a protected and recognizable interest. These lands are to be sustainably managed to provide timber revenue to the state, local schools and communities, and local taxing districts.

The CFTLC counties are Tillamook, Clatsop, Clackamas, Columbia, Washington, Benton, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, Coos, Douglas, Josephine, Klamath, and Lane.

The way that Forest Trust Lands are managed is important to Trust Land Counties. Paramount to CFTLC is ensuring Forest Trust Lands are actively managed. Sound management practices lead to high forest production, in turn, building strong communities, robust local economies, and providing critical public services. Revenues from timber harvest on Forest Trust Lands support education, public safety, special districts, and other services. In order to ensure best practice in management, CFTLC supports keeping options open for forest management.

The objectives of the Council of Forest Trust Land Counties (CFTLC) are:

- (1) Protect the trust and contractual relationship between the Forest Trust Land Counties and the State of Oregon, relating to management of the county forest trust land;
- (2) Support sound, active management of county forest trust lands, which fulfills their primary purpose of forest production and their important contribution to long-term community sustainability;
- (3) Protect the flow of revenues from county forest trust lands for essential local public services;

(4) Support forest trust land counties in other matters where they may have responsibility related to county forest trust lands; and

(5) Provide an organization that will effectively communicate these objectives.

Over these last few decades, Trust Land Counties have received less and less timber revenue due to decreased harvests on State forests. Yet, at the current rate of harvest it would take about 100 years to clear cut the entire forest. The current FRA (Forest Resource Assessment) shows there is approximately 17 billion board feet of timber in our state forests. The assessment says that there are only 8 billion board feet without any specific harvest constraints. We are growing approximately 400 million board feet every year. We are harvesting about 235 million board feet per year. All of this shows that we are continuing to age our state forests into classes that will not be harvestable in the future.

It must be understood that these decreases to timber harvest revenues have consequences on the hard-working people in timber counties. Revenue that is generated from harvest on Forest Trust Lands supports important services at the County level: Sheriff patrol, jail beds, criminal prosecution services, road maintenance, parks and recreation are just a few examples. Declining timber harvests also cause long-term negative economic and social impacts to schools and special districts that depend on this revenue. Taxing districts that share in timber harvest revenue include our libraries, schools, ports, and fire districts. These are important services that help rural communities have a measure of stability and sustainability. Further, loss of timber revenue to our school districts will need to be replaced by State general fund dollars.

It must also be understood that jobs in the woods, our mills, and truck transportation are some of our rural counties best paying, fully benefited, family wage jobs. These family wage jobs contribute significantly to the social stability in rural Oregon.

Continuing pressure on timber harvest continues to take many forms. There was a recent attempt to upgrade the Marbled Murrelet from threatened to endangered. The Technical Report issued by the BOF admits many times to the gaps in our knowledge about this cryptic and secretive bird. OSU is in the 3rd year of a 10-year study of the MaMu and what is known and reported is that the Oregon population is not decreasing...rather it is increasing at 1.8% per year over the last 16 years which accounts for a 28.8% increase over that period. We appreciate the department clarifying the sparse and conflicting nature of the data on the MaMu and hope the department will defer further action until the results of the OSU study can be added to the existing body of knowledge.

The department in conjunction with the BOF, has embarked on an update to the Forest Management Plan (FMP). There are areas where CFTLC is encouraged to see the department moving in terms of the FMP update, but at this time, much more detailed development of strategies and metrics are necessary to determine our ability to support these issues. Areas we would like to come into agreement include moving away from the current Structure Based Management Plan, consideration of a departure harvest schedule to re-balance age class distributions, restoration of poorly performing areas in our forests, and a more regional approach when setting habitat objectives. While we applaud these new approaches, the devil is in the details and at this point we have no detail or specificity to consider.

Another area of development by the department is a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). An October 2018 HCP Business Case Analysis by ECONorthwest, initiated by the department, does not provide sufficient detail about their calculations behind the analysis. The Trust Counties were not consulted about data, methods or assumptions, and the report does not provide the analytical details for us to determine if the conclusions are reliable. Until we learn more, we cannot have a position on the adoption of an HCP. Additionally, we would not support an HCP that violates the State's contractual obligations with the Trust Counties.

Another troubling development is HB 2020 carbon cap and invest scheme currently moving through the legislature as it relates to Forest Trust Lands. Let me start by saying that Oregon has the world's best carbon sequestration mechanism already in place...our forest lands. Through modern sustainable forestry practices, our forests have the ability to continuously sequester ever increasing amounts of carbon. The fastest rate of uptake of carbon occurs in younger forests as they grow rapidly while reaching for the sun. As a forest ages to 50+ years, the rate of carbon uptake slows as the forest matures. We can then harvest the trees and when turned into finished wood products, the carbon remains in the fiber. We then go in and replant the forest and the rapid uptake of carbon starts all over again.

Forest Trust Lands play a critical role in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration. Productive forests that are managed to produce products that store carbon have greater long-term carbon benefits than forests left unmanaged. If we think about replacing forest products with steel, concrete, and plastic composites to build our homes, how does this reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The major problems we see is the issue of ever decreasing timber harvest if carbon offsets are instituted for Forest Trust Lands. The delta between harvest revenue and carbon offsets is huge. Forest Trust Lands are already managed to a higher standard than private or tribal timberlands, as evidenced by almost half of our forests under specific harvest constraints, which means we start at a higher baseline which means lower carbon offsets versus private or tribal lands.

We all remain horrified by the many conflagrations that have occurred in Oregon, California and across the West in recent years. We cannot prevent forest fires, but we can help to make sure they do not become conflagrations. Proper forest management can decrease the chances of forest fires becoming conflagrations. At the same time, we halt the release of carbon back into the atmosphere when our forests burn.

We must remember that timber revenue drives economic development for rural counties. In an era when the department is struggling to remain financially viable, the best way forward for them is to increase harvest levels which benefits both the department and the counties. The amount of timberland that would need to be sequestered for carbon offsets would be huge. It has been stated by the department that entire contiguous forests, not smaller carve outs, would need to be enrolled. Please don't use HB 2020 to further reduce fiber supply...this is a community killer for rural timber counties.

I apologize for being so long and detailed but as you can see, actions past, present and future, have placed many timber dependent counties financially on a knife's edge, with some having already fallen off the edge. Sustainable forestry is not something we can simply aspire to; it is already a fact in the State of Oregon.

Timber counties are comprised of hard working, resourceful men and women. We are not looking for a handout, nor even a hand up. We are used to helping ourselves and our neighbors but the ever-increasing roadblocks to our livelihoods are becoming insurmountable.

Respectfully submitted,

David Yamamoto

Tillamook County Commissioner
Council of Forest Trust Lands (CFTLC), Chair
Forest Trust Lands Advisory Committee (FTLAC), Chair