



Oregon

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State Land Board

March 20, 2025

Tina Kotek

Governor

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire
Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash and Members of the Committee

Tobias Read

Secretary of State

From: Ellie Forness, Government Relations Manager

Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 147 as amended.

Elizabeth Steiner

State Treasurer

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and members of the committee. My name is Ellie Forness and I am the Government Relations Manager at the Oregon Department of State Lands. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today in support of Senate Bill 147 as amended.

You will see a –1 amendment posted to OLIS for today’s discussion, but I will note that DSL will be requesting a –2 amendment to address some changes. I’ll speak to what the –2 will include at the end of this letter. Before I go into an overview of SB 147 with the –1 amendment, I would like to provide a brief update on the status of the Elliott, for context on today’s conversation.

Oregon’s first state forest is now officially now Oregon’s first state *research* forest. Our state now has a national center for forest science and management that will also contribute significant benefits for conservation, education, recreation, Indigenous culture, and economies right here in Oregon.

2024 and 2025 have brought many milestones for the Elliott State Research Forest.

- The State Land Board appointed the initial Elliott State Research Forest Board of Directors, which meets regularly to ensure ongoing accountability and transparency in operation of this public research forest.
- The State Land Board formally approved the Forest Management Plan at the October 2024 meeting. The forest management plan guides the development and implementation of activities on the Elliott.
- Throughout this year we have been working to formalize research partnerships, Tribal partnerships, and more. We are discussing Elliott opportunities with Oregon State University, federally recognized Tribes, local community, and others, and will continue to do so into the future.
- Our Habitat Conservation Plan has now been submitted to federal agencies. We anticipate securing federal approval of the HCP, and related Endangered Species Act permits that will allow active management, later this year.

- We have secured federal funding to explore turning Shutter Creek, once a military radar station then a correctional site, into headquarters for the research forest. DSL has already begun work on a redevelopment plan for the property, an effort that will include robust Tribal and community collaboration.
- A groundbreaking carbon project agreement has been signed for the Elliott. A carbon project enables timber harvest and research, while also benefitting biodiversity and adding a revenue stream.
- Finally, we are well underway in our hiring efforts for the Elliott. As of now, we have filled the roles of Forest Manager, Policy and Partnerships Coordinator, and Biologist, and are in the process of recruiting a Forester and a Research Coordinator.

This year we will see the implementation of the forest management and operations plans. We will also be collaboratively developing plans for recreation, education, and monitoring. Efforts to secure funding are continuing in 2025.

SB 147 is a housekeeping bill for DSL to more efficiently manage the Elliott. The bill accomplishes three goals:

1. Number one: It ensures statute reflects the current status of the Elliott as a State Research Forest. This includes repealing old references to the forest in its previous form, as well as its connection to the Common School Fund, given the forest was successfully decoupled from its constitutional obligation in the 2019-21 biennium. SB 147 also moves the Elliott out of ORS 530, the chapter of statute that governs state forests, and formally establishes the Elliott as a Research Forest in Chapter 273. This is the chapter of statute that governs state lands and is where DSL's other authorities lie.
2. Second, the bill sets up a new fund specifically for the Elliott at State Treasury, that will be used to receive revenues from carbon credit and timber sales.
3. And lastly, SB 147-1 provides the Department with delegated authority in contracting and procurement. This authority is critical to ensure the Elliott can be managed efficiently, for example conducting timber sales and entering into research agreements.

For the -2 amendment, we will be updating the contracting and procurement language to offer more clarity and flexibility and addressing our language around the repeal of ORS 530.450. We will be adding additional language to complement this decision that makes very clear that the Elliott will not be sold, or moved out of public ownership, now or any time in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions.