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JUNE 15, 2016

Oregon Is Selling Its Public Forest to a Timber Company

BY:  CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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PORTLAND, *Ore.*— The Oregon Court of Appeals is set to decide the legality of a 788-acre timber sale on the Elliott State Forest following a court hearing last Friday. The lawsuit, brought by Cascadia Wildlands, Audubon Society of Portland and the Center for Biological Diversity, argues that the Oregon Department of State Lands violated the law when it sold the East Hakki Ridge parcel in 2014 to Seneca Jones Timber Company. The case could have a significant bearing on the state’s plan to sell off the rest of this public forest by casting significant uncertainty on its legality.

“Laws are meant to be followed, and we believe the state of Oregon acted outside the law when it privatized this swath of the Elliott State Forest,” said Robin Meacher, wildlands campaign director with Cascadia Wildlands. “Oregonians are now met with ‘no trespassing’ signs upon entering this part of the forest, and that should be reversed by the court so that public access is maintained.”

The Elliott State Forest is a 93,000-acre state forest in the Oregon Coast Range, southeast of Reedsport. The forest contains rare mature and old-growth forest, harbors imperiled salmon and wildlife, and is enjoyed for its camping, hiking, birding, hunting and fishing opportunities. The forest also has an historic mandate to

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generate revenue for the Common School Fund in Oregon.



Firs in Oregon's Elliot State Forest. (Photo Credit: Tony Andersen, Oregon Department of Forestry)

A federal court in 2012 found that the state of Oregon — in its quest to ramp up clearcutting on the Elliott — violated the federal Endangered Species Act, which forced the cancellation of 28 old-growth timber sales. The state responded by selling off nearly 1,500 acres of the Elliott, including the East Hakki parcel, and is currently moving to dispose of the entire public forest through a process adopted by the State Land Board. The board, made up of Gov. Kate Brown, Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins and Treasurer Ted Wheeler, oversees the management of the Elliott State Forest and other Common School Fund lands in Oregon.

“The public cares deeply about public lands and doesn’t want them sold to industrial timber companies or any other private business,” said Bob Sallinger with

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Audubon Society of Portland. “Oregonians already rejected one attempt to privatize public lands at Malheur earlier this year. Governor Brown, Treasurer Wheeler and Secretary of State Atkins need to reverse course on the Elliott and stand with Oregonians who treasure this public forest for all its incredible values to ensure it doesn’t get acquired by private interests and liquidated.”

At issue in the East Hakki case is Oregon Revised Statute 530.450, which prohibits the sale of most of the Elliott State Forest. The state agrees that the statute forbids the sale of the forest, but argues that the law “unduly burdens” its ability to manage the Elliott.

“The Elliott State Forest provides essential habitat for imperiled species like salmon and marbled murrelets,” said Tanya Sanerib with the Center for Biological Diversity. “It’s essential we safeguard this unique coastal forest for future generations.”

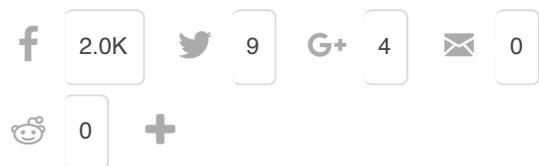
Oregonians have long advocated that the state and State Land Board maintain the Elliott in public ownership and managed for ecological, social and recreational purposes in addition to its Common School Fund mandate.

“The Elliott can, and should, be managed in a way that balances ecological and

recreation needs with revenue production,” said Meacher. “Approximately half the Elliott is a dense, second-growth tree farm that could benefit from restoration thinning, which would generate much-needed jobs for the local economy. The State Land Board should jettison the current privatization process and take real leadership to create a balanced forest plan that keeps the Elliott in public ownership.”

The Department of State Lands, which manages the Elliott on behalf of the State Land Board, anticipates receiving acquisition proposals in November, and could make a decision to sell off the forest by December. Earlier this spring a [letter was sent by the plaintiffs](#) in two recent lawsuits regarding the Elliott to interested parties, outlining the liability associated with owning and managing the forest based on past and present litigation.

The plaintiffs are represented by attorneys Daniel Kruse of Eugene and Nicolas Cady with Cascadia Wildlands.



3 Responses



Mac says:

June 16, 2016 at 1:04 am

Such privatizations are major crimes.

Humanity's children can not be deprived of the natural world. To live is to learn to care for the living world, not to exploit it.

Reply



Edward says:

June 19, 2016 at 10:56 pm

The land is public and belongs to the people. The state government are nothing more than representatives for th people.

There is no message reason for the sale. The money is not needed. This kind of decision requires a vote of the state. We are the owners of the land.

Period. People always tend to forget that the government ownes nothing. Only control it in the interest of the people. Pull your. Heads out of your asses people. Don't let this kind of thing happen.

Reply



Gary DiNardo says:
July 19, 2016 at 11:40 am

If the humans would simply stop breeding like a cancer, this wouldn't be an issue.

Reply

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