

New Elliott State Forest management plan will significantly increase logging, clear-cutting and revenue



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SALEM -- With hisses and jeers from protesters providing the background, the [Oregon Land Board](#) on Tuesday unanimously approved a management plan for the [Elliott State Forest](#) that significantly increases logging, clear-cutting and revenue flowing to the Common School Fund.

The land board members -- Gov. John Kitzhaber, Secretary of State Kate Brown and Treasurer Ted Wheeler -- acknowledged the plan isn't popular with environmentalists, who believe management of the Elliott is deeply flawed. Board members said they want to review the plan annually.

"This is not a black and white issue," Kitzhaber said. The land board is constitutionally mandated to manage the Elliott to produce the greatest amount of revenue for the school fund, he and others noted, and less than one percent of the 93,000 acre forest will be logged in a given year.

The Elliott, in the Coast Range near Coos Bay, is a tiny slice of the 30 million acres of public and private timberland in Oregon, but has become the focal point for the heated arguments over how we use our natural resources. Protesters perched in trees and blocked roads last summer in an attempt to halt a timber sale.

About 50 people chanted and sang outside the Department of State Lands building Tuesday as board members discussed the management plan with staff from the [Oregon Department of Forestry](#). Protesters filed into the meeting room as the board approved the plan, standing at the back holding signs such as "CLEARCUTTING FOR SCHOOLS IS BAD BUSINESS." Some said "Sell out, sell out," and "liar," before chanting "Kitzhaber lies, forests die." Oregon State Police troopers ushered shouters from the room without incident.

Afterward, Wheeler defended the board's action with protesters outside the building. "We'll see you in the forest," they chanted as he left.

Under the plan, the Elliott's annual timber harvest will increase to 40 million board feet, compared to 25 million board feet under a plan implemented in 1995. The new plan increases the targeted annual harvest to 1,100 acres with up to 850 acres for clear-cutting; up from 1,000 acres, half for clear-cutting.

The new plan will produce annual net revenue of up to \$13 million, compared to up to \$8 million currently.

The plan requires foresters to survey for [northern spotted owls](#) and [marbled murrelets](#) on proposed timber sales. Surveys replace long-term habitat conservation plans. State foresters estimate the plan will make 28,000 acres of timber off limits for logging, compared to 22,370 acres now reserved for owls, murrelets and riparian management areas.

Josh Laughlin, campaign director for the Eugene-based [Cascadia Wildlands](#), said the Elliott represents the "worst of the worst" in forest management. The state's work harms threatened wildlife such as northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets and coho salmon, he said, and damages watersheds.

He and other environmentalists believe the Elliott can be managed in a way that produces money for schools while avoiding clear-cuts. Thinning younger trees and aggressively seeking markets for the Elliott's ability to store carbon dioxide provide a "new way forward," he said.

To date in 2011, loggers have cut 28 million board feet of timber in the Elliott, 29 percent more than 2010. Its produced \$8.1 million for the school fund, about \$1 million more than 2010.

The approval by the land board, which owns 91 percent of the Elliott, concludes its action on the management plan. The state Board of Forestry, which owns the remaining 9 percent, votes on the plan Nov. 3.

-- [Eric Mortenson](#)

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