Promoting and practicing sustainable forestry

2011-2013 BACKGROUNDER

Common School Forestlands

An overview

Oregon Department of Forestry manages a total of 120,019 acres of Common School Forestlands under an agreement between the Department of State Lands (DSL) and Department of Forestry (ODF). Common School lands are properties given to Oregon by the federal government at statehood to support public education.

State Land Board is composed of the Governor, Secretary of State and State Treasurer. Article VIII, Section 5(2) of the Oregon Constitution requires the SLB to "manage lands under its jurisdiction with the object of obtaining the greatest benefit for the people of this state, consistent with the conservation of this resource under sound techniques of land management."

Elliott State Forest, the first state forest in 1930, is located in the Coast Range between Coos Bay and Reedsport, and holds 73 percent of the total forestlands managed by ODF for the Land Board (86,367 acres). It's named after Francis Elliott, Oregon's first state forester, who worked many years to create the forest by trading scattered state lands for one large block of land.

Oregon Department of State Lands' 2006 - 2016 Asset Management Plan provides strategic direction for all Common School lands, which includes retaining the Elliott as a "core asset." ODF and DSL staff coordinates on an ongoing basis to ensure management of the Elliott and other forestlands are aligned with the Asset Management Plan.

Timber revenue for schools across the state

Oregon Constitution directs that all of the timber revenue from Common School lands, minus the cost of management, goes to the Common School Fund (CSF) and is used to support Oregon's 197 K-12 public school districts. Management costs average about 35 percent of gross revenue.

Obtaining the greatest benefit for Oregonians is constitutionally required for Common School lands. This must be done while conserving the forest resource under sound techniques of land management.

Maximizing revenue to the Common School Fund is the standard for "greatest benefit," according to a 1992 State Attorney General opinion. This must be done in the context of environmentally sound management.

Net Forestland Revenue to the Common School Fund Fiscal Years 2000 to 2010

Fiscal Year	$ Millions
2001	$ 12.6
2002	$ 9.4
2003	$ 3.5
2004	$ 10.6
2005	$ 14.0
2006	$ 4.4
2007	$ 7.2
2008	$ 4.2
2009	$ 8.7
2010	$ 5.4
5-yr Average	**$ 6.0**
10-yr Average	**$ 8.0**

Forestry manages Common School Forestlands to generate revenue over long run

Since 1955, $354 million has been deposited into the Common School Fund as net revenue (after ODF expenses) from all timber harvest activities on CSF forestlands. The Elliott State Forest makes up 75-85 percent of the total revenue generated from CSF forestlands. Using 80 percent as an average, the Elliott has generated about $284 million into the school fund since 1955.

April 2011

Sustainable harvesting and habitat for wildlife

Generating the greatest amount of revenue in the long run – consistent with sound techniques of land and timber management – is the goal for Common School forestlands.

Conserving the forest resource means sustainable harvesting and providing habitat for native fish and wildlife. Protecting habitat is a legal requirement for threatened and endangered species.

A forest management plan is used to balance revenue and environmental obligations.

New plans for forest management and habitat conservation are developed

New plans allowing for higher harvest levels while continuing environmental protections have been developed. The draft revised plan is being finalized and will go before the State Land Board and the Oregon Board of Forestry for approval in fall 2011.

Advantages of the draft revised plan include increased revenues to the Common School Fund while providing species and habitat protection through conservation area strategies. The plan includes protections for the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, coho salmon and other species of concern that meet or exceed state and federal law.

Harvest levels would be consistently around 40 million board feet (mmbf) a year under the draft revised plan. The average harvest level for the past 10 years is 25 mmbf. *(A board foot is a unit of wood that measures a foot square and an inch thick. An average house has about 13,000 board feet of framing lumber and 7,000 board feet of plywood or panels.)*

Timber income still important to Oregon communities

About 10 percent of Coos County's total income is generated by timber-related industries, according to a recent study. Timber harvest revenues from Common School forestlands provide vital resources for Oregon's K-12 education districts and support local family-wage jobs in many economically challenged Oregon communities.

New approach: Develop forest structure instead of relying on age for habitat

Using structure – not age –to estimate habitat conditions is a key concept in the new plan.

Wildlife has certain habitat needs and foresters can influence forest development – through harvest practices – to benefit wildlife. The new plan measures the forest's habitat by its structure.

Structure is what you feel and see in forests. Trees of different types, ages and sizes; standing dead trees; decaying logs; and underbrush are examples of structure. All are important components for wildlife habitat.

A managed forest that looks like a natural forest is the goal. Stand structure types have open areas and places with snags, resembling the effects of natural disturbances such as fire, insects and disease. This provides a mix of habitat for native fish and wildlife.

For more information

Nancy Hirsch
ODF State Forests Division Chief
503-945-7204

Jim Paul
DSL Assistant Director
503-986-5279