



Rediscover Oregon's Forests

October 24, 2007

Dr. Stephen Hobbs, Chair
Oregon Board of Forestry
2600 State Street, Bldg. B
Salem, OR 97310

E. Walter VanValkenberg, Chair
Attention: Teri Kucera
Oregon Economic and Community
Development Commission
775 Summer St. NE, Suite 200
Salem, OR 97301

Dears Sirs:

On behalf of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) Board of Directors, I am writing in support of the proposed joint resolution to develop an economic development strategy for Oregon's forest cluster. The OFRI Board has reaffirmed its intent to collaborate in this multi-agency effort to strengthen the environmental, community and economic contributions of sustainably managed forestlands in Oregon through public and landowner education, research and other outreach activities consistent with our statutory mission.

Success in this effort is important to Oregon's vitality in many ways and is especially critical to the economic prosperity of rural communities. As Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter told the 2006 Oregon Leadership Summit, Oregon's competitive advantage in the global economy lies in its potential to combine our unique strengths in natural resources with our capabilities in high-tech, higher education and our tradition of environmental sustainability.

Oregon has been the nation's top producer of high-quality softwood dimension lumber for decades, and is a global leader in environmentally sound forestry and forest research. A 2004 report produced for OFRI by economic development expert Eric Hovee & Associates notes the potential to increase sustainable timber harvest by about 25% per year, or 17,700 direct jobs, without lowering environmental standards or changing forest management goals. New opportunities are presenting themselves, such as use of woody biomass to meet renewable new energy goals; improved forest productivity and manufacturing technology; innovative new products; and the role of forest management and wood products in sequestering the atmospheric carbon that contributes to global climate change.

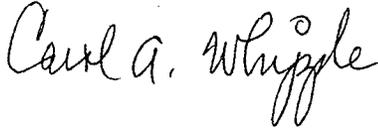
However, challenges must be addressed if Oregon is to benefit from these opportunities. For example, forest health problems in overstocked eastside forests are increasing, along with fire risk and habitat loss. Lack of a predictable timber supply has contributed to the closure of 34 mills between 1989 and 2000—eroding the infrastructure needed to restore both forest

ecosystems and rural economies. Loss of additional infrastructure will severely limit future options.

We have high potential to enhance forest cluster contributions, but time is of the essence. Some regions—Arizona and Colorado, for example—have discovered this too late, while other states (e.g., Minnesota) have been moving ahead on collaborative public/private forest sector strategies.

Oregon has been blessed with some of the world's most beautiful and most productive forests, and OFRI is committed to working with the Board of Forestry, the Oregon Economic and Community Development Commission, the Oregon State University College of Forestry and other collaborators to keep them this way.

Yours sincerely,



Carol Whipple, Chair
Board of Directors
Oregon Forest Resources Institute

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