



Oregon Department of Forestry
Board of Forestry
Comments for the meeting on Thursday, November 6th, 2008
Salem, Oregon

By Meryl Redisch, Executive Director, Audubon Society of Portland

Board Members and State Forester Brown,

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you today.
My name is Meryl Redisch and I am the Executive Director of the Audubon Society of Portland. While our chapter name indicates Portland, our membership base of 10,000 represents the greater metropolitan region.

As you know, Portland Audubon has been involved in the policy debate over state forests for more than a decade. Our staff participated in the development of the current forest management plan and we have continued to monitor and weigh in on the implementation of the plan since its approval in 2001. Please accept these comments for the Tillamook/Clatsop State Forests.

At last year's November board meeting, members made a decision to set a new target that would increase the harvest level while reducing the target for complex forest structure to a point below what is outlined in the current plan.

I have several concerns that I would like to share with you about this potential new direction. The first is about the reduction of complex forest structure. Under the current plan, the goal of attaining 50% complex/older forest structure would allow for greater ecosystem health, biodiversity, and forest connectivity. According to the analysis presented by ODF staff, there are a variety of species including the spotted owl, which rely on large tracts of interior forests with late successional characteristics. Under the new direction which calls for increased harvest levels, the data shows considerably less large tracts of complex and older forest. Owls are just one species of concern; others such as the dusky tree vole may be vulnerable as well. At this time, we don't have a good understanding about which species may be risk. While I am glad to see that this issue is being discussed and is of importance to you, I respectfully request that this analysis take place as soon as possible.

Along the same line, I am interested to better understand how owl clusters, as they are defined under the current habitat conservation plan, will be defined under a new one.

Finally, it has come to my attention that timber production over the last five years has been at levels that are unsustainable for long term ecological and social health. This needs to be addressed.

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Board members, Portland Audubon greatly appreciate the difficult decision that is before you. The stewardship of our state forests must provide economic, social, and ecological benefits for all Oregonians. While select counties will continue to need timber revenue to assist their local economies, everyone needs the full suite of ecological services provided by our state forests to assist in their health and well being. Portland Audubon encourages you to be visionary in your approach to restoring this tremendous asset. We ask you to be prudent in making decisions that will impact future generations of Oregonians. We urge you to be proactive and to view these natural resources as investments that can absorb the impacts from climate change, increased population, and water quality and quantity variations.

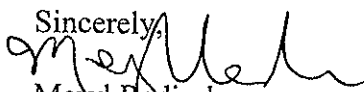
According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, "The costs resulting from ecosystem "surprises" can be very high. Increased insurance premiums for floods, fires and other extreme events have risen dramatically in recent decades. Changes in ecosystems are sometimes important factors in contributing to the increased frequency and severity of the impacts of these extreme events. Such surprises suggest that the precautionary principle may apply to conserving biodiversity even where data are insufficient to calculate costs and benefits". We now have the data.

Portland Audubon respectfully requests that:

- ◆ The board keep working under the current forest management plan that identifies the goal of establishing 50% of the forest as complex and older structure,
- ◆ Timber harvest is reduced to a sustainable level, approximately 140-150 million board feet,
- ◆ New ways for generating revenue are part of the solution so that counties now primarily dependent upon timber sales, have other options to maintain and improve city services, and
- ◆ Until a new habitat conservation plan is peer reviewed, approved and implemented, the current owl cluster strategy is maintained.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share Portland Audubon's position.

Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to this process. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Meryl Redisch,
Executive Director