

## Chapter 1. Introduction

The Elliott State Forest (Forest) is a mostly contiguous block of State Land Board and State Board of Forestry lands covering more than 93,000 acres, located south of Reedsport and north of Coos Bay in Oregon. The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) manages the Forest from its Coos Bay office. This land supports forests, fish runs, and varied types of wildlife. Once stripped of most of its vegetation by fires in the late nineteenth century, the Forest now contributes to the economic and environmental backdrop of this region.

For this project, the watershed analysis team provides an analysis of the natural resources found in the Forest, with special emphasis on aquatic resources such as fish, other aquatic organisms, and water quality and its use. The approach is first to describe the processes that historically created good habitat for fish and wildlife and provided clean water, and then to evaluate the status of conditions currently within the Forest. Finally, this analysis includes likely future conditions of these resources under current and alternative management scenarios.

### PURPOSE AND APPROACH

The purpose of this analysis is to better understand the natural processes that influence fish habitat, wildlife habitat, and water throughout the Elliott State Forest, along with the consequences of human activities on these resources. Using information derived from current inventories of the Forest, or that which can be extrapolated from studies conducted on similar areas, the watershed analysis team provides an analysis that will be useful for several purposes including, but not limited to:

- Development of an updated Management Plan;
- Development of a new Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for fish and wildlife;
- Annual operations plans;
- Total maximum daily load (TMDL) studies;
- Restoration activities; and
- Public education and outreach.

This project is not intended to catalog *all* past and current information on processes and natural resources within the Forest. Rather, the analysis team has intentionally streamlined the study to focus on issues most critical for management of the Forest throughout the next several decades. Requirements of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Clean Water Act often affect these priorities for the Forest.

Management of the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet, both federally threatened species, has significantly influenced timber harvest on the Forest since the 1990s. An incidental take permit for the marbled murrelet has expired and a strategy of *take avoidance* is currently being used. An incidental take permit for the spotted owl expires in 2055. The ODF is currently in the process of preparing a new HCP that covers both of these species,

along with the federally listed coho salmon and other species currently not listed. For this reason, this analysis does not provide a thorough evaluation of spotted owl and murrelet habitat and its management. Separate documentation for these two species will appear during the processes for updating the *Elliott State Forest Management Plan* (ODF 1993) and preparing the new HCP. Nevertheless, strategies to successfully manage spotted owl and murrelet habitat do overlap with strategies to manage watersheds for fish and water quality.

## **KEY ISSUES**

Time and economic limitations do not allow an in-depth evaluation of all possible natural resource issues associated with the Forest. Early in the study process, the watershed analysis team met with the ODF to identify issues that are likely to be highly important during upcoming planning and public processes. These key issues, in question format, are:

- How do natural processes and human activities influence water temperature throughout the analysis area?
- How do herbicide applications within harvest units or adjacent to roads influence fish, wildlife, and domestic water supplies?
- How do roads and their maintenance alter patterns of sediment supply and transport in streams?
- How does timber harvest alter natural patterns of sediment supply and transport in streams?
- How do past and current management activities influence large wood abundance in streams and related fish and wildlife habitat, both now and in the future?
- How do culverts influence the upstream and downstream movement of fish and amphibians in streams?

Although many other issues are addressed in this document, these key issues receive the greater scrutiny.

## **GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS**

The study area is shown on Map 1.1, located in the map section of this report. State lands managed in the Coos Bay District include a mostly contiguous block covering over 93,000 acres of the Forest, eight scattered tracts of land (about 1,189 acres) located 0.5 to 18 miles from the edge of the main block, and a number of other scattered tracts located much further to the south. These southern tracts are not considered part of the Forest and are not included in this project. Two of the scattered tracts near the main block (about 294 acres) are included in the analysis because they are within several miles of the main block. The other six scattered tracts (about 895 acres) are more distant from the main block and are not included in the analysis of the main block (Table 1-1). The natural resources on these tracts are summarized in Chapter 2, *Watershed Analysis Area Overview*. Five parcels of private forestland totaling about 165 acres also occur within the boundaries of the main block of the Forest.

Table 1-1. Scattered tracts of land associated with the Elliott State Forest.

Tract Name	Acres	Legal Description
<i>Included in the evaluation of the main block of the Elliott State Forest</i>		
Sock Creek*	158	T.23S, R.9W, sec 6
Ash Valley**	136	T.23S, R.10W, sec 24
<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	
<i>Not included in the evaluation of the main block of the Elliott State Forest</i>		
School Land Bay	91	T.23S, R.12W, sec 16
Folley Creek	156	T.21.S, R.7W, sec 36
Purdy Creek	36	T.22S, R.9W, sec 16
Lighthouse	178	T.22S, R.12W, sec 7 and T.22S, R.13W, sec 12, 13
Tyce 40	42	T.25S, R.7W, sec 16
South Slough (3 parcels)	392	T.26S, R.13W, sec 19, 20, 30 T.26S, R.14W, sec 36
<b>Total</b>	<b>895</b>	

\* Within analysis basin #1

\*\* Within analysis basin #13