

A Future for the Elliott State Forest

The Elliott State Forest has been at the center of passionate conversations for many years, with growing tension between the forest's historical role of helping fund our public schools and the forest's potential to provide benefits beyond harvest revenue.

The State Land Board has a modern vision for the Elliott: A public forest that has completed its obligation to funding Oregon schools, but will continue to contribute to conservation, recreation, education, local economies, and more as a research forest.

A World-Class Research Forest

[At the Land Board's direction](#), Oregon Department of State Lands and Oregon State University have worked together since 2019 to explore transforming the Elliott State Forest into a publicly owned state research forest. The Land Board in [December 2019](#) and [December 2020](#) affirmed the Elliott's future as a research forest and directed DSL and OSU to finalize details.

Bringing Together Diverse Interests, Finding Agreement

Since 2019, work has been guided by a 15-member [Advisory Committee](#) representing diverse perspectives on conservation, timber, schools, recreation, local government, and more. Their input and insight, along with extensive engagement of Tribes, community stakeholders, and the public, has helped resolve many challenging issues and continue a path to a research forest.

Work is underway on multiple details, including:

- **Forest Ownership:** Establishing an independent public entity to own the forest helps ensure creation of a world-class research forest in Oregon that is governed with the accountability and transparency Oregonians expect. The collaborative work of the advisory committee, DSL, and OSU is reflected in SB 1546, passed in 2022.
- **Habitat Conservation Plan:** On October 8, 2021, DSL submitted the Elliott State Research Forest Administrative Draft Habitat Conservation Plan to federal agencies for review. [Read the Department's submittal letter.](#)
- **Forest Management Plan:** OSU is leading work to develop a forest management plan, guided by the Advisory Committee and with engagement planned throughout 2022.

Elliott State Research Forest Key Topics

Protecting Habitat

Establishing a research forest will:

- Place more than 90% of older forest and 66% of the entire forest in permanent reserve.
- Create a 34,000-acre contiguous reserve, the largest in the entire Oregon Coast Range.
- Provide protections for all Northern Spotted Owl nests and modeled Marbled Murrelet habitat.
- Limit annual harvest to approximately 1% of the forest.
- Allow for conservation encumbrances in addition to the 80-year protections of the HCP.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF STATE LANDS

How will long-term protections be ensured? A habitat conservation plan, which must be approved under the federal Endangered Species Act, provides the basis for enduring conservation protections. The Department of State Lands submitted a draft HCP to federal agencies in October of this year, with finalization possible as early as 2022 after an extensive public review process.

Providing for Multiple Benefits

In addition to protecting essential habitat for coastal species such as the Northern Spotted Owl, the Marbled Murrelet, and Oregon's iconic Coho Salmon, the Elliott State Research Forest offers unparalleled settings for:

- Continued public access across the forest
- Scientific inquiry on an array of forest lands management issues.
- Outdoor education at every level and collegiate research partnerships.
- Traditional and contemporary Tribal forest practices.
- Active forest management practices that will benefit local economies.

Funding for Schools, Forest Operations

How will the Common School Fund be compensated for the Elliott? The Land Board vision calls for “decoupling” the forest from the Common School Fund – compensating the Fund for the Elliott and releasing the forest from its obligation to generate revenue for schools.

The appraised value of the forest is \$221 million. A down payment of \$100 million was made to the Common School Fund in 2019, through sale of legislatively approved bonds. In 2022, the Legislature provided the remaining \$121 million in general funding to satisfy the Common School Fund obligation.

How will ongoing research forest operations be funded? The research forest is expected to be financially self-supporting, with management and operations funded by forest activity revenues.

Legislation to Keep the Elliott Publicly Owned: SB 1546

Collaborative work with the Elliott State Research Forest Advisory Committee identified key elements that served as the basis for SB 1546:

- Establishment of an independent public agency to own the research forest which would be managed in partnership with Oregon State University.
- Assurances that the forest is governed with transparency and public accountability, including third party right of enforcement and public access to the decision making process.
- Codify commitments to conservation and other public values.
- Decouple the forest from its Common School Fund obligation.

Additional Resources

- [DSL's Elliott website](#) (news & meeting information, committee information, forest background)
- [OSU's Elliott website](#) (research proposal information, OSU committee/workgroup information)
- [Elliott playlist on YouTube](#) (committee meetings, public information sessions, and more)