

Elliott State Research Forest

ESRF Guiding Principles and Oregon State University's Commitments to Public Values

Land Board Vision and Development of Guiding Principles for the ESRF

Recognizing that the Elliott State Forest is incredibly important to the people of Oregon, the Land Board voted to keep the Elliott State Forest in public ownership in 2017. The Land Board's collective vision, as articulated at the May 2017 Land Board meeting, was for a future Elliott State Forest that "maintains public ownership and access, is decoupled from the Common School Fund, and has a habitat conservation plan."¹

This collective vision initiated an assessment report conducted by neutral third party Oregon Consensus in 2018 for the purpose of gathering perspectives and informing a process for finding a path forward for the Elliott State Forest.³ Following OC's assessment, at the December 2018 Land Board meeting, the Land Board directed DSL to work with OSU to explore the feasibility of OSU management of the Elliott State Forest as a research forest.⁴ In early 2019, OSU agreed to develop a plan in collaboration with DSL that engaged tribes, local governments and other stakeholders that is consistent with the "Board Vision."

- Keeping the forest publicly owned with public access
- Decoupling the forest from the Common School Fund, compensating the school fund for the forest and releasing the forest from its obligation to generate revenue for schools
- Continuing habitat conservation planning to protect species and allow for harvest
- Providing for multiple forest benefits, including recreation, education, and working forest research

OSU began an exploratory process in early 2019 that included public listening sessions, outreach to stakeholders, and engagement with local tribes around a potential research forest concept. During public listening sessions, attendees were divided into discussion groups that roughly aligned with public values the Land Board had articulated as important to consider in the design and management of a research forest. Listening session discussion groups included: Recreation and Public Access; Research and Education; Timber, Economy and Forest Management; and Conservation.

As OSU was conducting its exploratory work, holding public listening sessions, and investigating aspects of transforming the Elliott State Forest for research, DSL formed an Advisory Committee composed of community leaders and stakeholders to provide insight and input on key elements of an Elliott State Research Forest proposal.

With the initial Land Board vision and data from the OC assessment report as the foundation, the DSL Advisory Committee and OSU Elliott project team collaboratively reviewed the input from the OSU led outreach to develop guiding principles also known as public values.

Throughout 2019, guiding principles were developed for the following areas:

- Forest Governance
- Conservation
- Recreation
- Educational Partnerships
- Local and Regional Economies

Each set of principle is a reflection of stakeholder input synthesized and reconciled to provide overarching statements of suggested direction for management of the Elliott State Research Forest in the context of the primary research mission.

Commitments to Public Values

The public, including all of the people it represents, hold multiple values and perspectives for the Elliott State Forest (ESF) and genuinely care about its future. Currently, the ESF provides various types of ecosystem goods and services, such as wood production, species habitat, and recreational opportunities to varying degrees. As one might expect, members of the public carry a variety of expectations regarding how to manage the ESF and which of the ecosystem goods and services of the ESF are most important to them.

The proposed research design for an Elliott State Research Forest (ESRF) is multifaceted, designed to provide opportunities for the provision and expression of many of the public's interests. The research theme is a systems-level understanding of synergies and trade-offs for conservation, production, and livelihood objectives on a forested landscape within a changing world. The goal of the ESRF is to conduct research that provides a science-based understanding of how to sustainably deliver ecosystem goods and services, delivering on multiple values important to the public, while maintaining the Land Boards vision of a publicly owned and accessible working forest. However, The ESRF, first and foremost, needs to be a viable research forest. In this context it is not a preserve or park (although it supports the same or similar ecological, social, and economic values), but rather it is a working forest—working to achieve multiple values through a combination of active and passive research-based management approaches.

Recognizing that the success of such a research forest will require broad public support, OSU has articulated a set of commitments to the diverse public values expressed in each of the five sets of guiding principles developed by OSU and the DSL Advisory Committee in the process outlined above. These guiding principles align with direction provided by the State Land Board and will aid decision-making on the forest as the research design is implemented and management actions are undertaken on the forest. These commitments will shape future ESRF planning and management, but they cannot be carried out by OSU alone. OSU will rely upon partnership engagement for adequate funding and assistance in meeting many of these commitments.

The following subsections list the DSL Advisory Committee's guiding principles followed by OSU's commitments to the public and the forest based on, and in response to these guiding principles.

FOREST GOVERNANCE

DSL Advisory Committee's Guiding Principles

- **Accountability.** The history and unique public nature of the Elliott Forest requires placing a premium on establishing a governance structure that will provide clear lines of accountability for forest management decisions that support research programs and articulated public values into the future. This structure should include formal and informal mechanisms that ensure commitments and principles are honored in the context of fiscal and operational management of the forest over time.
- **Transparency.** Management of the Elliott Forest requires a commitment to transparent operations and decision making that will maintain and enhance public support for the research forest over time. This includes clear and defined processes for governance and oversight, clearly defined pathways for public inquiry and input, and accessible information related to forest operations.
- **Representation.** An Elliott State Research Forest governance structure should engage and incorporate multiple interests and partnerships that reflect key public values the forest will represent over time. Representation of these values in governance of the forest should be balanced, accountable, and transparent with regard to fiscal and operational management of the forest to support research programs over time.
- **Decision Making.** Regardless of governance structure, decision-making processes directing the fiscal and operational management of the Elliott State Research Forest must be accountable, transparent, and open to input while also empowered to operate the forest efficiently and effectively to meet identified objectives.

OSU's Commitments

OSU's proposed governance structure for the ESRF is described in detail on pages XX in this proposal. It clearly articulates ownership rights, responsibilities, and accountability, as well as a role for representatives of public interests in the decision-making process.

- We commit to **transparency and accountability** in the management and use of the ESRF through a governance structure that includes meaningful engagement with public interest groups, local communities, the private sector, Tribes, and others, primarily through an advisory board that advises ESRF management. **The publicly-represented board and committees** will address issues such as revenue generation and economic outcomes, conservation, Tribal interests and traditional cultural uses, research and monitoring, recreation and education, and the other myriad ecosystem services benefits provided by the ESRF.
- We commit to owning and managing the ESRF **as a public forest and guarantee public access** for recreation, education, and foraging in ways consistent with research objectives and activities.
- We commit **to engaging, coordinating, and promoting research and management partnerships** with local watershed councils and associations, Tribes, conservation NGO's and other public and private entities.
- We commit to **collaborating with scientists and researchers** from other institutions in Oregon, the USA and globally.

RECREATION

DSL Advisory Committee's Guiding Principles

- **Ensure Public Access Into the Future.** The Elliott State Research Forest ("forest") will remain accessible to the public for a variety of uses from multiple established entry points, by both motorized and non-motorized transportation, but not all places at all times.
- **Promote Recreational Access and Use that is Compatible with Research and Ecological Integrity.** Public use of the forest will be supported and managed for different recreational opportunities consistent with a management plan reflecting stakeholder interests and historical activities in concert with public safety, ongoing research, harvest, and conservation of at-risk and historically present species.
- **Support and Promote Diverse Recreational Experiences.** The Elliott State Research Forest recreational program will leverage partnerships within the local community and others to accommodate multiple and diverse recreational uses to provide a range of user experiences within the context of a working forest landscape. Recreational planning will not favor any one recreational type over another but will seek to ensure high-quality experiences on the forest by managing to minimize the potential for conflict between users while safeguarding research and management objectives, and conservation values.
- **Partner with Stakeholders and Manage Locally.** Elliott State Research Forest recreation programs will be managed by local staff who live in the community and work with stakeholders to enhance and protect the identified values of Elliott recreationists.
- **Conduct Research on Sustainable Recreation Practices.** An Elliott State Research Forest recreation program will support relevant research on recreation and eco-based tourism, with the goal to advance scientific knowledge and inform the general public on the opportunities and impacts of balancing multiple interests within forested landscapes.
- **Cultivate Multi-Generational Respect for the Forest.** Utilizing a collaborative approach to partner with schools, organizations, and volunteer groups recreation planning and management will seek to create more opportunities for engagement and a more widely informed forest-user community that is vested in the future of the Elliott State Research Forest.

OSU's Commitments

The ESRF will remain a publicly owned forest and will continue to be accessible for recreational uses. Through a direct, transparent and engaging governance structure, we will be held accountable to the public for their access and use that is consistent and does not conflict with research activities and outcomes.

- We commit to providing and enhancing **public recreation access and use** of the Elliott, including **building upon existing partnerships and new ones.**
- We commit to **collaborating with local stakeholders** in developing and implementing a **recreation management plan** for the ESRF. The work may build on or integrate with existing efforts, such as Oregon's Websites and Watersheds (ORWW), Southwest Oregon Community College (SWOCC), hunting organizations, motorized and non-motorized interests, trail groups, and the amenity sector.
- We commit to **conducting research on sustainable recreation management practices** that **advance knowledge and inform the general public** about forested landscapes represented by the ESRF and as used by locals and visitors.
- We commit to **principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion** associated with recreational access and use of the ESRF.

EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

DSL Advisory Committee's Guiding Principles

- **Seek and Incorporate New Educational Partnerships.** An Elliott State Research Forest will offer opportunities to leverage and integrate existing local and state educational programs and institutions that support and generate forest-based research and knowledge.
- **Expand Accessibility to Forestry Education.** An Elliott State Research Forest will provide and promote a diversity of values, and in doing so will leverage efforts by OSU's College of Forestry to engage students with diverse social, economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds in forestry education programs.
- **Serve Students at All Levels of Education Through Programs on the Forest.** OSU will seek to foster and establish a programmatic link with K-12, community colleges, informal collaborative educational initiatives, and educational programs at other universities so that the forest becomes a resource for students at all educational levels.
- **Integrate and Demonstrate Elements of Traditional Knowledge in Educational Programs on the Forest.** Through active partnerships with local Tribal Governments, the Elliott State Research Forest will seek to provide demonstration areas that use traditional forest management practices and focus on Traditional Ecological Knowledge outcomes for use in educational programs.
- **Foster Public Awareness and Understanding of Sustainable Forest Management.** Management and research actions on the Elliott State Research Forest will seek to promote broader understanding and awareness of the role of healthy working forest landscapes to local economies, resilient ecosystems, innovative competitive products, and healthy communities.
- **Develop an Educational Partnerships Plan.** The Elliott State Research Forest will work with stakeholders to develop a plan to foster and implement educational partnerships consistent with the foregoing principles and will implement it pending available resources.

OSU's Commitments

The ESRF will remain a publicly owned forest and will continue to be accessible for educational uses. Through a direct, transparent and engaging governance structure, we will be held accountable to the public for their access and use that is consistent and does not conflict with research activities and outcomes.

- We commit to providing and enhancing **educational access and use** of the Elliott, including building upon existing partnerships and new ones. For example, we will work to integrate and build on existing efforts and partnerships, such as ORWW's historical research relevant to the Elliott and partnerships with SWOCC and OSU's Outreach and Extension.
- We commit to **collaborating with stakeholders** in developing and implementing an education/outreach plan for the ESRF, including its human and natural history as well as social and economic research opportunities (in addition to other research relevant to ecological and management issues). Collaborations will ensure the forest provides professional and educational benefits to Oregonians, in particular, and to the broader public and scientific communities in general.
- We commit to the ESRF being a showcase and place of **learning about the role of healthy working forest landscapes** to local economies, resilient ecosystems, innovative competitive products, and healthy communities.
- We commit to **principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion** associated with educational access and use of the ESRF for students of all backgrounds, ages, and levels.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIES

DSL Advisory Committee's Guiding Principles

- **Operate as a Working Forest While Managing for Research.** The Elliott State Research Forest will be owned and managed as a working forest that produces wood supply as a by-product of research, consistent with the mission of the Institute for Working Forests Landscapes at Oregon State University College of Forestry.
- **Be Financially Self-Sustaining.** The financial model of the forest should incorporate traditional and innovative options for generating revenue to support forest management, and research programs without requiring continued funding support from outside sources.
- **Generate Consistent and High-Quality Timber Harvest.** A sustainable supply of wood volume will be produced over time as a by-product of the research program on the Elliott State Research Forest. Quality should be prioritized over the quantity of harvest.
- **Support Employment Opportunities for Local Communities.** The Elliott State Research Forest should not be managed from a remote location. Management and operation of the forest should be located in proximity to the forest and promote local partnerships that provide opportunities to local businesses and residents of Coos and Douglas counties.
- **Study and report on the Relationship between the Research Forest and Local Economies.** The connections between OSU, the Elliott State Research Forest, and local economies should be documented and reported with transparency over time.

OSU's Commitments

The ESRF, as a working forest, will provide benefits to the economies and communities surrounding it. There is great potential for positive impacts on local economic sectors as we grow capacities associated with timber and other forest products, research, forest management, infrastructure building, maintenance, restoration, education, and recreation activities on or related to the ESRF. We also anticipate that the ESRF will generate spillover workforce and economic benefits to the broader region, state, and elsewhere.

- We commit to operating the ESRF as a research forest that is **self-sustaining** based on revenue generated directly and indirectly from the forest through timber harvesting and other revenue-generating activities, gifts, and grants/contracts.
- We commit to **providing local jobs and other economic values** associated with activities on the ESRF. These include jobs in support of timber production, supplying timber to local mills, managing and monitoring the forest, recreation, education, and other activities on the ESRF whenever possible. In addition, recreation and education opportunities may draw people from outside the local economy who spend money as they recreate and learn.
- We commit to the **sustainable production of timber products and growing high-quality trees** by maintaining approximately 19% of the forest in intensive timber production and about 20% in extensive timber production (we define intensive and extensive management practices on pages XX of this proposal). The timber production includes the ESRF playing a positive role in providing wood and research relevant to advancing market opportunities tied to high-quality wood products. It also consists of the value-added forest products the ESRF has supported in the past and new products pertinent to the health of Oregon's forest products sector in the future.
- We commit to **managing the ESRF locally**, including key personnel living in the surrounding communities as well as building the infrastructure necessary to house researchers, students, and other stakeholders. Over time, OSU envisions the forest will attract researchers from around the region, USA, and the world to conduct research that brings significant investments in housing, food, and research infrastructure to Coos and Douglas counties.
- We commit to **advancing financial partnerships** tied to recreation, education, research, forest management, and habitat restoration that individually and collectively improve local economic and workforce benefits both on and off the forest. While timber harvest revenue will directly support forest research and management, it will be insufficient to fund all opportunities or needs on the forest, thus making partnerships and related external funding critical to achievement of broad public values on an ESRF (e.g., Cougar Pass fire tower restoration, habitat restoration, road removal, recreation infrastructure development and maintenance, and educational programming).

CONSERVATION

DSL Advisory Committee's Guiding Principles

- **Improve Conservation Status of At-Risk Species.** The Elliott State Research Forest will undertake studies, research, and associated forest management activities that seek to improve the conservation status of at-risk species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.
- **Implement Science-Based Conservation Efforts to Enhance the Productivity and Conservation Values of the Research Forest.** In adhering to the academic mission of Oregon State University, and to ensure the sustainability of any management or activity that occurs on the landscape, all conservation decisions or proposed projects on the Elliott State Research Forest will be rooted in the best available scientific Manage for Multiple Conservation Values to Maintain and Enhance Essential Elements of a Forest Ecosystem. With a holistic, ecological approach, management of the Elliott State Research Forest will support the protection and enhancement of at-risk species and preservation of biodiversity, along with promoting improved natural hydrologic function and opportunities of carbon sequestration.
- **Preserve and Proactively Steward a Diversity of Forest Structures.** Management of the Elliott State Research Forest will emphasize key ecological areas ranging from early seral to late-successional forest structure in the context of the greater landscape. The future growth of the forest should encompass diverse objectives of biological quality and resilience for future adaptability.
- **Collaborate with Local Partners for Monitoring and Restoration of Habitat.** Management planning for the Elliott State Research Forest will partner with local conservation stakeholders to maintain transparency and mutual trust that protection of sensitive natural values will be prioritized.
- **Management Decisions Will Not Be Driven by Potential Financial Returns.** The integrity of the research objectives and conservation values on the Elliott State Research Forest will not be compromised by the presence of active management and economic influences on the forest.
- **Conduct Innovative Research on the Intersection of Forest Ecosystems Functions and Climate Change.** The Elliott State Research Forest will provide a unique opportunity to conduct innovative research on the role that native, mature, and managed forests can play in ameliorating the impacts of climate change for sensitive species, water quality/retention, and carbon sequestration.

OSU's Commitments

The ESRF will make meaningful contributions to species persistence and recovery through its research platform, specific research programs on habitat restoration and enhancement, and broader commitments below. As a result of a research design that promotes older forests, complex early seral, and other valuable habitats, and the functions of resilience and resistance in riparian, aquatic, and terrestrial systems, conservation and biodiversity will be enhanced. The ESRF research design and commitments outlined below support a goal of conserving and recovering species including coastal coho salmon, marbled murrelet, the northern spotted owl, and other species of concern, which while dependent upon actions and actors across a broader landscape, is something to which an ESRF can positively contribute.

- We commit to **conserving, enhancing, and sustaining high-quality habitats for endangered species and other wildlife** through approaches such as placing approximately 60% of the ESRF into reserves where recurring timber harvests will cease and habitat restoration and protection would be their primary focus. Doing so creates the largest contiguous reserve networks in the Oregon Coast Range (detail on pg. XX of proposal). We also will foster the growth of older forest stands in the ESRF well beyond current levels and such that there will be a significant gain of older complex forests relative to today.
- We commit to **providing and enhancing other habitats beyond older forests**, in particular for complex early seral forests and the multitude of wildlife dependent upon them.
- We commit to **conserving, enhancing, and sustaining native riparian conditions and vital ecological processes** that influence the aquatic system of the ESRF and connected aquatic networks. This commitment includes recruitment of instream wood, shading for water quality and thermal refugia, and active restoration projects (with partners and contingent upon adequate funding) related to these and other aquatic system attributes.
- We commit to **conserving, enhancing, and sustaining carbon storage** on the forest by increasing rotation ages in intensively managed stands, retaining older trees in extensively managed stands, and designating reserves.
- We commit to **reducing the current road network density** and known related adverse impacts on the ESRF (in particular in the Conservation Research Watersheds), while maintaining and balancing for necessary access for research, harvesting, management, education, fire protection, and recreation.
- We commit to **limiting salvage harvesting** and related research to intensive watersheds, and with further limitations in extensive treatment areas. No salvage logging will occur in reserves (CRW and other reserve watersheds) when tree mortality is due to natural disturbances (drought, disease, wind, insects, and fire).
- We commit to helping advance a **Habitat Conservation Plan** that improves the certainty around OSU's ability to advance research, while conserving endangered species over an extended timeframe.
- We commit to a **working forest approach** that, through research and applied project work, is intentional about better understanding and highlighting the role of coastal pacific forests in carbon sequestration and climate adaptation, and the impacts of climate change on the diverse public interests associated with forests.

TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT

Oregon currently has nine federally-recognized Indian Tribes. These Tribes have retained unique legal status which includes Government-to-Government relationships. Oregon has recognized this relationship through various statutes, Executive Orders and policy statements. The continued involvement of Tribes is essential in the future management of the ESF. Therefore, the guiding principles for Tribal engagement will revolve around:

- Respect for Tribal sovereignty and Government-to-Government relationships.
- Understand and appreciate the unique values of individual Tribes and their respective connection to the ESF.
- Honor Tribal Ecological Knowledge (TEK).
- Ensure accessibility by Tribes to OSU's educational programs, research, and information resources.
- Promote shared generation of knowledge from activities on and related to the ESF.
- Develop sustainable partnerships with Tribes.

A necessary first-step in expressing our commitments to Tribes, we intend to establish government-to-government MOUs between College of Forestry / Oregon State University and local Tribal governments that set standards and expectations for sustaining meaningful and productive partnerships in research, education, and outreach that directly co-benefits Tribal communities, individuals, and businesses, and OSU. The DSL Advisory Committee and sub-committees, including Research Platform and Governance, have included representatives from various Tribes. As the new governance structure of the ESRF evolves, we anticipate continued involvement from Tribes as advisory roles, committees, and/or operational levels of projects.

OSU's commitments express our desire to own and manage the ESRF for the good of science, the land, and the people it sustains. Our commitments to the public values are enduring in that they are long-term, enabling research to be conducted over large spatial and temporal scales addressing ecological, social, and economic questions in the context of sustainable forest management, including natural disturbances, changing climates, and social pressures on these forested systems. The following section provides information on the research objectives for an ESRF.