



February 6, 2025

BOARD

Daniela Brod, Chair
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Mike Houck,
Director

State Land Board
Department of State Lands
775 Summer St. NE, Salem

Dear Land Board,

I am writing to offer my strongest support for the appointment of Kaitlin Lovell as a voting member of the Board of Directors to the Elliott State Forest on behalf of the Urban Greenspaces Institute.

I have known Kaitlin for many years in her capacity as chief scientist and in many other roles at the City of Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services and as fellow board member of Bird Conservation Oregon.

Kaitlin has a rare and unique combination of being a scientist, having extensive legal expertise in the Endangered Species and Clean Water Acts; she has a practical working knowledge of local, regional, and local land use and water resource issues; has knowledge of on-the-ground nature-based land management and restoration and management of sensitive lands. She contributed greatly to the City of Portland's Climate Adaptation strategies and co-authored The Intertwine Alliance's *Regional Conservation Strategy* for which she co-authored the chapter on climate change. She also contributed to the *Biodiversity Strategy for the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Region*. As if that weren't enough, the fact that she is a rural land-owner is an added asset to her service on the Elliott Board.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Houck".

Mike Houck, Director

In Livable Cities is Preservation of the Wild

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Kudos to the Land Board and DSL for your effective recovery from the shock wave generated by OSU's withdrawal and disavowal of its five years work on development of a research plan for the Elliott Research Forest, for the appointment of an talented and capable Board of Directors or Advisory Board, and for development of the research forest's first two-year operations plan proposal. The Elliott Research ship has taken on water, but continues to sail. Whether the vessel's rules of procedure are ready to be codified in administrative law is another question.

Thanks to the leadership of Director Walker through this difficult transition, DSL and the Land Board have managed to maintain momentum on a path which keeps the promise of developing a thriving research forest alive. However, less than optimum trade-offs have resulted in fundamental organizational shortcomings of the new research forest which, left unresolved, threaten the venture's long-term success.

Several things became clear in last week's meeting of the new Elliott Board:

- 1) the rejection and abandonment of OSU's "triad" research strategy
- 2) the lack of an alternative overarching research strategy or identification of a path toward such a new, coherent strategy,
- 3) a confusing and dysfunctional fragmentation of authority among the Land Board, DSL staff and contractors, new research forest staff and the Elliott Board, making development of a coherent research strategy difficult or impossible to achieve
- 4) the unpleasant potential for the Elliott to become a bureaucratic zombie agency driven by previous policy choices which lack coherence or support, without the capacity to reform itself, let alone perform at the high level capacity of the gifted new Board. The troubling fact is that the research forest is moving forward guided by documents based on OSU's rejected and discredited "triad" foundation which nobody- now that OSU has stepped away- seems to either understand or support. The confusing context of overlapping authorities cobbled together after OSU's withdrawal as the lynchpin of the new research forest presently lack the capacity for the informed, effective and mission-driven excellence necessary for fulfilling the immense promise of becoming the world's premier forest research institution.

Last week's Elliott Board meeting revealed profound unanswered questions among the new Board about who is to guide the new research forest. Is it

DSL? The Land Board? The new research forest director? Or will it be the talented and capable new Board?

In last week's meeting new Elliott Board member Peter Hayes, perhaps the leading practitioner of ecological forestry in Oregon, emphasized the crucial importance of the Board's authority and autonomy for the Elliott's capacity to develop long-term relationships of trust with kind of high level potential Elliott researchers who can vault Oregon's research forest to the top ranks of forest scientific organizations. The Board needs that kind of recognized authority if this venture is to bring to Oregon the paradigm-shattering kind of changes to the practice of forestry the new Board appears capable of putting in place- attendant with the economic growth possible from fundamental scientific breakthroughs. It may not be possible to keep such a talented group engaged and working unless the Land Board is willing to clarify and delegate to them the power and authority they need to succeed.

A case in point would be the apparent carbon credit contract the state is entering into for Elliott carbon. The Board appears to be completely shut out of this process, despite its overarching importance to forest management. The new Board appears to have its hands tied at the most fundamental and important level of management. It should be they who are managing the forest's carbon.

As Hayes pointed out, the single most critical element of a successful research forest is its capacity to develop long-term relationships of trust with potential researchers. Nothing is more important to the Elliott Research Forest. For now, this must be the overriding consideration: long-term coherence and stability, without the risk of disruption, which can only come from a respected and empowered Elliott Board.

The proposed two-year Operations Plan includes a one-off harvest of a small cohort of 70-year old plantations which can deliver high value thinnings. It appears that DSL's forester and contractor have proposed a minimally disruptive, high-value initial harvest plan which will buy time to fill in some of the research strategy gaps left after OSU's abandonment of its research proposal. May that time be used wisely!