



# News

## NEWS RELEASE – *for immediate release*

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### **State Secures Habitat Conservation Plan, Permits for the Elliott State Research Forest**

*The HCP is Oregon's first for public forest lands and key as research forest operations begin*

SALEM, Ore. – Oregon's Elliott State Research Forest has achieved another major milestone and first for Oregon.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [today announced](#) approval of the habitat conservation plan for the research forest and issuance of an Endangered Species Act permit for implementing the plan over the next 80 years.

The HCP is the state's first for public forest lands, and key as the Elliott begins actively operating in 2025 as Oregon's first state research forest.

"Oregon's Elliott State Research Forest is continuing to lead the way," said Governor Tina Kotek. "With this habitat conservation plan comes certainty that innovative research, economic and environmental benefits, and wildlife protection can all be achieved on the Elliott for decades to come."

"The habitat conservation plan supports our state partners in innovative forest research and timber production compatible with species conservation," said Bridget Fahey, Acting Regional Director for the Pacific Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "We're looking forward to working with the state for another 80 years of conservation."

HCPs ensure compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act, mapping out both specific management activities that may impact protected species and conservation commitments that protect those species and their habitat over time. Timber harvest and habitat restoration projects are among the activities covered by the approved HCP, which supports operation of the Elliott as a working research forest.

A 2012 lawsuit over protected species halted timber harvest on the Elliott, and ultimately led to the State Land Board's vision of a publicly owned research forest that would contribute multiple benefits to Oregon.

"The future of the Elliott has always been about Oregonians coming together to chart a course that represents what's best about our state – fulfilling our obligations to school kids, protecting public lands, research that benefits our rural communities, and providing predictable access to timber off this forest. This HCP is foundational to that effort, and its approval is a vote of confidence from our federal partners," said Secretary of State Tobias Read.

The Department of State Lands, guided by a public Elliott State Research Forest [Board of Directors](#), will now oversee the 83,000-acre Elliott as a national center for forest science and management. In October 2024, the State Land Board approved the initial research forest management plan, which calls for benefits that include protecting and restoring habitat, supporting local economies by resuming timber harvest, enhancing opportunities for recreation and education, and promoting opportunities for Indigenous forest stewardship and research.

As a research forest, the Elliott will advance a business model and social, economic, and ecological research of national and international relevance to how forest management can support many public benefits. Integrating an HCP and voluntary carbon project on public land, [as the research forest will](#), also represents a first for the nation.

Treasurer Elizabeth Steiner said, "the Elliott State Research Forest embodies the values that make Oregon unique: people working together to safeguard our children's future and the forests that we depend on. The habitat conservation plan shows what we can do when we work together to advance these values."

DSL is [currently finalizing](#) the initial Elliott operations plan, which outlines timber harvest, restoration projects, road maintenance, and other anticipated activities over the next two years. The operations plan implements the approved forest management plan and includes activities allowed under the HCP. The permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service covers incidental take of the threatened marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl. A separate decision by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service is expected on issuance of an incidental take permit for Oregon Coast coho salmon.

Keith Tymchuk, who serves as chair of the Elliott State Research Forest Board of Directors, said ongoing collaboration by many has been essential to the success of the research forest.

"The Elliott is a treasure, and for over seven years now, Oregonians representing many different walks of life have been working to craft a future that fits it. The HCP has always been a huge part of completing our move past the gridlock and standing up the transformation to a research forest," Tymchuk said. "I'd like to thank Gov. Kotek and the Land Board, Director Walker, ESRF Manager Goodding and the terrific DSL staff, and our collaborative partners from all circles—past and present—for their vision, dedication, persistence and hard work to get us to this point."

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