

# Forest Legacy Project

## Gilchrist Forest

Gilchrist, OR, Oregon



### FUNDING HISTORY

FY 2014 Forest Legacy Program Funding	\$3,000,000
FY 2014 Non-Federal Cost Share	\$5,805,000
FY 2014 Project Costs	\$8,805,000
FY 2014 Project Acres	25,835
Forest Legacy Funding To Date	\$0
Total Project Costs	\$8,805,000
Total Project Acres	25,835



★ Project Location  
 ■ Forest Legacy Areas

Tract Name	Size (ac)	Tract Cost	FLP Funding	Non-Fed Cost Share	Status
Gilchrist East	25,835	\$8,805,000	\$3,000,000	\$5,805,000	In Review 2014

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The 25,835-acre Gilchrist State Forest parcel, to be protected in FEE, is a keystone property surrounded by three National Forests, a State forest, and BLM lands. The tract will be added to the newly created Gilchrist State Forest and will be managed for sustainable forestry and public recreation, generating significant revenue for Klamath County. The highest priority acquisition for Governor Kitzhaber, it represents a unique and affordable (\$341/acre) investment in Oregon's future. Protection would eliminate 40 miles of inholding border for the 2 million acres of adjoining public lands. It will strengthen critical wildlife corridors, protect a large aquifer recharge area for the federally-designated Wild and Scenic Deschutes River, and restore a mature Ponderosa pine forest, one of the highest priority habitats in Oregon's Conservation Strategy. Because of its prime location--close to Bend and abundant outdoor recreation--and permissive zoning (with destination resort overlay), this parcel is seriously threatened by parcelization and conversion. At the State's request, The Conservation Fund acquired the property as a pass through project because development would eliminate hundreds of jobs and increase fire suppression costs.



View of project from Buell Butte (Photo by Doug Decker (Oregon State Forester))

### PROJECT FEATURES

#### Important

- **ECONOMIC BENEFITS – FORESTRY:** This large (25,835 acres) and productive Ponderosa pine forest will in time create an estimated 50 jobs in the biofuels and forest contracting sectors and at the Interfor mill in Gilchrist, Central Oregon's largest sawmill.

- With harvesting projected to eventually hit 8 million board feet, revenue sharing from this parcel will provide \$1 million annually for Klamath County's schools, health clinics, and other vital public services--critical help to an economically challenged area.
- Drastic reductions in timber supply from the surrounding National Forests resulted in multiple local mill closures and made the few remaining large private tracts even more critical to the local economy--making this area a high priority in the Statewide Forest Assessment.
- Under State management the parcel will become a showcase for sustainable long-rotation silviculture, under the Eastern Oregon Long Range Plan. The parcel will be managed in a manner comparable to the Sun Pass State Forest, widely regarded as the best managed Ponderosa pine forest in Oregon.
- **ECONOMIC BENEFIT – NON-TIMBER:** By drawing thousands of visitors annually, this project and the State Forest will generate increased recreation dollars to Klamath County (well below the state median income). Wildlife viewing in Klamath Co. is estimated to bring in \$14 million annually.
- A scoping analysis to register as an Improved Forest Management carbon offset project on the Climate Action Registry suggests the forest will generate 25,000 credits (mtCO<sub>2</sub>e/yr) beginning in 2017, which should eventually generate \$150-300k annually to assist in property management and restoration.
- **THREATENED OR ENDANGERED SPECIES HABITAT:** The Upper Deschutes River supports endemic and federally-listed Bull and Redband trout. According to OR Dept. Fish & Wildlife, low river flows due to agriculture/development are the greatest limiting factor, so this project is key to species recovery.
- The parcel provides 25,835 acres of habitat for State Priority Species such as the endemic white-headed woodpecker, flammulated owl, and Lewis' woodpecker, and is one of the last remaining low elevation winter range and migration corridors for mule deer, also a State Priority Species.
- Ponderosa pine is a nationally-important habitat type; identified by the American Bird Conservancy as one of 20 Most Threatened Bird Habitats. The property supports several state-listed threatened species such as Pumice Grape-fern and Peck's milk-vetch.
- **FISH, WILDLIFE, PLANTS AND UNIQUE FOREST COMMUNITIES:** Ponderosa pine forest is one of the eleven highest Priority habitats for the federally approved Oregon Conservation Strategy and the only one that supports working forests. Less than 1% of Oregon's late seral Ponderosa pine forest remains.
- The property also supports more common species such as bobcat, fox, and migrating songbirds. GPS tracking shows that the only wolf known to migrate west to the Cascades in the last 100 years crossed through this property in 2011, indicating the value of large tracts of undisturbed habitat.
- **WATER SUPPLY, AQUATIC HABITAT AND WATERSHED PROTECTION:** The parcel provides an important aquifer recharge area for the Wild & Scenic Deschutes River, which during the dry season relies almost exclusively on groundwater sources to sustain healthy flows for fish, recreation, and drinking water.
- Development of the Gilchrist parcel would interrupt the aquifer recharge and increase water withdrawals--further reducing instream flows and threatening endangered species recovery and a multi-million dollar recreational fishing and rafting economy.
- Conserving the Gilchrist property protects its freshwater source role in the Upper Deschutes groundwater hydrology--helping maintain in-stream flows for fish and other water available for recreation, drinking water, and agricultural uses.
- **PUBLIC ACCESS:** The parcel will be a prime recreational destination, offering 25,835 acres of free public access for camping, biking, snowmobiling, and other recreation--including some of the best deer hunting in Central Oregon, with numerous connections to adjoining federal and state lands.
- The new State Forest adjoins Gilchrist High School and is already used by the science and vocational



White-headed woodpecker, endemic to Ponderosa pine forest and occurs on property (Photo by Tom Munson)

classes; school use as well as new programs based on the award-winning education programs in other state forests, such as the Klamath Outdoor Science School, will be held on the project tract.

- **SCENIC:** The parcel protects scenic viewsheds from the adjoining Oregon Outback National Scenic Byway, the adjoining Deschutes and Fremont-Winema National Forests, the adjoining Gilchrist State Forest, the nearby Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, and the nearby Oregon Cascades Birding Trail.
- **HISTORIC/CULTURAL:** Situated around Oregon's last logging company-owned town, the parcel contains numerous historic sites, including homestead and logging sites from the early twentieth century, which will be protected under state ownership and used for interpretation and education.
- Once added to the State Forest, the \$1 million in annual timber sales revenue for Klamath County will be used to support cultural activities, public schools and health clinics in this impoverished county.
- As an example, 2000 acres of thinning on the State Forest in 2012 employed 60 local workers for 3 months, generated 1 million bf of sawlogs and 18000 tons of chips--dramatically reducing fuel loads and future firefighting costs, and improving future forest growth, timber value, and habitat quality.

## Threatened

- **LACK OF PROTECTION:** This parcel is readily developable: under current zoning the parcel could be developed into 270 residences without special permit application. Comprised of 35 underlying legal tracts, the parcels could be easily divided without requiring any county zoning or planning review.
- Most of the tract also has a Resort Development zoning overlay; therefore a destination resort of any size could be approved without triggering any zoning changes. Though primarily zoned for Forestry, about one-third of the parcel is zoned for 2 and 5-acre residential lots.
- Due to the high threat, the OR Dept of Forestry requested The Conservation Fund pre-acquire the property for the new Gilchrist State Forest. This pass-through acquisition is governed by a Lease & Option Agreement: all transaction terms have been disclosed and approved by the Board of Forestry.
- **LANDOWNER CIRCUMSTANCES:** The prior owner was an investment holding company that purchased 200,000 acres of central Oregon timberland. They received resort development permits on two nearby areas, and had development plans for this property--precipitating its purchase ahead of Forest Legacy funds.
- **ADJACENT LAND USE:** Most surrounding land is publicly owned; this concentrates development pressures on the low-elevation private lands, such as this parcel. The tract is only 40 miles from Bend--one of the nation's most-desirable and fastest growing regions--which has quadrupled in size since 1980.
- Because of its scenic views, sunny climate, world-class recreation, lack of sales tax, and moderately priced real estate-- low-density residential development increased by a remarkable 233% in northern Klamath County between 1974-2005 (the fastest rate in Oregon, five times the State average!).
- In particular, the number of structures in "Wildland Forest" in the surrounding area increased 12% annually in the most recent study (2000-2005)--over four times faster than any other region in the State--and severely increasing fire fighting risks and costs.
- During the past 20 years, resort development in the area has exploded--for example, Sunriver Resort (30 miles away) features two golf courses, a private airport, 28 tennis courts, and more than 400 vacation rental properties. There are 25+ golf courses in the 40 miles between the property and Bend.
- **ABILITY TO DEVELOP:** The parcel has almost unlimited development potential because of the well-drained soils, state highway frontage, a good internal road system and numerous potential building sites with scenic views. Utilities are already established adjacent to the parcel, along State Highway 31.



Gilchrist High School (with State Forest in background) (Photo by Klamath County School District)

## Strategic

- CONSERVATION INITIATIVE, STRATEGY, OR PLAN: Oregon's federally-approved 2010 Statewide Forest Assessment identifies this site as a high overall conservation priority. This parcel scored highly in all categories: Communities at Risk to Wildfire (landscape wildfire risk), habitat conservation (Ponderosa pine importance), and threatened with loss of timber markets (declining manufacturing base).
- Protection and restoration of Ponderosa pine habitat is prioritized nationally, identified by the American Bird Conservancy as one 20 Most Threatened Bird Habitats. The property is also identified as a "Portfolio Site" (high priority conservation area) in The Nature Conservancy's East-West Cascades Ecoregional Assessment, due to the endemic species and biodiversity value of Ponderosa pine habitat.
- A study by the USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station documented that the conversion of this parcel would increase the risk and cost of uncharacteristically severe wildfires and insect outbreaks on adjacent National Forests and threaten surrounding communities. The federally-approved Walker Range Community Fire Protection Plan recognizes conservation of this tract as critical to public safety.
- By generating significant revenue to Klamath County, the project supports the US Forest Service objectives of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Determination Act. By reducing fuel loads next to National Forests, the project helps address the agency's "4 Threats to the Health of the Nation's Forests." And the project supports the goals of the "Upper Deschutes River Restoration Strategy".
- Creation of the Gilchrist State Forest was the highest land acquisition priority for then-Governor Kulongoski, who worked with local representatives to secure the legislative funding to purchase the first 43,000 acres in 2010. Gov. Kitzhaber has continued this initiative, drawn by the rural economic benefits and low cost of the acquisition, and the strong public support from a conservative region.
- The Deschutes National Forest has an existing partnership with Gilchrist High School to provide youth conservation corps opportunities, this and other activities will be expanded to this property. Well-supported youth education and recreation connections such as this are central to the Outdoor Nation Coalition (the Forest Service and five other federal agencies are formal partners).
- COMPLEMENT PROTECTED LANDS: The property adjoins the Deschutes, Fremont-Winema National Forests, BLM lands, Gilchrist State Forest, and tracts conserved by the Deschutes Land Trust. Other nearby federal investments include Newberry-Crater National Volcanic Monument, Deschutes Wild & Scenic River, Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, Diamond Peak Wilderness, and Pringle Falls Experimental Forest.
- The parcel is surrounded by 2 million acres of public land, sharing 40 miles of border with National Forests, BLM lands, and the new Gilchrist State Forest. Protecting this keystone property will dramatically reduce wildfire suppression risk and enhance recreation and habitat restoration cooperation--key priorities in USDA Secretary Vilsack's "All-Lands Approach".
- Management by the Oregon Department of Forestry will restore late seral Ponderosa pine forests, one of the highest priority habitats in the Oregon Conservation Strategy (a federally approved State Wildlife Action Plan). The parcel is close to two other priority areas and is one of the few remaining migration corridors with winter range for mule deer, a Priority Species in the Strategy.
- The parcel is located within a nationally-renowned birding destination on the Pacific Flyway with many nearby National Wildlife Refuges, and is adjacent to two officially recognized birding sites--the Oregon Cascades Birding Trail and the Little Deschutes River/Crescent Creek Important Bird Area.



Community leaders celebrate the initial Gilchrist State Forest acquisition. (Photo by OR Dept of Forestry)

## Readiness

Pre-Appraisal/Market Analysis	1
Easement or Fee Conditions	1
Non-Federal Cost Share Commitment	0
Signed Purchase Agreement	1
Title Search	1
Mineral Determination	1
Stewardship Plan (or equivalent)*	1
<b>Readiness Total Tally Score</b>	<b>6</b>

## Supporting Parties

Governor John Kitzhaber; Oregon Board of Forestry; Klamath County Commissioners; Deschutes National Forest; Fremont-Winema National Forest; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Oregon Department of Forestry; The Conservation Fund; The Deschutes Land Trust; International Forest Products (owner of the Gilchrist sawmill); The Freshwater Trust; Walker Range Forest Protective Association; and Crescent-Gilchrist Community Action Team (local town council).

### For more information on the Forest Legacy Program, please contact:

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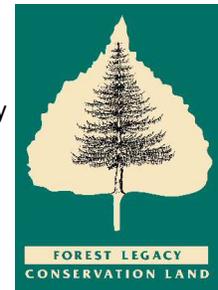
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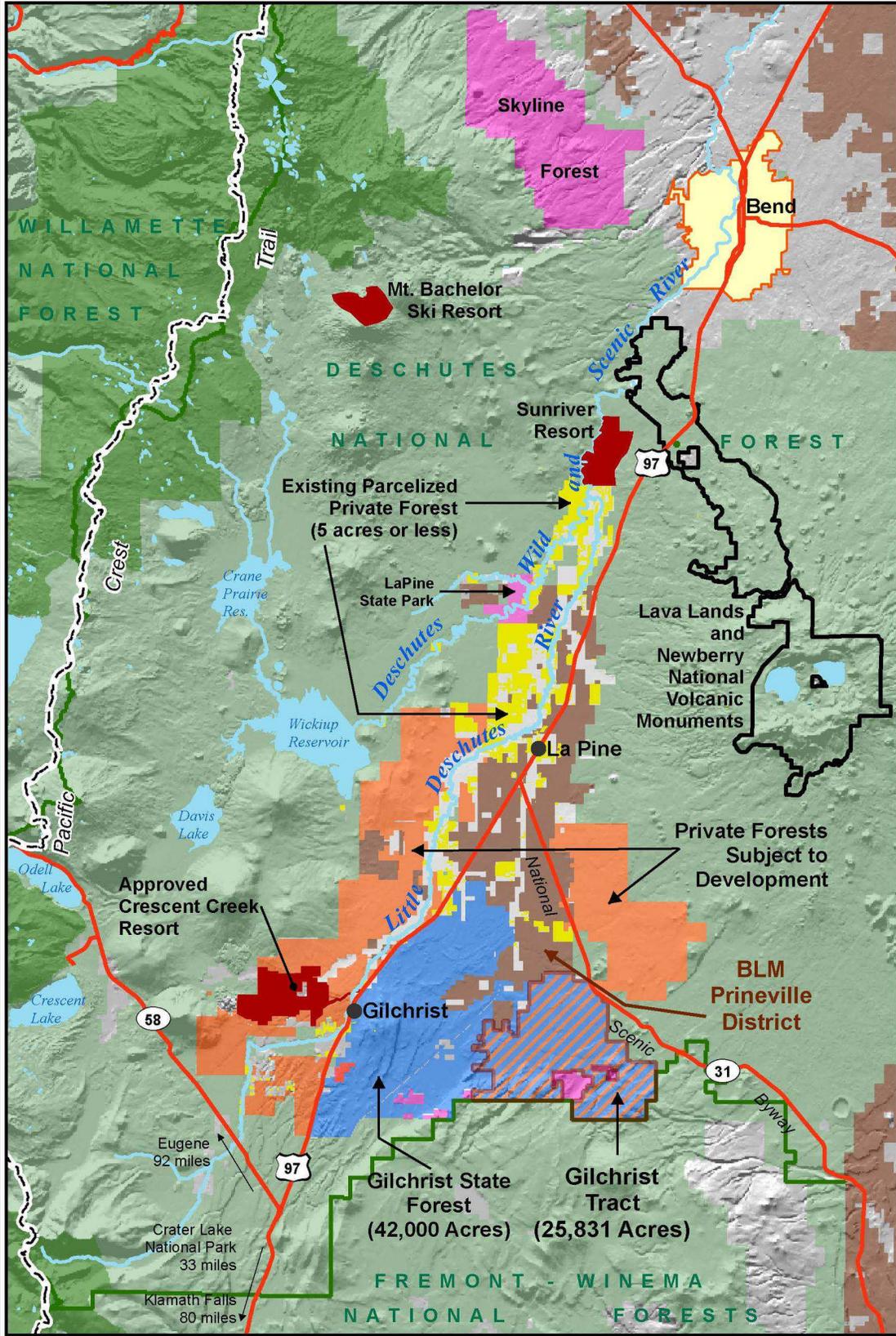
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# Gilchrist Forest Legacy Proposal

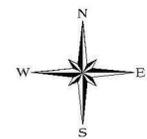
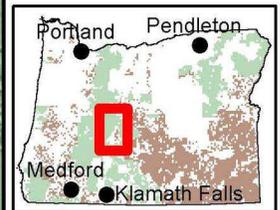


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## Legend

- Gilchrist Tract
- Resort Areas
- National Monuments
- Existing Parcelized Private Forest
- Private Forests Subject To Development
- State Forest
- BLM
- USFS
- Conserved Lands
- Wilderness Areas



0 2.5 5 Miles

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MW 10/01/2010