

September 7, 2016

TO: Oregon Board of Forestry Members  
State Forester

FROM: Carolyn Eady

SUBJECT: Forestry Practices and Climate Change

Note: I had hoped to deliver this testimony in person, but a mobility issue has made that impractical. I hope you will still give this written material the attention I think it requires.

My testimony today is about climate change as it relates to Forestry. I know staff have been instructed to keep up-to-date on the **impact climate change is having on forestry** – this is important and must continue. I want, however, to approach this issue from the other direction, i.e. **How forest practices are affecting climate change.**

Based on two reports released last Fall:<sup>1</sup>

- Compared to 2000, Oregon has **522,000 acres less forest cover<sup>2</sup> on its state and privately managed forestland in western Oregon. This is attributed primarily to rapid clearcutting at rates that far exceeded growth by 45% between 2000 and 2013.**
- **This practice has generated significant greenhouse (GHG) emissions from industrial logging and a loss of sequestration capacity – four to seven times higher than those associated with the Boardman coal-fired plant in 2012 or the equivalent of 2-4 million new cars on the road, and making logging on private (and possibly State land under one model) the second largest GHG polluter in Oregon.**

Personally, I found it hard to believe Oregon's state and privately managed forests were actually contributing to global warming rather than sequestering carbon. Then I read the following in the November 2015 Talberth study:

*The timber industry shields its global warming pollution from public scrutiny by using a greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting trick other sectors cannot make use of – taking credit for the emission reductions achieved by others.....therefore net emissions from what they call the “forest sector” are zero....This accounting trick is used worldwide.*

In this case, the industrial forests are relying on the sequestration capacity of the federal forests.

I should make it clear up-front, that I am certainly not trying to shut down or cripple the timber industry, but I am suggesting that they, like all other industries, must be environmentally responsible.

**Why is this so important now?** We all know by simply watching the evening news that global warming is accelerating. Some of the specifics, however, that we rarely hear from major news outlets are:

- **June 2016 marked the 14<sup>th</sup> consecutive month of record heat for land and oceans; the 378<sup>th</sup> consecutive month with temperatures above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average.**
- **Carbon dioxide concentrations have passed the symbolic milestone of 400 parts per million.**

- **Temperatures in the Coral Sea were the highest on record contributing to unprecedented bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef off the shore of Australia.**
- **Due to thermal expansion and melting of glaciers, the year 2015 set the record for highest global sea level. The oceans are now 2.76 inches higher than the average in 1993. the Arctic Ocean is a staggering 14.4 degrees F warmer than average.**

The best scientists in the world are working on multiple techniques to curb GHG emissions. Here are two examples from the Spring 2016 publication of the Union of Concerned Scientists:

- Steven Chu, Nobel laureate and former US secretary of energy, is trying to promote a global carbon tax to avoid the intractable problem of how to allocate carbon emissions credits between developed and developing countries. He also stated that **if global emissions are capped below 3.7 trillion tons of carbon dioxide, there is a 50% chance of staying below the 2 degree C target for 2100....At our current emissions rate, the remainder of this allotment will be gone in 30 years.**
- Doug Boucher, a scientist who has participated UN climate negotiations since 2007, said **we must protect and protect Earth's forests if we are to reach the long-term goal of balancing emissions with sequestration. "Humanity has been destroying the Earth's forests for millennia; the Paris agreement means that we've reached a fundamental turning point in this relationship."**

**The Oregon Board of Forestry is in a unique position.** You cannot do it alone, but you have a responsibility as the body that sets policy for private and state forests to take the lead in a state-wide conversation to address the GHG emissions in the western private and state forest in western Oregon.

### Suggested Actions

I would like to describe some specific steps that would demonstrate that you realize that this situation is extremely serious and, likewise, that it calls for prompt action.

1. **Select two or three respected scientists – not a task force or a committee – to inform you whether or not the work just now coming out OSU research is far enough along to give you more reliable data of the type cited above AND/OR whether they need to meet with Talberth and his associates to go over their reports .** (This would allow them to become thoroughly familiar with these studies and to identify their strengths and weaknesses.) However, I would hope that whichever route is selected, you continue to move ahead. Even if the Talberth studies turn out to be off by 50%, the state still has a very serious issue to deal with. **Do not let perfection stand in the way of progress!**
2. **It is essential that the BOF must come together to support the work you decide to do in dealing with the GHG emissions issue.** Without this, your efforts will simply not be as effective.
3. **If you do agree to move forward on this issue, you need to strategize the best way to do it.** I think that early on you need to have a forum with industrial and private forest land owners to present the issues to them in a public and open way and to seek their input. I think you might be surprised by the reaction of a sizable number. These individuals have children and grandchildren and must be just as worried as you are about their future.<sup>3</sup> If you could gain this group's support, it would make the next steps much easier.
4. **Begin the conversation with the Governor and the legislators. I am not naive: this will be**

**tough because you will be asking for a major re-ordering of state priorities in an already stressed financial situation at the state level.** Ask yourself: Do we really have any other choice? Will future generations thank you for taking a stand? Also remember, Oregon has a reputation as a leader in environmental matters. What if Oregon could encourage other large logging states to also have the courage to tackle this issue?

- 5. Ultimately, ODF personnel and the various committees and advisory committees should be brought into the conversation, plus the people of Oregon.** There needs to be broad understanding and awareness of this situation and, hopefully, support for the actions that will be required.

Finally, I would close with a famous quote of Robert Kennedy:

**IF NOT YOU? WHO?**

**IF NOT NOW? WHEN?**

Thank you for your service to the state and for your consideration of this issue. If you have any questions, please contact me.

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For Endnotes: See next page

1 Talberth and Fernandez, Deforestation Oregon Style, September 2015 and Talberth, DellaSala and Fernandez, Clearcutting our Carbon Accounts, How State and private forest practices are subverting Oregon's climate agenda, November 2015. For copies of these reports and other publications, go to the Center for Sustainable Economy, <http://sustainable-economy.org/oregon-forest-practices-reform>)

2 Talberth et al used the international standard for defining forest cover: 30% of the ground covered as seen from the air, with trees that are at least 5 meters in height. In this region, this would likely fall in the 13-15 year old stand age range.

3 In a recent article by Emily Green in Street Roots entitled “The Forester's Dilemma”, there are extensive quotes by former BOF member, Peter Hayes, who comes from a long line of foresters, about the history of the timber industry in Oregon. He noted that we now have the environmental protection of the FPA, but it still only rewards owners for one thing: timber production. **He is one of a growing network of timber company operators who are trying to usher in a new way of managing their forests for timber that brings them money, and the ecological benefits that do not – a drastic departure from common current practices.** I think many foresters may respond favorably to a relatively simple solution for not letting their rate of clearcutting exceed their growth rate by using their current “ledger” of stands to identify the acreage of the 13-15 year old stands that are ready to provide the forest cover for the equivalent acreage planned to be clearcut in the next one to two years.