



Committee for Family Forestlands Meeting Summary for June 25, 2025



Under public notice made by news release with statewide distribution, a meeting of the Committee for Family Forestlands [an advisory body to the Oregon Board of Forestry with authority established in Oregon Revised Statute 527.650] was convened on June 25th, 2025, as a virtual online meeting. Meeting recordings constitute the official record.

CFF Committee members participating:

Wendy Gerlach, Citizen-At-Large (Voting)
Kaola Swanson, Conservation Rep. (Voting)
Gary Jensen, Southern Oregon Landowner Rep. (Voting)
Kate McMichael, Landowner-At-Large Rep. (Voting)
David Bugni, NW Landowner Rep. (Voting)
Maurizio Valerio, EO Landowner Rep. (Voting)
Jake Ryan, Industry Rep. (Voting)
Julie Woodward, OFRI Ex-Officio
Glenn Ahrens, OSU College of Forestry Ext. Ex-Officio
Amanda Sullivan-Astor, Forest Policy Manager AOL Ex-Officio

ODF Staff attending:

Mike Kroon, Deputy Chief – All Lands
Heather Hendersen, Administrative Specialist
Jessica Westcott, Stewardship Forester

Members not in attendance:

Guests/Public:

Theresa Hauser
Travis Anderberg
Gordon Culbertson
Jeff Gersh
Nils Christoffersen
Lauren Grand

Chair Comments.

- Chair Gerlach calls the meeting to order.
- Asks for comments on the agenda/meeting minutes.
- Recognized a quorum was established.
- Ask for public comments.
- Moved on to Chair updates.

Division update.

- Mike Kroon provides division updates.
- Gary Jensen – Does the state still have the relationship with Forest Service where they can manage timber sales and they can take over management obligations on districts?
 - Mike Kroon – That's part of the Forest Restoration Program.

Mill Infrastructure.

- Gordon Culbertson provides a PowerPoint presentation on Mill Infrastructure.
- Jeff Gersh – What are you hearing from the mills as far as the future on the timber coming their way and how do we think about that as small forestland owners?
 - Gordon Culbertson – We try to establish committees of people that are interested in developing products with the various types of timber.
 - Gary Jensen – As the coastal redwood is planted inland more it becomes susceptible to freeze, so I'm not aware of any coastal redwood doing well in the valley.
 - Gordon Culbertson – There are a couple of landowners who have had great results with the redwood. Which demonstrates that it is possible.

- Kate McMichael – It feels like it will just get more and more difficult for small woodland owners as summers get longer, dryer, and hotter. There is going to be a shift in what people can plant just to meet reforestation requirements.
- Heather Hendersen will send the PowerPoint presentation to the group.

Land Succession.

- Jeff Gersh provides a PowerPoint presentation on Land Succession.
- Kate McMichael – What size are you looking at for the “small parcel”
 - Jeff Gersh – Looking at the acres size, but really as low as 20. Getting below that gets to be really hard.
- Mike Kroon – I’ve heard from a landowner that they have an LLC that has been in their family and the neighboring property decided to sell their land, they asked to please let them know when they were going to sell so they could try and purchase it and instead they sold to the highest bidder which lead to houses being built. I think what is going on is we are up against something like that.
- Maurizio Valerio – I love the idea, one quick question about the average of 94 acres, is that the average or median? The other question, is the name of the organization Cascadia Working Forest Trust?
 - Jeff Gersh – That is the average. That is the draft name.
- Julie Woodward – We all know there are many factors, I also want to nod to OSWA and their work to this last session on the estate tax. Jeff and I have talked about the survey and doing that again and we have put that on the docket for the Partnership for Forestry Education. One of the things I struggle with is, as a state agency, we can’t agree to do survey work that feeds private and business. So, trying to walk the line and be cautious of that.
- Kaola Swanson – I think we throw ourselves under the bus when we say things like Oregon’s land use laws prevent the kind of outcomes we see in Washington. We do have a strong land use system; it is just slower. I strongly recommend that, as you make the case for funding, you place the focus on this and the need to conserve these small parcels.
- Amanda Sullivan-Astor – When we are talking, words are important so when you say that we “lost” all that land it is a little degrading, so maybe utilizing other language to keep conversations open. Maybe utilizing works like “transfer” just so keep everyone aligned. My family and my generation want to own that land, so I don’t know the land trust model, does that now take the land away from small families being able to own that in the future?
 - Jeff Gersh – Absolutely not. One of the models that the Oregon Agricultural Trust is using is donate, conserve, sell. What that means is you acquire a parcel through donation, you put an easement on it that’s really based on the forest management plan of the family that is providing it, and then selling to a young person whose vision aligns with that plan. And we can make it affordable so that this can happen.

New Revenue Streams and Management Strategies.

- Nils Christoffersen provides a presentation on Stewardship Economy.
- Kate McMichael – I really appreciate the emphasis on partnership and that feels like a real push we need to be making more and more of. I think the more people at the table brings in more people due to trust for different people/organizations.
- Wendy Gerlach – Are there other regional groups that are similar to Wallowa Resources that are working in rural areas and presenting these same kinds of ideas?
 - Nils Christoffersen – In Eastern Oregon there has been a lot of work being done by Blue Mountain Forest Partners, particularly on federal land management on the Malheur National Forest. Because of the initial success we were having, NRCS gave us additional money to basically be a pass through/provide sub-awards.
- Wendy Gerlach – What’s your opinion on what is the best way to educate people on this?
 - Nils Christoffersen – We are working hard with various colleges/entities to try and figure this out.

- Dave Bugni – Was thinking about having time to talk about these three presentations, maybe at the next meeting? Talk about what we can do, either as CFF or with other organizations to try and increase the exposure of these things.

Board of Forestry Update.

- Ben Deumling provides a Board of Forestry update.
- Kate McMichael – Speaking strictly as clothing, one size fits all tends to fit no one. One of the touch stones becomes what's the ideal? So, you never stop stating the ideal, but you assume that to reach that you have to assume dispensation from it at times. I think this becomes one of the big challenges and I think you are facing it in a variety of ways and how you keep something becoming counterproductive. A rule isn't an ideal and a forest isn't a rule, it is a living breathing organism. Rules tend not to be living breathing things. I'm glad to hear you are wrestling with that.
- Wendy Gerlach – As a pro rules statement, to a certain extent it creates a level playing field. I think that traditional ways of dealing with the grey area are to provide alternatives.
- Dave Bugni – There are rules that apply for broad expansive things and things that apply to narrow things and this post disturbance in my view, is a very narrow low probability but high impact sort of event. For small woodland owners they can adversely affect all or a huge percentage of what they own compared to an industrial landowner. There should be more flexibility to interpret conditions in more of a performance based vs. prescriptive based a prescription to achieve the desired future condition based on what's there. ODF has a great repository of individuals who can help small landowners. Take advantage of the assets that Oregon Department F has to help the landowners to achieve these goals but realize how much more they are impacted.
- Kate McMichael – Takes us back to the sort of partnership model. Who are those trusted partners? How do you sustain that trust? It's about forging relationships and being able to work with someone, not as a regulatory voice and more as a partner thinking something out, you get better performance models.
- Julie Woodward – Not to change the topic; I was wondering if you could provide any thoughts on the annual report for us as we put it together for the board.
- Amanda Sullivan-Astor – By and large of a forest sector, we all rely on each other. That's part of the conversation today is how does one impacts the other. The conversation becomes can we trust each other?
- Gordon Culbertson – I've been working with Stewardship Foresters that I find to be an honorable group focused on good results, something I see eroding is the traditional relationship they have that allows for alternate plans to meet the results. Rather than us drafting the rules to be whoever is a bad actor doesn't do something bad, we don't punish those trying to do the right thing and need alternative prescriptions.
- Ben Deumling – For the annual report, I think some of the stuff we have talked about today would be great for the board to hear as well as the usual suspects that are usually in the report to the Board. Anchor into the trust portion.
- Wendy Gerlach – What about including supporting the Board on the Vision?
 - Ben Deumling – Any time you can speak on "These are the things we would like to be more involved in" is always going to be good.
- Kaola Swanson – I think there is often a real gap still around exposure and implementation in the field. One of the specific ways this group and the community could support the rule development would be with more field trips. Not just the board, but those at the meetings who are advocating for certain rules.
- Ben Deumling – If you wanted to put this in the report saying we are ready to support and host the Board that could be really powerful. I think it is long sense over-do.
- Wendy Gerlach – Dave Bugni, your ideas about work you have been doing on small forestland owner reforestation might be an interesting thing to put in our report as work we are going to focus on.

Ties to the Land.

- Lauren Grand provides a presentation on Ties to the Land.
- Jeff Gersh – I am curious if you have any data on how many people have taken the class, of those who have completed the program and actually gone through a land transfer. Do you have any idea how many small landowners in Oregon have no heirs?
 - Lauren Grand – The answer is no, the program started a long time before I started in OSU, the date coming to mind is 2012. It was written by Clint Bentz, it was sort of the original version of the program. I have a little data from some of the more recent classes, but there are quite a few years of classes that have happened that I have asked for data and haven't received.
- Julie Woodward – The Committee for Family Forestlands was actually really involved when this first started and it first started in the early 2000's. And it started with OSU at the Austin Family Business program. It was classes and things you could run through if you were a landowner or owned a business. They did keep all those numbers and kept track. Then recently it went to the extension and Tammy Cushing and Clint Bentz revitalized the curriculum. We just recently got a grant through ODF and the Private Forestry Division. So, this revitalization of it is through granting effort and the partnership for forestry education.

Roundtable.

- Dave Bugni – For the plan going forward I think it would be worthwhile to talk about reforestation. This is now rising to the surface in Oregon, particularly among small woodland owners because of the results of the ODF study. I think we should find how we can become involved in the solution to the problem. Regarding these presentations we had earlier today as well as Lauren's, I think they all have a common thread, and it would be worthwhile to think of what we are going to do with this information and impart it onto others so that it matters. To add to the earlier topic, I think tours are really important, it would be worth it to create a list of assets to bring to the table.
 - Wendy Gerlach – Include this on our next meeting agenda to talk about this and what we would like to do with this information.
- Kate McMichael – Tree School East is Friday in Baker City.
- Kaola Swanson – Provides parting remarks, and refers to her possible successor: I think that Becca Shively, who is Sustainable Northwest's fire program coordinator, based in Portland is the most likely candidate. My thought was to connect her with Wendy, Mike and Heather to provide a statement of interest and a short bio.
- Glenn Ahrens – The Forestry Natural Resources Program has their annual planning meeting next month. There is a lot of food for thought and what we're discussing today. The succession planning and the kind of resurrection or revitalization of the Tie to the Land, which we just heard from Lauren, that obviously ties in quite a bit. We did a big push to get 10 different workshops scheduled for this year and I'll be hosting one up here in Clackamas.
- Gary Jensen – With the implementing of our new forest accord, is there an opportunity to get a summary of what the process has been, how it has worked and the feelings of the individuals who have participated.
 - Mike Kroon – I think so. Will look into this. One thing we have noticed showing up on new rules policy reporting, when you're done with the timber sale. That's the one piece we're having to probably figure out how to do additional kind of outreach and everything to OSWA and everyone else.
- Gordon Culbertson – Something else regarding to the Private Forest Accord, I think a lot of people are running into where the flow permanence studies on non-fish streams that in the mapping that it was created in, that there are a lot of streams that have been identified that either mark streams or they are mistyped.
- Wendy Gerlach – Putting that in for the report as far as well. I like your ideas about maybe next year we focus on how well private forest support implementation is working for small forestland owners and to what extent they are taking advantage of that support.
- Maurizio Valerio – Back to the infrastructure where does OSB board fit? Do they fit along with the plywood or do they have their own category? I want to go back to Dave's "now what?". What am I doing with all of these things?

How do I fulfill the duty of this position? How do I communicate knowledge is good and but also potentially possible mitigation, solutions and whatnot.

- Gordon Culbertson – Really in the state of Oregon, there's really no OSB manufactured. There are some particle board and MDF and those kinds of products and that is a product that is manufactured using wood raw materials from byproducts so that's not included in the solid wood figures that I showed.
- Amanda Sullivan-Astor – I think part of the charge of this committee is how past decisions are affecting the constituencies represented here and letting the Board know that, you know, what are the ramifications, good or bad. What is our opinion or advise is to the Board. PFA is one of those things that has happened, I think having data from Forest Resources around what was the implementation of the SFISH program, how was the forest tax credit being utilized, have we met or how do we meet the 5% of watershed linear feet? Having all of that information in one place is critical as well as some examples. The second piece on the decisions coming up, part of why I advocated for Gordon to come has been all the other decisions the Board has on either state lands, industrial lands, etc. and they will be making a decision on the forest management plan for state lands. That would be good to be brought up in this annual report.
- Kate McMichael – Continuing the conversation we started having with them about rule making moving forward, how to navigate that, that balance between protecting against bad actors and penalizing those that are just trying to do the right thing and pushing through rules that ultimately end up creating future conditions that are the opposite of what the health was.
- Amanda Sullivan-Astor – Follow up on that Kate, maybe is obviously Dave, myself, and Wendy are all on the adaptive management program and I wonder where we just finalized our first research agenda. So there's many years down the road probably until any potential rulemaking occurs from that process, but where there could be an effect on small woodlands or the rule set that affects small woodlands, there could be an opportunity for this body to liaise directly with that body.
- Julie Woodward – For tours, pre-COVID this group used to do an annual tour separate from the Board. As we think of the presentation in the fall, it's important to have that face with the Board, as we saw today, with you, Ben. We also have a connection with the SFO office. This is a pretty new program with the department, and I think this committee has a responsibility to is it effective? Is it helping small woodland owners, how do we elevate their successes? Concerned about some of the services as you look at what the budgets are looking at that I think will impact landowners, so making sure we keep an eye to that.
 - Dave Bugni – This is a really important point; there was a lot of trust built up between landowners and the state regarding how the state was going to make good on all the restrictions that were developed as a part of the Private Forest Accord. And if the state is going to start to renege on this, something's going to happen, so I think we need to be aware of that and keep our fingers on the pulse of that.
- Kate McMichael – Always keeping the topic of keeping small forests as forests.
- Kate McMichael – There is work in process, OTFS has been really involved with it, and the whole partnership for forestry education, I think it's come up before the sort of TurboTax meant for management planning for small woodland owners and we're working with Eco Trust and it's in phase one of trying to gather data on what would be most helpful to people. I should have brought the QR code for the survey, will send out the flyer to Heather Hendersen for distribution to CFF.
- Dave Bugni – When you start to think about synthesizing all of this, the unified management plan is very important, when it comes to succession planning, getting more people involved in certified tree farms or family forests, whatever you want to do. I think we should look at it in that vein that this is all part of one big puzzle and to get to keep these forests as forests.
- Chair Gerlach closes the meeting.