

Tillamook County



Land of Cheese, Trees and Ocean Breeze

Board of Commissioners
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Peter Daugherty, Oregon State Forester
Tom Imeson, Chair
Members of the Board of Forestry

For the record, I am Tillamook County Commissioner, David Yamamoto, and I serve on both the State Forests Advisory Committee and Forest Trust Lands Advisory Committee. I appear before you today as County Commissioner.

I ask that you take a very thoughtful, measured approach to your deliberations concerning policy implementation for the marbled murrelet. We must all realize that policy decisions made by the Board of Forestry can and do have severe, real life impacts on people living and working in rural areas. Over the past several decades, we saw first, Federal timber sales dwindle, and now State timber harvests are also shrinking and the pressure on rural county budgets is nearing crisis levels.

Public services affected extend well beyond county general fund departments such as sheriff, public health, and roads, but also include many special districts such as schools, community colleges, libraries, 911 centers, fire and rescue, and the list goes on and on. Tillamook County residents are a proud, hard-working lot and we are not looking for a hand out. We are asking that we are allowed to continue our livelihoods in the traditional natural resource based industries that built our great county.

Just a generation or two ago, the conservation logic told us we needed to take every stick of wood out of streams and rivers because they were blocking the migration of fish up and down stream. Today, the exact opposite is true and now we are told that putting as much complex wood structure as possible into the water is important for fish habitat.

It is critical that we embrace current research such as Hinkle Creek, Alsea Revisited, Needle Branch, and Trask Paired Watershed study which all show negligible stream temperature increases, low levels of stream sedimentation, healthy fish populations, good quality fish habitat, and excellent water quality which all go hand in hand with modern logging practices.

This brings us to the recent February uplisting of the marbled murrelet from threatened to endangered by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). When ODFW Director, Curt Melcher, presented to the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) in March explaining how and why the Commission decided to uplist, it was evident and admitted by Director Melcher that the science was incomplete at best. Half a dozen times during the presentation we were told that the marbled murrelet was a very "secretive" bird and we really knew little about it. We were also told that Oregon State University (OSU) was starting the second year of a ten year study of the marbled murrelet.

When pressed on the criteria used for uplisting, Director Melcher told us the issue was that of habitat loss. When asked about the desired outcome of the uplisting, Director Melcher told us it was habitat protection. There was no mention of recovery or preventing extinction, just lost habitat.

It is my understanding that the ODFW Commission had six of its seven members present for the February vote and when the vote was called, it was a three – three tie which means the call for uplisting was not upheld. Yet remarkably, after a period of time, another vote was called and this second vote was four – two to uplist. Curious to say the least.

Your own staff report provided to you today states that these birds are difficult to detect, their nests are extremely challenging to find, and there is no efficient and effective method to actually locate nests. At the same time, your staff report says surveys indicate the population trend is likely stable and results for state-wide population trends for Oregon indicate an increase of 1.7% per year from 2000 to 2015. It is imperative that we include a detailed assessment of the social and economic impacts of implementing any conservation measures proposed for the marbled murrelet, especially in light of these details provided in your own staff report.

As we move forward, we must not ignore the most recent science, nor make decisions based on a lack of science. OSU is starting the second year of a ten year study...in the context of a stable and increasing population of marbled murrelet, why should we develop and implement new rules with deleterious social and economic effects for rural coastal counties before we have the results of this study. Given good scientific evidence, our foresters can and do adapt to protections necessary for endangered species. However, placing new restrictions on "possible areas of concern" are not in the best interest of Oregonians.

Thanks so much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

David Yamamoto
Vice- Chair, Tillamook County Board of Commissioners