

Oregon Can Do Better. Much Better.



Seven Reasons Why State and Private Forest Practices in Oregon Need Deep Reforms

1. **Once a leader in sustainable forestry, Oregon now lags far behind.** Despite Oregon's proud reputation as an environmental leader, management of state and private forestlands is far behind scientific consensus, standards in neighboring states, and even federal law. NOAA and EPA recently found that Oregon was the only state in the nation that failed to adequately protect streams from logging in the Coastal Zone. Most forest practices laws and rules are over forty years old and are tragically outdated. Forestry practices that need to be improved include larger stream buffers, increasing the size and diversity of protected areas, limits on aerial spraying of toxic chemicals, protections for drinking water, limits on clearcutting, protection for fish and wildlife and opportunities for public participation.

2. **Harmful logging practices perpetuate rural poverty and harm public finance.** Communities surrounded by industrial forest landscapes are among those with the highest incidence of rural poverty. Deregulation of the industry is not the solution. The "boom and bust" nature of resource extraction makes for highly unstable employment. Jobs per unit harvested have been declining as less labor-intensive practices are used. Rising exports send jobs and profits overseas while state and local governments are left paying the bill for social services and repairing damages to roads, rivers, and soils. Hammered landscapes limit opportunities for economic diversification to capture growing demands for sustainable forestry, recreation, tourism, non-timber forest products, fish and high quality living environments to locate new business.

3. **Voluntary compliance is not working.** In 2003, the Oregon legislative assembly was pressured by the timber industry to remove one of the most basic checks and balances against corporate mismanagement of forests – the ability to say "no" to harmful logging operations before they occur. Because of this, compliance with Oregon's Forest Practices Act is now largely voluntary. And the results show. International investment companies like Plum Creek find it more profitable to risk penalties rather than implement legal protections needed for fish, wildlife, soils and drinking water.

4. **Waters of the State are in jeopardy.** Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality lists clearcutting and associated chemical spraying as one of the most ubiquitous threats to drinking water supplies statewide. Sediment and temperature pollution are ubiquitous across industrial forests.

5. **Logging practices are unsustainable and mining irreplaceable soil resources.** Soils are literally bleeding from Oregon's clearcut landscapes. Clearcutting also compacts soils, strips soils of vital organic matter and triggers landslides – all factors in the decline of forest productivity over time. Clearcutting on high-risk soils increases landslide risk by 200-400%.

6. **Logging practices are driving the extinction of native fish, wildlife, and plants.** Most Oregonians hold deep reverence for the protection of life. Yet logging practices on state and private forestlands is a driver of extinction. The combination of extreme landscape fragmentation and loss of nearly all mature and old growth forests on these lands makes recovery of isolated refugia of native species that need mature, interior forests nearly impossible. Species that need naturally regenerated forests are rapidly losing ground to industrial tree plantations. Salmon, steelhead, and other native fish dependent upon high quality water, shade, and in-stream structures are being extirpated.

7. **A changing climate demands a change in forest policy.** As Oregon's climate changes, business as usual forest practices also need to change to ensure that our forests are resilient. Vast even aged plantations are highly flammable and need to be restored to more natural conditions to withstand an increase the frequency and severity of wildfire. Old growth stands need to be retained to keep their immense carbon stores on site.

Elements of the Solution

Forest diversity standards: This would entail greater restrictions on the size and placement of clearcuts to reduce fragmentation as well as new standards for retention of "biological legacy" such as residual trees, snags, downed logs, and diverse native tree species.

Water resource protection standards: Clearcutting should not take place in places that feed into domestic drinking water supplies or near streams, wetlands, and rivers used by so many of Oregon's fish and wildlife species. Much greater no-cut zones and "light touch" management buffers around all water resources are badly needed.

Economic incentives: Timber taxes should be reinstated. Impact fees should help cover the costs unsustainable logging imposes on public finance. Harmful types of logging practices should be taxed at the highest rate. Foresters who truly implement sustainable forest practices and mill their wood in the state should be exempted and given subsidies like payments for ecosystem services and carbon storage and preferential treatment in public contracting and procurement. Conservation easements and park and protected area acquisitions should be ramped up to help those who want to help protect the landscape.

Public participation and enforcement: The ability of the State Forester to approve or disapprove of major logging operations should be reinstated. DEQ should be empowered to authorize or disapprove logging operations that affect water resources. All stakeholders should have the right to challenge pending logging operations that are detrimental to public health and environmental quality and seek changes before logging operations begin.