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REPORT: OREGON LOST 500,000 ACRES TO DEFORESTATION SINCE 2000

- Rapid clearcutting and log exports claim half a million acres of forest cover in Western Oregon, jeopardizing clean water, salmon, and timber milling jobs -

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PORTLAND – Using a tool developed to study clearcutting of tropical rainforests in the developing world, a new analysis has documented the loss of 522,000 acres of forest cover in Western Oregon since 2000. The analysis, done by the Center for Sustainable Economy and Oregon Wild, used satellite data made available through the World Resources Institute's [Global Forest Watch Program](#) to study forest cover trends on public and private lands. Because the rate of clearcutting on state and private lands has far exceeded forest cover gain from replanting, forest loss during this period exceeded forest gain by 45%. There are no signs that this rate of overcutting will abate anytime soon.

The report – *Deforestation, Oregon Style* – also discusses forest cover loss associated with the conversion of natural, ecologically diverse forests into industrial tree plantations, logging roads, and the loss of long-term productivity from erosion, landslides, and depletion of soil nutrients. The report was sent today along with a request for intervention to the Governor, Board of Forestry, and key politicians overseeing natural resource issues in the legislature.

According to Dr. John Talberth, President and Senior Economist at Center for Sustainable Economy, “At a time when we need forest cover the most to cool our streams and rivers and provide safe passage for migrating salmon big timber companies in Oregon are going on a clearcut rampage to fuel exports of raw logs to foreign buyers. This could not be a worse set up for water, fish, and forest products jobs.”

This summer, Oregon has been hit hard with a strengthening climate change signal that has led to record low snowpack, record high temperatures, decimated salmon runs, and [hatcheries breeding fish with nowhere to go](#). Salmon need the clear, cool water of shaded streams in the forest to survive. But if too much of the land is clearcut at any one time, these streams

warm past safe thresholds, especially in the face of climate change. The Department of Forestry's own analysis shows that current clearcutting practices boost water temperatures by an average of 2.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Alarmingly, the CSE-Oregon Wild analysis shows that over 40% of some key watersheds for salmon have been clearcut over the past 15 years alone.

“Anyone who has driven to the Oregon Coast has seen first hand the aggressive clearcutting that takes place under Oregon's weak logging rules,” said Steve Pedery, Conservation Director for Oregon Wild. “When it comes to deforestation, we have more in common with Brazil and Indonesia than most of our citizens realize. It is our hope that this analysis will spur Governor Brown and other state politicians to stand up to the political power of the logging industry, and enact meaningful reforms to address this problem.”

Rapid clearcutting is just one of four key drivers of deforestation in Oregon, according to the report. Another driver is the conversion of natural forests to into industrial tree plantations that are clearcut on short rotations. At least 4 million acres of land in Oregon is covered with these plantations at the expense of real forests capable of providing a wide array of goods and services such as filtration of clean water, carbon sequestration, and provision of fish and wildlife habitat. Logging roads are also taking their toll. Although no precise figures are available, the report estimates that another 100,000 to 150,000 acres of forests have been lost to the logging road network on state and private lands. Yet another, longer-term driver is the depletion of soils. Soil loss from erosion and landslides on clearcut lands has been a major issue for decades, as has the depletion of soil nutrients from repeated clearcutting over too short a time period. Despite its mandate to conserve productive forests for future generations, the Board of Forestry has done little or nothing to prevent deforestation from these four drivers.

“It's time for the timber industry to be held accountable for warming waters, declining salmon runs, and depleted soils,” Talberth continued. “We have asked the State to take immediate action to restrict the rate of logging, protect streams and watercourses with scientific standards, and use its authority to collect damages for lost fisheries and degraded water quality.”

For a copy of the CSE-Oregon Wild report “Deforestation, Oregon Style,” please visit CSE's Oregon Forest Practices Reform page at:
<http://sustainable-economy.org/oregon-forest-practices-reform/>.

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