

**Cascadia Wildlands  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Umpqua Watersheds**

For immediate release

February 9, 2010

Contact: Dan Kruse, Cascadia Wildlands, 541.337.5829

Noah Greenwald, Center for Biological Diversity, 503.484.7495

Francis Eatherington. 541.643.1309

**Oregon Land Board Plans for Increased Rainforest Clearcutting on Elliott State Forest**  
*Conservation groups urge state to explore alternatives, establish Elliott Carbon Reserve*

Year after year, the biggest trees cut down in the Pacific Northwest are on the Elliott State Forest.

This morning, the Oregon State Land Board, made up of Governor Kulongoski, Treasurer Westlund, and Secretary Brown – all Democrats – approved a plan to dramatically increase clearcutting of these coastal rainforests, located just southeast of Reedsport, Oregon.

The 93,000-acre publicly-owned Elliott State Forest contains the largest block of native coastal rainforest in Oregon, and is one of the last strongholds in the Coast Range for threatened coho salmon, marbled murrelets, and northern spotted owls.

Ninety percent of the Elliott is designated Common School Fund Land, which means that revenue from the forest is used to fund Oregon's K-12 schools. For decades, logging has been the sole revenue source on the Elliott. The revenue from logging first pays for administrative overhead, which is often up to 30% of the total. In 2009, the return-on-investment for Oregon Schools from clearcutting on the Elliott was a dismal 00.8%.

Conservation groups are urging the land board to explore alternate ways to generate funds for Oregon's children and schools.

"The model of destroying Oregon's rainforests to fund schools is outdated and ineffective," says Josh Laughlin of Cascadia Wildlands. "In addition to reducing emissions, Oregon's contribution to fighting climate change should focus on forests. Our rainforests are carbon sponges, soaking up dangerous gasses from the air. The state of Oregon should fully investigate the revenue potential of turning the Elliott into a carbon reserve."

At today's meeting, the Land Board heard testimony from a panel of speakers about the feasibility of carbon reserves. One of those panelists, Hal Salwasser, Dean of Forestry at Oregon State University, suggested that that the Elliott State Forest could be used as a pilot project for the state to explore carbon storage across Oregon.

Conservation organizations have also suggested the state generate revenue on the Elliott through restoration thinning in young plantations and through sale of the forest or parts of the forest to land trust organizations, which would permanently protect the unique area for endangered wildlife and recreational opportunities.

“The Elliott State Forest is absolutely essential to the survival of coho salmon, spotted owls, marbled murrelets and many other wildlife species,” said Noah Greenwald, endangered species program director for the Center for Biological Diversity. “Today’s decision by the Land Board is a step backwards from recovery of these three increasingly endangered species.”

Specifically, the State Land Board today accepted a recommendation by Oregon Department of Forestry to abandon the 1995 Habitat Conservation Plan for the Elliott that set aside substantial areas as reserves or long-rotation basins. The Department of Forestry is expected to have a new plan in place by December 2011 that will allow substantially more cutting, including in the currently reserved areas.

The existing management plan for the Elliott permits 510 acres of clearcutting annually. Under the new plan, 670 acres would be cleared each year. Additionally, the new plan allows logging in the western half of the forest, which is currently reserved and unfragmented.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), which is the federal agency in charge of restoring wild salmon to Oregon’s rivers, has already rejected the state’s new strategy because of how much clearcutting would occur above salmon streams.

“Oregonians should not have to choose between preserving the Elliott’s remaining older forests or funding our children’s educations,” says Francis Eatherington. “This archaic arrangement must end, and it is imperative we find new and innovative ways to fund our children’s educations with certainty.”