

Goal 4 – Forest Lands

Introduction

Oregon's forests are working forests. Forests provide broad environmental, social, and economic benefits, including clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, jobs, products, recreation, and tax funds for communities. Logging and support activities for forestry form the base of Oregon's forestry industry.

However, the county's forestlands are important to different stakeholders for reasons that sometimes conflict with each other. In the years since the Forest Practices Act (FPA) was approved by the Oregon Legislature in 1971, the timber industry and environmentalists have clashed repeatedly over issues such as stream setbacks and aerial spraying of pesticides and herbicides. The 136-page act, most recently updated in February of 2018, is codified in the Oregon Administrative Rules and can be found online on the State of Oregon's website. As this Goal 4 revision is being undertaken, the Governor's office has announced a historic agreement between timber companies and environmental groups to enter into mediation to revise the FPA by creating a conservation plan that would cover the state's public and private forestlands. **The situation is developing, and this section may be updated before the final adoption of the revised Comprehensive Plan.**

The FPA sets standards for all commercial activities involving the establishment, management, or harvesting of trees on Oregon's forestlands. The Oregon Board of Forestry's primary responsibility is to interpret the FPA and set rules for forest practices. The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) is responsible for enforcing those requirements by:

- Reviewing pre-operations plans
- Overseeing operations
- Ensuring reforestation
- Investigating complaints
- Enforcing corrective actions when violations occur

ODF is responsible for working with landowners and operators to help them comply with the requirements of the FPA.

Oregon is known worldwide for its high-quality softwoods, predominantly Douglas fir. Most Oregon logs are purchased by wood product manufacturers in Oregon. Oregon's timber harvest today comes primarily from private timberlands. In 2014, 79% of Oregon's timber harvest came from private lands. Some logs from private lands are exported, but that market represents a very small share of total logs harvested in Oregon.

Forestry is an important source of high-paying jobs for many rural communities, and Clatsop County, which is home to one of the most productive state forests in Oregon is no exception. In 2017, this forest generated \$27.5 million in timber for processing at local sawmills. Of that, Clatsop County's taxing districts received roughly \$18.3 million for schools, roads, and other services. The Department of Forestry received the remaining \$9.2 million to help cover its costs, including maintenance and wildfire prevention and response.

Forestry-related jobs – logging and associated industries that include pulp and papermaking, quarrying, millwork and cabinetmaking, environmental consultants, state and federal employees, nurseries, machinery manufacturing, wood and paper products wholesalers, and transportation of logs, chips and goods (trucking) – provide family-wage incomes in Clatsop County. Economists estimate that each million board feet of timber harvested creates or retains about 11 forest sector jobs. Private forestry and logging in 2018 accounted for an average of 169 jobs directly, and the total payroll was \$9,273,960,

or an average of \$54,875 per person. (This does not include the State Forestry Department; those employees are counted under state government figures.) However, jobs across the full forest-related sector numbered 1,351. Wages averaged more than \$70,000 for the full sector, almost twice the annual average of \$37,000 in the county for employees covered by unemployment insurance.

These same forests are crucial to wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, and watershed protection. Clatsop County's watersheds provide critical clean water and fish habitat, the foundation for the county's fishing industry, another vital component of the county's economic wellbeing. The county's forests also provide recreational lands for hiking, camping, hunting and fishing, mushrooming, and motorized and non-motorized trails, not just for locals, but for the county's ever-increasing visitor industry, the third essential cog of the county's economy.

With changes in climate and increases in wildfire hazard, forestlands are at once both under threat and perhaps part of the survival strategy, storing vast amounts of carbon and releasing oxygen as a byproduct. Clatsop County's Goal 4 intersects with other county goals, including at least: Agricultural Lands (Goal 3); Open Spaces, Scenic and Historic Areas and Natural Resources (Goal 5); Air, Water and Land Resource Quality (Goal 6); Areas Subject to Natural Disasters and Hazards (Goal 7); Recreational Needs (Goal 8); and Economic Development (Goal 9).

Clatsop County's Forest Lands



Clatsop County covers about 843 square miles, or roughly 540,000 acres.

Approximately 80% of the county's acreage is timberland, far exceeding the state's overall 47% average. The county's generally mild year-round temperature and average 87 inches of annual rainfall make it home to a significant temperate rainforest, part of the Pacific Temperate Rainforest system that stretches from the Central California coast, along the Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and southern Alaska coastlines. The system is one of the largest temperate rain forests in the world. In Clatsop County, a spruce hemlock forest-type predominates along the west-facing slopes of the Coast Range and westward to the ocean, as well as upriver along the Columbia, toward the Brownsmead/Knappe area; a Douglas-fir forest type predominates in the county's interior.

Clatsop State Forest

Before the 1930s, nearly all of the land that is today part of the Clatsop State Forest was in private ownership. Logging camps, railroads, and lumber mills were prevalent in Clatsop County due to the demand for lumber during World War I.

As tracts of timber were cut, the logged lands were given to the counties in exchange for paying taxes. In 1936, Clatsop County became the first county in Oregon to deed its forestlands to the state to manage in exchange for part of the revenue generated from timber sales.

The Forest Acquisition Act, passed in 1939, further encouraged counties to deed the foreclosed lands to the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), giving rise to the state forest system in place today. By 1957, Clatsop County had transferred 141,000 acres to the state.

In 1973, the Oregon Board of Forestry formally dedicated 154,000 acres of forestland as the Clatsop State Forest. Today, the forest provides timber products important to local economies, wildlife habitat, and recreational areas. Like all of Oregon's state forests, these lands are actively managed under forest management plans to provide economic, environmental, and social benefits, offering recreation and educational opportunities, and provide essential wildlife habitat and clean water. Timber sales on these forests produce jobs and revenue that funds counties, local districts, and schools throughout the state.

Private Forestlands

Another 200,000+ acres is owned and managed by private landowners, mostly large timber companies. Like the state forests, private forests are managed under the FPA. ODF works with landowners and operators to help them comply with the requirements of the FPA.

Reforestation goes hand-in-hand with timber harvest planning. Reforestation rules are intended to make sure new trees are replanted and successfully growing after an area is harvested. Landowners must complete replanting of harvested ground within two years of a harvest. Within six years of harvest, the young trees must be "free-to-grow", meaning they are vigorous, well-distributed, and ready to grow successfully into a young forest. Depending on site productivity, a minimum of 100 to 200 trees per acre must survive following replanting. A landowner may be required to replant additional seedlings to ensure a sufficient number of trees per acre following selective harvest or thinning.

Management and Planning

Forestland Classification

Forestland classification is a process by which a committee studies all lands within the fire protection district boundary to determine which lands are "forestland." Once lands have been determined to meet the definition of forestland, they are further classified as lands primarily suitable for timber production, grazing use, or a combination of the two.

"Forestland" means any woodland, brushland, timberland, grazing land or clearing that, during any time of the year, contains enough forest growth, slashing or vegetation to constitute, in the judgment of the forester, a fire hazard, regardless of how the land is zoned or taxed.

State forest resources such as streams, recreation sites, and unique wildlife habitat are managed and protected under state forests' policies and forest management plans. These areas are highlighted through the Forestland Management Classification System (FLMCS)(OAR 629-350-005) adopted by the Board of Forestry in 1998 to ensure a range of benefits would result from an area's management emphasis. Clatsop County's most recent classification was updated in 2016.

Planning Incentives 

Privately-owned forested lands can receive help to prevent them from being converted or developed into non-forested land and protect environmentally sensitive forest lands. Landowners are encouraged to obtain long-term conservation easements and implement sustainable forestry practices. To maximize the public benefit this achieves, ODF can help landowners access incentives through the federal Forest Legacy Program, the Community Forest Program, and the Conservation Reserve Program. These programs are voluntary and provide a variety of strategies for landowners, governments and nonprofit groups to acquire land to grow and sustain a community forest; and protect soil, water, fish, and wildlife.

To help conserve soil, water, and related natural resources on working lands, ODF can help landowners access funding through the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program. ODF also can help forest landowners obtain incentives through the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands on private property which provide habitat for diverse wildlife and plant species, including those that are endangered and threatened.

Wildfire

Forest landowners are required by law to provide protection from fire for their lands. Rather than having their own firefighting force, most private landowners have ODF or their local fire protective association protect their lands. To fund this service, they pay a forest patrol assessment to the state. Forestland classification is done at the local level. Each county within a forest protection district has a committee that meets periodically to determine which lands meet the definition of forestland and are subject to the forest patrol assessment.

During wildfire season, ODF Meteorologists and the Fire Environment Working Group monitor factors that can influence the ignition and behavior of wildfires. Tools and strategies to prevent or reduce wildfire destruction include the ODF Lightning Tracker, satellite imagery, restrictions and  closures on forestland uses, and fire prevention regulations.

Other organizations concerned with wildfire in Oregon include 1000 Friends of Oregon, which issued its own report in 2018: A New Vision for Wildfire Planning: A Report on Land Use and Wildfires (<https://www.1000friends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/A-New-Vision-for-Wildfire-Planning.pdf>)

Recreation

Today the Clatsop State Forest is a mix of mostly second growth hemlock, Douglas-fir, and western red cedar with many associated hardwoods, shrubs, ferns, and flowers. Elevations range from near sea level at Gnat Creek to 3,000 feet on Nicolai Mountain. Visitors often find warm, sunny weather in the summer, especially at higher elevations. October can be a transition month with dry weather or rain. The rainy season usually starts in November and continues through early spring. Winter snow occurs occasionally in the higher elevations. County residents and visitors enjoy a variety of facilities, including trails, campgrounds, fishing access, and horseback riding opportunities: Henry Rierison Spruce Run Campground, Gnat Creek Campground, Northrup Creek Horse Camp, Viewpoint Campground, Beaver Eddy Campground, and state fish hatcheries.

Total forest fires and forested acres burned in Oregon

The total number of forest fires per year has remained fairly stable, but the total acres of forestland burned in recent years has increased dramatically. (Table includes Forest Service, state, private, tribal and BLM forestlands.)

Year	Total Fires	Total Acres	Acres/Fire
2018	1,657	442,791	267
2017	1,808	517,883	286
2016	1,375	52,386	38
2015	2,534	206,231	81
2014	2,480	213,375	86
2013	2,339	133,240	57
2012	1,319	168,554	128
2011	1,524	37,045	24
2010	1,590	32,629	21
2009	1,952	67,424	35
2008	2,314	66,942	29
10-yr. avg (2008-2017)	1,924	149,571	78

2014 Community Profile draft Clatsop Vision 2030 Together, March 2014

Recognizing forestry will continue to be a major factor in Clatsop County's economy well into the future, The Board of Clatsop County Commissioners included the following "Potential Strategies" in the county's Vision 2030 Together project in 2014:

- Protection of Natural Resource Base. Develop new strategies and land use policies that strengthen preservation and protection of the County's natural resource base.
- Sustainable Forestry Promotion. Promote sustainable forestry and timber industry practices throughout the county.
- Natural Areas, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Protection. Maintain and protect natural areas of all types for fish and wildlife habitat and corridors, as well as public access, enjoyment and recreation.
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration Plans. Support watershed councils, land trusts and local communities in developing wildlife habitat restoration action plans and priority projects.

Forest Carbon Accounting

There have been multiple conversations over the past two Legislative Sessions regarding the development of climate policy and carbon pricing. In those discussions, legislators and stakeholders have frequently referred to the role that Oregon's forests play in sequestering carbon. Under ORS 468A.259(i), an accurate forest carbon accounting is required to meet the directive to the Oregon Global Warming Commission (OGWC) to "track and evaluate the carbon sequestration potential of Oregon's forests, alternative methods of forest management that can increase carbon sequestration and reduce the loss of carbon sequestration to wildfire, changes in the mortality and distribution of tree and other plant species and the extent to which carbon is stored in tree-based building materials." To meet this obligation, OGWC has been pursuing a reliable source of forest inventory and carbon accounting data since 2010. In 2017 the OGWC's Forest Carbon Task Force recognized the value of preliminary data and analysis provided by the USFS Forest Inventory Analysis Program for forest carbon accounting in Oregon.

In the 2018 Session, the Legislature established the Office of Carbon Policy and included funding to further develop an assessment of the amount of carbon in Oregon's forests. The assessment report is found in the background material that informed this goal revision.

Conclusion

Many depend on the county's forestlands for so much, and conflict may seem inevitable; balancing the needs and demands of public and private enterprise, environmental quality, and recreational pursuits is challenging. With this in mind, it is vital to recognize all county residents have a stake in Goal 4, regardless of where they live, work, and play.

GOAL 4 -- FORESTLANDS

Goal 4: To conserve forest lands for forest uses by maintaining the forest land base and to protect the state's forest economy by making possible economically efficient forest practices that assure the continuous growing and harvesting of forest tree species as the leading use on forest land consistent with sound management of soil, air, water, and fish and wildlife resources and to provide for recreational opportunities and agriculture.

Policies:

1. Forest lands shall be conserved for forest uses, including the production of trees and the processing of forest products, open space and scenic preservation, buffers from noise, visual separation from conflicting uses, watershed protection, wildlife and fisheries habitat, soils protection, wind breaks, maintenance of clean air and water, outdoor recreational activities compatible with these uses, and grazing land for livestock.

Clatsop County recognizes the importance of conserving both public and private forestlands for growing and harvesting trees and for the environmental benefits forestlands provide, including clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, clean air and recreation.

2. Forest Lands shall be designated Conservation-Forest in the County's Comprehensive Plan. When considering a zone change to a forest zone, the Planning Commission or other reviewing body shall review the proposal against the acreage, management, and other approval criteria in County-wide Forest Lands Policies. 

3. Forest practices on lands designated Conservation-Forest shall conform to the Oregon Forest Practices Act and Oregon Forest Practice Rules, as revised. 

3a. The Forest Practices Act sets minimum standards consistent with past priorities and needs updating to take into account in new science and findings. The Comprehensive Plan should encourage the timber industry to exceed these standards in order to protect and enhance clean water, air, fish and wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

1. Stream buffers should be wide enough that they not only provide shade for streams but also resist being uprooted by strong winds.

2. During replanting where clear-cuts border streams, trees should be planted inside the stream buffer where density of conifers is below a set standard.

3. Clear-cuts should be designed to provide fire break corridors.

4. Selective harvest should be encouraged over clear cutting. Explain the benefits of continuous forest cover.

5. Forest Access should be gated only where a clear and present danger to the forests can be shown. This standard pertains to all forest lands be they county, state or privately owned. The forests should be a recreational resource for all. 

6. Forest diversity should be maintained. A variety of native tree species should be used when replanting clear-cuts.

7. *When spraying herbicides the maximum quality of chemical spray should be limited, not by the manufacturer, but by forestry department regulations in order to control over spraying. Such regulations should be set by scientific study, perhaps by OSU, to determine the minimum amount of chemical to be applied per acre necessary to accomplish the objective.*

8. *Where available, organic compounds which breakdown readily into non-toxic compounds should be used for forest spraying.*

9. *Use of controlled burns should be encouraged to clear forest under story of fuel.*

3b. The commercial timber industry, while important to Clatsop County for the jobs it creates, the raw materials it provides, and the tax revenues it generates, should be highly regulated to maintain forestland at a sustainable level.

3c. Restoration following all timber cuts should be encourage, along with effort to assure compliance. If the terrain is not suitable for restoration, alternative sites should be identified for tree planting in order to keep the overall number of forested acres roughly the same.

3d. Global warming is increasing the risk of forest fires. Efforts to prevent forest fires and limit fire propagation should be prioritized. 

3e. Existing restrictions on timber cutting should be enforced. Regulations should encourage selective harvest in areas of scenic beauty, such as the coastal hills visible from Clatsop County beaches.

3f. The use of synthetic herbicides and pesticides on forest lands should be discouraged.

3g. Any development on forestlands shall not exceed the carrying capacity of the air, land, and water resources of the planning area.

3h. Clatsop County should encourage incentives for these objectives, such as tax benefits, land trades or others. 

4. Division of forestlands will be permitted only upon a finding that the proposed division meets the following criteria: 

4a. the proposed division will not diminish the potential for timber production, watershed protection and fish and wildlife habitat, and

4b. the creation of new parcels will not materially alter the overall stability of the area's land use pattern.

5. Clustering of non-forest residences on forestlands may be permitted in the F-80 and AF zones, subject to non-forest use siting standards allowed by the state legislature under provisions in the Oregon Revised Statutes or Oregon Administrative Rules. This non-forest development is permitted conditionally because, when properly designed, sited and conditioned,  it does not result in the loss of forest lands or diminish or interfere with forest uses.

6. The designation of new park and recreation areas (campgrounds, etc.) on forestlands shall require an assessment of public need for these facilities and their potential impact on adjacent forestlands. The productive capacity of the land shall be evaluated and considered when siting these developments. These developments, if allowed, shall be sited and designed so as not to preclude forest management wherever possible. 

7. The County will do the following in order to minimize conflicts between the use of forestland for elk habitat and for commercial timber production.

- a. Wildlife refuges:
Existing wildlife refuges which are owned/leased and managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) or by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) shall be designated Conservation-Other Resource and zoned Open Space, Parks and Recreation (OPR).

Proposed wildlife management areas which are managed and either owned or leased by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) located in areas designated Conservation Forest or in other lowland areas under any plan designation shall be reviewed by the County for compliance with the approval standards listed below. Such hearings shall be conducted according to a Type IV procedure at a time and place convenient to residents of the affected planning area. ODFW shall provide an evaluation of the economic, social, environmental and energy consequences of the proposal and** information sufficient to support findings with respect to the following approval criteria:

1. Identification of the need for the proposed new wildlife management area. "Need" means specific problems or conflicts that will be resolved or specific ODFW objectives that will be achieved by establishing the proposed area.
2. Alternative lands and management actions available to the ODFW, and an analysis of why those alternatives or management actions will not resolve identified problems or achieve objectives.

- b. Elk and Deer damage due to browsing is a natural risk of timber production. It may be reduced through liberal availability of hunting licenses and through open access to forest lands. This means that gates at all forest access roads are to remain open. 

8. Forestry activities within watersheds in areas designated Conservation-Forest in the Comprehensive Plan may not violate the Oregon Forest Practices Act and the Oregon Forest Practice Rules, as revised. Additional protective measures negotiated between forest landowners and water users are encouraged.

9. Protection of watersheds is a critical issue. Unfortunately, the existing Forest Practices Act does not do a good job of adequately protecting watersheds for community or municipal drinking water. Watersheds for community and municipal drinking water in Clatsop County that extend into forest lands need special protections in addition to what is currently specified in the Forest Practices Act. For such watershed areas the forest owner shall: 

- a. Provide advance notification to each affected community or municipal water district regarding any forest practice activity that is planned for such watershed areas including, but not limited to, aerial spraying, clear cutting, alteration of existing drainage (such as by road construction or modifications);

- b. Avoid use of synthetic chemical application in the watershed area; and
- c. Negotiate in good faith with the affected community or municipal water districts to ensure that the watershed will not be adversely affected.

9.1. We encourage the county to adopt policies and tools to provide notification to neighbors and communities of the intention to burn slash so that they can be vigilant about the spread of any such fires.

9.2. We support and recommend that the county develop policies which encourage utilities to take all reasonable measures to prevent forest fires.

10. The productive capacity of the land will be considered before land designated Conservation-Forest is changed to another plan designation. The impact of the proposed new use on adjacent lands shall also be evaluated and considered before such a plan change is made.

11. Off-road vehicles (ORVs) shall be strictly confined to established rock roads in order to prevent erosion, stream degradation, damage to young trees and seedlings, and disturbance of wildlife and its habitat.

12. Existing utility rights-of-way shall be utilized to the maximum extent possible before new rights-of-way are created.

- a. Utility right of ways and equipment shall be maintained in a way consistent with best practices developed in California to prevent forest fires caused by transmission lines. These rules must be developed by the state and applied to all utility company installations passing through forest lands.

13. Roads in forest areas shall be limited to the minimum width necessary for traffic management and safety.

14. Forest landowners shall be encouraged to actively pursue methods of complete utilization of wood fiber left on the ground after harvesting, consistent with current best practices.

15. Where forestlands of suitable management size occur in the interior of rural residential areas, or are completely surrounded by residential development, small woodland management and farming is encouraged. Over time these areas may be needed for housing and in future comprehensive plan updates shall be considered ideally situated for conversion to residential uses prior to conversion of other forestlands.

16. Expansion of existing non-forest developments and uses in forest zones may be permitted under a Type II procedure only when such expansion is substantially confined to the existing site.

17. Partitioning of forest lands under the provisions of Clatsop County's forest zones which serve to increase forest management efficiency by allowing one or more forest owners to consolidate their land holdings is encouraged.

18. When reviewing a proposal that would change a zone to F-80, Clatsop County will take into consideration that forestlands in the F-80 zone include areas where timber production is the primary land use and lands often are managed intensively by full time professional foresters.

19. A zone change from the F-80 zone to any other zone shall require a plan amendment. The Purpose for such a plan change is to assure that primary forest lands in the F-80 zone are not converted to mixed use forest lands or to any other plan designation without appropriate review by the county. 

20. In land use changes involving a change from Conservation-Forest Lands or Rural Agricultural Lands to Rural Lands or Development designations, an exception to Goal 3 Agricultural Lands and/or Goal 4 Forest Lands Goals must be taken.

21. CARBON SEQUESTRATION: Slash burning is to be discouraged in lieu of disposal methods which are more consistent with carbon sequestration. Chipping and distribution on the site are among the options. Studies should be conducted to determine the best methods for accomplishing carbon sequestration. 

22. Acknowledging the diversity of values in Forest Lands: Alongside forest uses, Clatsop County has diverse fish, wildlife and biological resources which provide a balanced natural forest community as well as outdoor recreational opportunities as identified in the plan.

23. Acknowledging the importance of sound ecological practices on forest lands: The preservation of fish, biologically significant wildlife resources, watershed, and clean air and drinking water in the County is dependent upon retention of natural habitat and sound ecological practices on forest lands.

24. Preservation of Forest Habitat for Salmon: The preservation of fish, including anadromous species such as salmon and steelhead, and biologically significant wildlife resources in Clatsop County is dependent upon retention of natural forest habitat, clean air, and clean water.

25. Watershed Protection/Maintenance of Clean Air and Water: Clatsop County will discourage activities which cause the substantial degradation of the air, water or land resource quality on public and private forests.

26. County intention with respect to development/forest uses by private landowners: Clatsop County strongly encourages the retention of wildlife habitat and the protection of streams on private land through active habitat preservation and restoration as carried out or allowed by the landowner.

Efforts to improve wild salmon and steelhead habitat in Forest lands are supported by Clatsop County.

27. County intention with respect to use of chemical spray/herbicides: Clatsop County discourages the use of chemical spray or herbicides in drinking watersheds or near streams that serve as spawning habitat to salmon or steelhead on Forest lands.

28. Clatsop County encourages the use of non-chemical alternatives to control plant growth on Forest lands whenever feasible.

29. County's encouragement of "sustainable forest practices/management": Whenever feasible, Clatsop County shall prefer and encourage the use of sustainable forest management practices to ensure sustainable economic growth/health, advance forest restoration, protect drinking water resources, and allow for carbon storage.

Concepts raised but not placed or could be expanded/revised under other headings:

GOAL 4 -- FORESTLANDS

- Community forest management should be explored and encouraged for the benefits to the local community and Clatsop County.
- The county should consider alternate ways to incentivize forest land owners to preserve forest lands, such as monetizing carbon sequestration and other conservation practices.
- Clatsop County encourages forest land owners to (private, county, and state) to open forest lands for recreational use. This could be accomplished by such measures as tax incentives and limits on liability.
- General concerns about stream setback regulations not being met and enforced, impacts of development in forestlands, fire danger, harvest practices and duration of rotation cycle, diversity of tree species