

# Community Forestry Initiative:

## *Keeping Forests as Forests for Oregon*

### The Problem

New forces are reshaping Oregon's forests in ways more significant than any wildfire, windstorm, or disease outbreak. Fueled by development pressures, population growth, concerns about Measure 37, and increasing real estate values, forest land is being converted to suburban and residential land uses.

**This is not just an urban or rural problem. It affects Oregon's largest cities and smallest communities, and some of our most prized forested landscapes.**

Consider the following facts about population, land use change and Oregon's forest landbase:

- ✓ Since the early 1970s, areas in Western Oregon zoned for residential and urban land use have increased markedly (45 percent and 36 percent) while areas in forest land use classification have decreased.
- ✓ An estimated 1 million acres of Oregon forest—about 10 percent of the state's non-federal forestland—exist inside urban growth boundaries or other development zones. These lands will be converted to development during this century.
- ✓ Statewide, another 2.5 million acres of forest exist within one mile of residential or urban areas.
- ✓ Oregon's population base has become predominantly urban, shifting from a 58 percent rural/42 percent urban ratio in 1910, to a 79 percent urban/21 percent ratio today. Since 1990, Oregon has been among the leading states in population growth.
- ✓ Nationwide, 1 million acres of private forests are being developed every year, according to a study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. An additional 44 million acres are expected to be developed by 2030.

### The Consequences

**Unless we recognize this trend and respond with thoughtful, community-based tools, policy and incentives, these forces stand to change our environmental, social and economic quality of life. Consider the following consequences:**

- ✓ The presence of development in forested areas changes everything about wildfire—placing homes at risk, making firefighting more complicated, and increasing firefighting costs.

- ✓ Fragmentation and parcelization of forests, combined with the development of roads and residences, can degrade the “green infrastructure” of a forested watershed, including clean water, the diversity of fish and wildlife species, and their habitat.
- ✓ Conversion from forest to development dramatically changes the way the surrounding landscape is managed, limiting the range of traditional forestry practices. In many areas, the notion of producing a timber value from the lands—even in the context of sustainable forestry practices—is no longer acceptable to neighborhood residents.
- ✓ When formerly productive timberlands are converted to development, surrounding economies and supporting industries are affected as forest products-related jobs and infrastructure are no longer viable. Harvest taxes are no longer available to support local government services and education. With no workable return for their investment in forest management, some landowners sell the land for development or other non-forest land use, perpetuating the problem.

## The Opportunities for Leadership & Action

**Now more than ever, Oregon needs to step up with information, resources and policies that promote sustainable forest values in these developed and developing areas and that assist residents, communities and landowners maintain their “green infrastructure” for today and for the future.**

The Oregon Department of Forestry recognizes the problem—and its complicated connection with Measure 37—and is committed to maintaining the values that forests provide for the best long-term interest of all Oregonians.

The Department has launched a Community Forest Initiative to provide experienced and knowledgeable Community Foresters in these vulnerable urban fringe areas to assist landowners, communities and local government maintain forest values. The Department and the Board of Forestry are contemplating new tools to help communities prevent the loss of forest landbase, and to help address wildfire safety, stream health and other facts in forested areas where development is occurring.

There is no single solution to this problem, nor any short-term fix. The key is to get people talking and thinking about the community-wide consequences of forest fragmentation, and to provide a mix of tools and resources that can support sound decisions about our precious forests.

For more information, contact:

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# WASHINGTON COUNTY Measure 37 Claims

As of December 7, 2006

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