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The Voice for Native Fish

Conserving biological diversity of native fish and protecting their habitats

Sept. 8, 2009

Testimony for Sept. 9, 2009, BOF meeting in Silverton, OR

TO: Oregon Board of Forestry
FR: Russell Bassett, River Steward Coordinator
RE: Timber harvest in State forests

Dear Board of Forestry members,

Thank you for your dedication to managing state forests in Oregon. This is the third time this year I have attend your public meetings and the second time I've testified. I had planned to testify at the June meeting but was unable to based on the volume of people wanting to testify. As an employee of the Native Fish Society, I'm sure you know where my testimony is headed, and you're right, I am here to implore you not to increase timber harvest in state forests. There are numerous different approaches I could take to try and convince you of this. The first time I testified, I talked about the importance of riparian buffers to native fish, the second time I was prepared to speak on the importance of intact forests to Oregon's economy.

I've been thinking for months now on how to approach this testimony. I've considered focusing on the importance of forests to stopping climate change, the issue of Board member conflict of interest, the value of ensuring any new plan uses best-available, peer-reviewed science, and pleading with you to please reconsider your June 3 vote, among several others.

Each of these approaches I rejected, because based on your June 3 vote, they will likely have no effect. So today I thought I would approach you with your own language and ask if you are really fulfilling your responsibility to manage for sustainable, healthy forests.

"It is the Mission of the Oregon Board of Forestry to... lead Oregon in implementing policies and programs that promote environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable management of Oregon's 28 million acres of public and private forests. To achieve our mission, it is the Vision of the Board of Forestry that Oregon will have ... healthy forests providing a sustainable flow of environmental, economic, and social outputs and benefits; public and private landowners willingly making investments to create healthy forests; citizens who understand, accept, and support sustainable forestry.

Clearly sustainability and healthy forests are major priorities and values of the Board of Forestry, yet I ask you, are you living up to your mission and vision?

The Clatsop and Tillamook forests are not healthy now. These forests are still recovering from unsustainable logging practices and massive logging-caused fires that occurred in the mid-20th Century. Is increasing timber harvest in these forests really going to fit with your vision of healthy forests? The answer is, no, it will not. The Clatsop and Tillamook forests need to put on a restorative trajectory, not a trajectory that produces so much lumber that the forests cannot be restored.

Secondly I ask you, Do you really believe increasing timber harvest from 50 percent to 70 percent fits with your mission to provide sustainable management of Oregon's public forests?

Your own Forest Management Plan, which you adopted in 2001, allows for the "sustainable" harvest of up to 140 million board feet of timber per year. In reality, harvest rates from 2002 to 2008

have bounced between 175 and 225 million board feet. You've rejected your own sustainability guideline in favor of a non-sustainable focus on timber harvest.

In addition, sustainability doesn't just apply to the number of trees not cut. It's not just an equation of one tree in, one tree out. Sustainability is a much broader concept that also applies to sustaining the many other values associated with forests, such as salmon and steelhead runs, recreation, and watershed health. Your own scientific review of the current proposal to increase clear-cutting in State forests said this revision would result in a low probability of enhancing watershed function and hydrological function.

We can have a win-win situation that results in sustainable timber harvest, recreation, and watershed health. The Wild Salmon Center and others have presented to you how this is possible, but yet you've moved away from sustainability and healthy forests, in favor of increased clear cuts.

So I'll close by asking you a final question: Are you going to rewrite your mission and vision statements so that they do not include the words sustainable and healthy forests? Or are you just going to keep moving away from your own mission and vision? Or, are you going to do the right thing, and actually manage these forests for sustainability and health?

Respectfully,



Russell Bassett
River Steward Coordinator