

The Elliott State Forest: Sustainable management provides school revenue, wildlife habitat

Revenue and habitat. By law, the Elliott State Forest must be managed in an environmentally sound way to produce dependable revenue for the Common School Fund. The management also provides for wildlife habitat. A federally approved plan is in place to conserve habitat for northern spotted owls. Surveys for marbled murrelets are conducted to make sure no harm would be caused by harvesting. Over the past ten years Elliott harvests have produced an average of \$14 million per year.

More growth. There is considerably more timber growth than is being harvested. The Elliott State Forest is growing about 75 million board feet of timber per year. Over the past ten years, the harvest level has averaged 27 million board feet.

One percent harvest. For 2009, a harvest level of about 28 million board feet is planned for the forest. About 500 acres are projected to be clearcut and about 400 acres will be thinned. Total harvesting on the 93,000-acre forest will amount to less than 1 percent.

Public involvement. All of the timber sales have been publicly reviewed. Each spring, all planned operations are posted on the Department of Forestry Web site and made available to interested parties. This is followed by a 45-day public comment period.

Carbon storage. All acres that are clearcut are replanted right away. The new trees then begin storing carbon. Scientists differ on what age and types of forests most effectively remove carbon from the atmosphere and store it (young, fast-growing stands or older ones with larger trees). In any case, the Elliott is managed to remain in forest cover, with a wide range of stand types and tree sizes.

Half of forest for wildlife. About 50-55 percent of the forest is in older stands. With this much land allocated to wildlife, the federal government approved a conservation plan that doesn't require surveying for northern spotted owls.

Timber sales still profitable. Even during the current economic downturn, some timber is selling at prices that exceed the cost of putting together the timber sales. This produces revenue for the Common School Fund. No timber sales are sold that aren't profitable. The goal is to have a consistent revenue stream for the Common School Fund. The other consideration is to maintain the wood processing infrastructure – such as loggers, machine operators, truck drivers and mills – so when better times return, there's a viable market for future timber sales.