Important Forestry Issues in Oregon
by the OREGON SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS
Dear Oregonian,

This booklet contains the views of the Oregon Society of American Foresters (OSAF) on five forestry issues that are of current interest to the Oregon public and legislators.

OSAF is one of 31 state societies that are proud to be affiliated with the national Society of American Foresters (SAF). In 1900, Gifford Pinchot and six other pioneer foresters founded SAF. Over 100 years later, the organization continues to represent the forestry profession in the United States.

The OSAF has nearly 800 members working as field foresters, researchers, administrators, consulting foresters, tribal foresters, and educators. Our members work for federal, state, or local governments; universities; forestry consulting companies; family-owned tree farms or industrial timberland owners; and nonprofit conservation organizations.

Our members have integral professional responsibilities that directly or indirectly affect the management of the 29.5 million acres of public and private forests throughout Oregon.

**How can OSAF assist with forestry issues?**

With its diverse membership, service-to-society mission, current science and requisite adherence to a detailed code of professional ethics, OSAF is ideally positioned to assist policy and decision makers in dealing with important issues on public and private forest lands throughout Oregon.

The focus and expertise of OSAF members range from general forestry to an array of specializations including ecology, hydrology, geology, fire science, wildlife biology, soil science, social science, and recreation planning.

During the Pacific Logging Congress’ “A Day in the Woods,” forester Peter Matzka, a SAF member and forestry outreach coordinator with Oregon State University Extension Service, takes students on a tour of the forest.

Photo: Oregon Forest Resources Institute
OSAF strongly encourages policy and decision makers, and the interested public to recognize the valuable perspective that trained and experienced forestry professionals can provide to understand and address forest resource issues and related policy and management concerns.

Please contact us at www.forestry.org or 503-224-8046 when an informed and professional perspective on forestry matters is useful.

A healthy forest is a resilient forest. Science-based active management enhances forest ecosystem resilience, ecosystem services, and produces forest products to create a high-quality of life for all Oregonians.

Because of our sustainable forestry practices in Oregon, the acreage of forestland in “The Beaver State” is the same as it was 60 years ago!

On this private property in northern Umatilla County, a breeding female of the Walla Walla Pack was seen walking through a log deck landing.

Katie Nichols is one of many SAF members who are stewarding Oregon’s forests for the future. She works for Lone Rock Timber Management as a forest engineering operations assistant and sustainability coordinator.
Healthy, Managed Forests Create Clean Drinking Water

The OSAF supports active forest management prescribed by professional foresters to achieve and maintain healthy public and private forests, consistent with land management objectives.

Oregonians are drinking some of the cleanest and best-tasting water in the country thanks to our forests. Of the major streams and rivers that are sources of drinking water, the highest water quality generally occurs in forested watersheds. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality’s 2017 Oregon Water Quality Index Data Summary rated the water quality of nearly 3/4 of these streams and rivers as excellent or good.¹

How is this excellent water quality achieved? Through active forest management.

Forest management and water quality are intricately linked. Trees, understory vegetation, and soils intercept and slow the flow of surface and subsurface water, which creates a more even streamflow that results in less flooding and erosion. Water quality is enhanced both by cooler ground water entering the stream and the filtering of sediments by surface vegetation and the soil duff layer.

The Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFPA) strictly regulates how forest landowners manage their forests, in part to maintain the conditions that improve water quality. Whether it is restricting the size of clearcuts, regulating herbicide application near water bodies or regulating construction and maintenance of roads, the OFPA aims to keep forests and water healthy, both for our use and for those species that live within them.

How are foresters protecting water quality?

When foresters lay out harvest units, they protect key resources, such as fish-bearing and drinking water streams with no-harvest buffer areas. When clearcuts are prescribed, the unit size is limited by the OFPA.² During harvest operations, loggers typically use skylines and low-ground pressure equipment to reduce soil disturbance and create less erosion and sedimentation as compared to older logging systems.

¹ Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, 2017 Oregon Water Quality Index Data Summary.
² Oregon Forest Practice Act.
New forest roads are placed and designed to reduce impacts on water quality and stream aquatic life. Older roads not designed to today’s high standards are being improved, and where applicable, decommissioned. OFPA rules require adequate road maintenance and can restrict trucking during heavy rains to reduce sediment entering nearby streams.

The OFPA contains strong measures, such as buffers and weather restrictions, to prevent herbicide contamination of streams. Where used, forest herbicides are only applied two to four times over a 40- to 80-year harvest rotation, and certified applicators strictly follow Environmental Protection Agency requirements. Forest herbicide use also accounts for only four percent of total annual herbicide use in Oregon.

**And the rules laid out in OFPA are being followed.**

*The Forest Practices Compliance Audit: 2017 Annual Report* produced by the Oregon Department of Forestry determined that when it comes to protecting water of the state, the forestry community doesn’t shirk from their responsibility. The audit found that:

- 96% compliance of vegetation retention along streams;
- 94% compliance of protection for significant wetlands;
- 89% compliance protection for “other wetlands”; and
- 99% compliance with operations near waters of the state.

*“Healthy forests provide the cleanest water of all water in Oregon.”*  
—Fran Cafferata Coe, wildlife biologist and SAF member

This forested stream is Jones Creek, found in the Tillamook State Forest.  
Photo: Oregon Forest Resources Institute
Good Tax Policy Promotes Good Forest Management

The OSAF supports tax policies based on equity and certainty to encourage our state's private forest landowners to make sustained long-term capital investments in forest management.

In Oregon, 34 percent of forestlands are owned by private landowners.⁴ These private forestlands are the source of 78 percent of Oregon’s timber harvests. Most of the direct and indirect jobs in the forest sector are created because of the management of these private forestlands.

Since 1973, when Oregon developed its statewide planning goals, a basic principle was retaining forests as forests and farms as farms. This goal is reflected in the current property tax structure that has a low annual Special Assessment on bare land value. This makes forestland ownership affordable while waiting for the trees to become harvestable. At harvest time, the landowner pays income tax and harvest tax.

To keep Oregon green and maintain its forest products industry, forest tax policy must incentivize economic, social, and environmental values.

Forestland owners are subject to property, income, and harvest taxes. Tax treatment of forestlands can incentivize or disincentivize active management. Active management of private forestland requires long-term capital investments for which landowners won’t see a return for 30 years or more. When taxes disincentivize active management, there are ecological and economic consequences. High taxes can cause owners to reduce active management, sell their lands, or even convert forestlands to other more profitable uses, such as housing developments or strip malls.

“Surveys consistently show taxes and the uncertainty around tax policy as one of the top concerns of forest landowners. Policy decisions about taxes should consider the direct and indirect impacts on private forest owners.”

—Tamara Cushing, SAF member and assistant professor of Practice & Extension Specialist Forest Economics, Management & Policy at Oregon State University, Starker Chair of Private and Family Forestry

SAF members Steve and Wylda Cafferata are the proud owners of Cafferata Family Forest, a 79-acre working forest they purchased in 2009. In 2017, they were Oregon Tree Farmer of the Year.

Photo: Steve and Wylda Cafferata
All forestland owners, whether industrial or family tree farms, support Oregon’s fire protection funding system by paying a state tax known as the Forest Patrol Assessment; this tax is determined based upon the amount of acreage owned. The State General Fund matches the landowners’ amount. This private/public shared fire protection funding system recognizes that the public receives values from private forestlands, such as hunting, fishing, and clean water, air, carbon sequestration, and other ecosystem services.

The shared fire protection funding system also reflects that the great majority of fires and acres burnt on state-protected lands aren’t started by the landowner, but by the public. When the tax rate of the Forest Patrol Assessment increases, this can lead owners to reduce investment and active management, sell their lands, or convert their forests to other more profitable uses.

“Our livelihood, our legacy and our home—that is how we describe the forestland we have the privilege to own. The current forestry practices are designed to protect this land with sustainable timber products, clean water, and healthy habitat for all creatures. Even very small parcels of timberland contribute to the overall health of Oregon’s valuable resource.”

—Susan Schmidlin, co-owner of Schmidlin Angus Farm

John and Cathy Dummer own The Ridge Tree Farm and were recognized in 2015 as Washington County’s Tree Farmer of the Year.

Photo: John and Cathy Dummer
Growing Trees Grows Living Wages and Communities

The OSAF supports commercial timber harvest as an appropriate objective and primary tool for promoting healthy sustainable forests.

What’s amazing about forest products is they are recyclable, biodegradable, and sourced from one of the most renewable sources in nature—trees. Using more products derived from trees instead of concrete, steel, or fossil fuels will play a crucial role to mitigate the effects of climate change, maintain resilient ecosystems, and sustain rural communities.

How do trees become Portland’s inspiring wooden buildings? It starts with a timber harvest.

In Oregon, most timber harvests are for the purpose of supplying sawlogs and pulplogs for our wood products manufacturers. Other reasons for conducting a timber harvest are to:

- maintain forest health and resiliency;
- control epidemic levels of insect damage;
- mitigate the likelihood of catastrophic wildfire, including hazardous fuels reductions;
- improve habitat for special-status plants and animals;
- produce sufficient revenue to pay for essential forest infrastructure such as roads or restoration projects, and payments to local communities/schools.

When timber harvests are conducted, they are in accordance with the Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFPA), which has some of the nation’s strictest environmental standards to protect Oregon’s waterways, soils, and wildlife. OFPA rules are developed using rigorous scientific analysis, informed by public input, and approved by the State Board of Forestry, which represents diverse public interests. Since 1971, this system has well served Oregonians and our forests.

Timber harvests are not a one size fits all; they are tailored to particular site conditions and management objectives to minimize undesirable disturbance. The process of planning and implementing a timber harvest is grounded in an ever-increasing accumulation of research and data.
Not only do timber harvests yield the trees needed for our buildings, but they also generate economic revenue that supports local Oregonians.

The forest sector generates 4.7 percent of Oregon’s overall economic output, and our state is a national leader in forest products. We are number one in softwood lumber and softwood plywood, and a leader in engineered wood products, such as cross laminated timber (CLT) and mass plywood panels (MPP).

In 2017, according to the Oregon Employment Department, forest-related employment in Oregon totaled 61,051 jobs, and three percent of all jobs in Oregon are in the forest sector. When looking at rural counties, forest sector jobs account for seven percent.

What’s notable about forest sector jobs? They pay living wages that support families and offer health care benefits and even retirement plans.

While the statewide average wage was $51,100, the average annual wage of a job in the forest sector was $54,200. In rural counties, a well-paying job makes a significant difference in keeping families financially stable and saving for the future.

“The critically important role that forest management plays in the livelihood of our community cannot be overstated. Douglas County’s history stands as clear evidence of the value of our rich forest resources to our rural communities. Our communities are directly dependent on the planting, harvesting, and processing of trees into forest products to support our government services, employment, schools, and related economic activity.”

—Lee Paterson, retired Roseburg School District Superintendent
Working Forests and Forest Products Mitigates Climate Change

The OSAF supports reducing greenhouse gas emissions through sustainable forest management practices that sequesters atmospheric carbon in trees and soil, and stores carbon in wood products.

The forest sector plays a significant role in mitigating the effects of climate change by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Not only do living trees sequester and store the carbon, forest products continue to store carbon when they are used in our buildings.

In *Inventory of US Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks*, the Environmental Protection Agency estimated that the equivalent of approximately 41 percent of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the power sector in America was annually removed from the atmosphere and stored in forest biomass.\(^6\)

Additionally, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate reported in the recently published *Climate Change and Land* that, “Sustainable forest management aimed at providing timber, fibre, biomass, non-timber resources, and other ecosystem functions and services can lower GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions and can contribute to adaptation.”\(^7\)

**How can Oregon’s forests continue to play a role in mitigating climate change? By keeping working forests as forests.**

With newcomers arriving in Oregon every year, there is intense pressure to convert forestland into suburbs and strip malls. Policies that discourage forest conversion to other uses are crucial to maintain our state’s forestlands.

Laws and policies that prohibit aspects of active forest management or add substantial costs to forest management can lead to the loss of competitiveness of Oregon’s forest sector. These policies can result in less investment in forests and conversion of forestland to more profitable uses, such as residential development, which reduces carbon sequestration.

Adopting policies that recognize the valuable services that family tree farmers and industrial landowners provide in mitigating climate change and producing renewable forest products enables these landowners to maintain their working forests and prevent conversion to other uses.

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\(^7\) United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate, *Climate Change and Land* (2019).

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Photo: Oregon Department of Forestry

This woody biomass is a renewable source of energy that can lessen our dependence on fossil fuels and hydroelectric dams for electricity.
“A vibrant forest industry in Oregon is key to ensuring the viability of forest health projects that reduce wildfires and smoke in our communities, while also encouraging the sequestration of carbon in trees and building products. A win-win for all Oregonians!”
—Eric Farm, PE, ACF, SAF member and president of Farm Unlimited—A Forestry Consulting Company

Supporting active forest management activities, such as thinning and fuels treatment, makes forests more resistant to insect mortality and stand-replacing wildfire, and consequentially contributes to reducing carbon emissions.

Silvicultural practices, such as planting, herbicide use and fertilizer application, improves seedling survival and increases tree growth, which increases the sequestration of carbon.

**How can Oregonians help combat climate change and keep working forests working? Use forest products.**

Wood used in construction represents a long-term storage of carbon. Life cycle assessments of building construction consistently show that wood buildings require considerably less energy to create than steel and concrete buildings. Consequently, wood buildings have a smaller carbon footprint. Laws and policies should encourage wood substitution for other materials and promote wood innovation.

Converting to woody biomass as a source of electricity is also important if we want to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels for electricity. However, expansion of biomass energy facilities requires long-term regulatory certainty and long-term fuel supply. While we have a potential long-term fuel supply from Oregon’s 29.5 million acres of forests, regulations need to be adopted to support converting energy production to woody biomass-generated power.

“When biomass comes from responsible and sustainable forests or plantations, it substantially reduces net carbon emissions to the atmosphere compared to fossil fuels. Using wood-derived biomass is an integral part of meeting Oregon’s carbon reduction targets.”
—Austin Himes, SAF member and PhD in Forest Ecosystems and Society from Oregon State University and Certified Forester

The First Tech Credit Union’s Oregon headquarters in Hillsboro features the cutting-edge forest products of glulam and cross-laminated timber.

Photo: Oregon Forest Resources Institute
Why Fire and Fuels Management is Needed on the Landscape

The OSAF supports the acceleration of management activities, especially hazardous fuels treatment, to restore fire-adapted forested landscapes.

Oregon’s forests evolved with fire as a disturbance element. Prior to European settlement, fires were either natural ignitions or deliberately set by indigenous peoples as a cultural tool to create openings for big game and vegetative food sources.

The removal of Native people from their ancestral lands reduced the use of frequent low-intensity human-caused fire on the landscape. As Oregon’s population increased, fire was viewed as a threat, and citizens called for fire suppression. Over the years, technology and tactics have led to very successful suppression program; over 95 percent of fires are controlled in the early stages.

Decades of fire suppression has resulted in a buildup of fuel across the forest landscapes, particularly in unmanaged forests. Tree densities have increased, and vegetation growing under the forest canopies have created an arrangement of fuels that allows a ground fire to spread into tree crowns and cause larger, more damaging fires that are challenging to control.

Warming climatic conditions have added to the current fire situation by changing the precipitation patterns and drying out the fuels. This has led to longer and more destructive fires seasons.

“For generations our people have used fire as a tool to manage the forestlands we occupied. The burning done by our tribal people maintained open healthy forests, provided a robust understory good for gathering and hunting.

Only today are we seeing the devastating effects of removing our management from the landscape. The build-up of fuel on the forest floor has led to catastrophic wildfires that continue to burn our homelands over and over again, robbing our people of their inherent right to continue the customs and life-ways of our ancestors.”

—Michael J. Rondeau, CEO for the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians
Our state’s forest types have different relationships with fire.

- The drier eastern, central, and some southwestern Oregon forests evolved to have their understory vegetation burn (underburning) roughly every 15-25 years. This results in a forest with widely spaced older trees and few seedlings and saplings.

- Forests along the west slope of the Cascades and the Coast Range burn less frequently with return intervals ranging in the hundreds of years. However, when fires do occur, they are often stand replacing, essentially restarting the forest from the few surviving trees.

Where appropriate, safe, and feasible, we should return periodic underburning to Oregon’s eastern, central, and drier southwestern forests. In the moister western Oregon forests, underburning presents significant challenges and its use, particularly in young managed conifer stands, will be uncommon. There are however some forest types such as oak or mature pine dominated stands which can benefit from underburning. Post-harvest broadcast or pile burning of logging slash should be a tool available to foresters throughout Oregon.

We should implement other active management activities in Oregon forests to reduce fuel loading. Active management can include tree thinning, mechanical treatments such as chipping and grinding woody debris, and piling and burning woody debris. These actions will make the forest more resilient to fire, and suppression actions, if required are more likely to be successful.

Oregon’s smoke management rules need to allow an increased use of prescribed fire. Under controlled burning conditions, prescribed fire can reduce fuel loads and the number and severity of severe smoke intrusions into our cities during fire season.

The Nature Conservancy is one landowner who uses prescribed fire as a management tool.

Photo: Oregon Forest Resources Institute
Who is the forestry community in Oregon?

Fran Cafferata Coe is a wildlife biologist and owner of Cafferata Consulting, LLC. She is past president of The Wildlife Society of Oregon and the Oregon Society of American Foresters. She has also led the Oregon Forest Resources Institute’s Wildlife in Managed Forests Program.

A former superintendent for the Roseburg School District, Lee Paterson is a board member of the Umpqua Community College Foundation and serves on the college’s Forestry Program Advisory committee. He is a member of Communities for Healthy Forests.

Eric Farm, PE, ACF, is president of Farm Unlimited—a forestry consulting company. A member of the Society of American Foresters, he serves on the Oregon Department of Forestry Southwest Oregon Regional Forest Practices Advisory Committee.

Austin Himes is a certified forester and former member of the Oregon Forest Industries Council’s public affairs committee and the Tillamook Working Lands and Watersheds Cooperative. He is now an assistant professor in Hardwood Silviculture at Mississippi State University.
**Michael J. Rondeau** is the CEO for the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians. He is a board member of the Phoenix Charter School and is on the board of governors for the Oregon State Bar Association.

**Tamara Cushing** is the national president of the Society of American Foresters. She is an assistant professor of Practice & Extension Specialist Forest Economics, Management & Policy at Oregon State University and the Starker Chair of Private and Family Forestry.

**Susan Schmidlin** is co-owner of Schmidlin Angus Farm, a family run registered Angus operation in Washington County’s Vernonia area since 1977.

**Front cover photo credits:** Andrea Watts, Steve Wilent, Lauren Grand  
**Back cover photo credits:** Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, Oregon Department of Forestry  

**SOURCES:**

This booklet explains just a selection of Oregon SAF position statements. We also have position statements on forestry issues that include:

- Active Management to Achieve and Maintain Healthy Forests
- Clearcutting
- Commercial Harvest on Public Lands in Oregon
- Forestry Professionals as Stakeholders
- Landslides on Forest Lands
- Managing Mature & Old-Growth Forests
- Managing Riparian Forests
- Salvage Harvesting
- Thinning on Public Lands in Oregon
- Using Herbicides on Forest Lands

These position statements and others can be found at http://www.oregon.forestry.org/oregon/policy/overview

National SAF has position statements on issues that include:

- Forest Management and Climate Change
- Roads in Managed Forests
- Wildland Fire Management
- State Policies Regarding Private Forest Practices
- Federal and State Tax Treatment of Private Forest Land
- Forest Offset Projects in a Carbon Trading System
- Utilization of Woody Biomass for Energy

These position statements are available at https://tinyurl.com/y37xb5qy