



Oregon State University
College of Forestry

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Dear College of Forestry Community,

The College of Forestry has significantly benefitted from the multiple-value management of the Oregon State University Research Forests. In addition to timber revenue, which has supported College faculty, staff, students and facilities, these research forests have been home to countless teaching, extension, research and community activities across many generations.

Multiple-value management plans have guided the operations of these forests for years. For example, the McDonald and Dunn Forests use the 2005 Forest Plan (which was developed by an interdisciplinary team within the College) as the basis for decision-making, although the plan was informally suspended in 2009 during the economic downturn. A new plan is under development, beginning with a comprehensive forestry inventory and a consultant-driven strategic process that incorporates all of the College's forests.

Recently, the College harvested a 15.6-acre unit within the McDonald Forest. The predominantly Douglas-fir stand had an origin date of 1759 with pre-harvest estimates indicating tree ages between 80 and 260 years. Based on recent evidence of a decline in stand health, this harvest was intended to regenerate the stand into a timber-generating future condition and included the retention of approximately six legacy trees per acre for habitat purposes.

While operating with the best of intentions and within the guidance of the 2005 Forest Plan, we made a mistake in carrying out this recent harvest. The harvest included trees with ages close to the origin of the stand and one that has been determined to be approximately 420 years old. Although harvest revenue supports critical College of Forestry operations, the future research and ecological benefit of these older trees should have been considered before the harvest was scheduled.

This harvest identifies a serious shortcoming in the College's current forest management practices. While the College maintains around 350 acres of mature reserves within its own forests that are intended to provide older stands for conservation, growth, study, monitoring change and aesthetics, we do not have guidelines for forest age class distributions outside of those reserve tracts.

The College will begin to address these matters immediately by enacting a preliminary suite of measures until the new comprehensive forest plan can address such matters more fully. This includes ceasing harvest of trees older than 160 years, an age identified as significant in the 2005 Forest Plan in the designation of reserve units.

On its own, this action is not enough to build an enduring, diverse, suite of tree age classes. As a result, I am directing the College's Research Forests team to immediately begin to develop actionable strategies to retain individual older trees and continue to broaden the age class distribution within the McDonald and Dunn forests. This increases the potential for these forests to grow large trees that are several centuries old. By doing so, we will expand our capacity for research across a more extensive array of age classes into the distant future.

With these changes, the College of Forestry will emerge with a management process that fosters the protection of current older trees and stands, as well as a plan to grow future old trees and forests. It is our responsibility to pass along to future generations a legacy of age classes that have been stewarded

effectively to date. This will lead to a diverse forest structure that will benefit the College's teaching, research, and extension missions, while also serving as a source of habitat, recreation and other non-timber uses embedded as part of a working forest landscape that also provides revenue to support the College.

This action will result in a reduction in timber revenue, however, it will also demonstrate our College's values and the balance we seek to achieve between timber revenue and the non-timber value of older trees and stands. To support this transition, we will begin a process that will explore the establishment of conservation easements to support the expansion of the College's forest reserve tracts. Adding non-timber revenue can be an essential source of funds that will allow us to continue to deliver transformative education, lifelong learning and informative research programs.

As I mentioned, our team already has been -- and will continue to work on -- updating the College's forest plan. This work will result in long-term guidance and an investment in operations that will continue to build on the College's already strong principles of transparency and engagement. To be clear, the immediate and unequivocal measures described here are preliminary, and will be in effect until a new forest plan is complete. This planning process will allow for appropriate consultation and engagement across varied expertise and stakeholder sectors. We also must continually assess and engage in dialogue around how our forests support the College's mission and research, teaching, extension activity, facilities and general financial support.

The core themes identified in the [2005 Forest Plan](#) still ring true today. Going forward, while aided by that plan, we have been presented with an opportunity to update our management practices to better align with our core values as we seek to continue to define the practice of contemporary sustainable forestry.

The research forests wide range of age classes across trees, stands and forests is a testament to past and present management practices. The deliberate articulation of our objectives for future forest conditions will only strengthen the College's ability to conduct vital research, transformative teaching, and effective outreach into the future.

In summary, I and the College's Research Forests team agree that harvesting this stand did not align with the College's values. Moving forward, we have learned from this matter. Within the College, OSU and the state of Oregon, we are fortunate to work and collaborate in an environment that promotes dialogue, listening, learning and progress. We embrace continuous improvement, and we are often able to do so by willingly assessing our impact and questioning the 'why' of our actions.

You can expect regular updates on next steps. As always, I am available for your questions and input.

Sincerely,



Anthony S. Davis, PhD
Interim Dean
Oregon State University