**My response to the OSU Board of Trustees, sent on Nov. 21st, after OSU's Research Forest staff burned the slash piles at 'No Vacancy':**

Dear OSU Board of Trustees,

On Friday, the College of Forestry's research forest staff burned the enormous slash piles at the 'No Vacancy' cut (where the Old Growth was cut in May).  The fires consumed an estimated 800-1000 tons of wood, releasing roughly 400-500 tons of carbon into our over-heated atmosphere.  This act directly contradicted President Ray's and OSU's commitment to reducing the university's carbon footprint in a big way.  Thick smoke blanketed our Soap Creek Valley for days due to a weather inversion.  You can find pictures of the burning slash piles here: <https://friendsofosuoldgrowth.org/gallery/>

In my email to the Dean of the College of Forestry on October 16th, I had provided a well-reasoned set of arguments against burning the slash piles.  The fire risk and reduction in tree-planting density would have been minimal.  Allowing the slash to slowly decay over decades and centuries would have released carbon to the atmosphere very slowly, while providing a wealth of ecological benefits and research opportunities (remember, it is a "research forest").  I copied President Ray and his staff, plus a number of OSU folks on this message.

On November 7th, I followed up by forwarding my original email to OSU's Communication Director, Steve Clark (copying the same recipients, and adding you, the Board of Trustees).  Since the Dean had not replied in three weeks, and the issue was very urgent, I asked three simple questions (below).  I received no response from Mr. Clark, President Ray, his staff, or you, the Board of Trustees.  Not even an acknowledgement of my request.  This speaks volumes not only about a lack of responsiveness, but also a fundamental failure in leadership.  A little over a week later, research forest burned the slash.

I recognize that change usually happens at a glacial pace within a highly complex and bureaucratic system like a university.  On the other hand, any one of you could have simply phoned or emailed the Dean and asked him to delay burning the slash.  This would have provided an opportunity for a thoughtful consideration and dialogue.  What strikes me is the collective lack of action.  If anyone of you had heard about a planned assault on a student or faculty member, I'm sure you would take immediate action.  But when faced with a horrific assault on land that has so recently been ravaged, it appears no one has the courage to act.  Is there no one willing to stand up among you and say, "Maybe this is wrong and we need to step back and reconsider."?  Is there no one willing to stand up for the health of the planet upon which we depend for our very survival?  Is no one willing to challenge the misguided management practices of your research forest staff?

I am convinced that the the burning of logging slash piles will one day be looked at with widespread scorn and disbelief.  Just like the field-burning that used to pollute our skies each summer for the benefit of a wealthy few, the practice of burning logging slash piles will be outlawed and relegated to the dustbin of our planetary misdeeds.  Our kids and grandchildren will bring about this change because we have not had the will to act.  I hope each of you will reconsider your role in bringing about the much-needed change.  If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

Sincerely Disappointed,

Doug Pollock

(Friends of OSU Old Growth)

---------- Forwarded message ---------  
From: **Doug Pollock** <[friendsofosuoldgrowth@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofosuoldgrowth@gmail.com)>  
Date: Thu, Nov 7, 2019 at 2:33 PM  
Subject: Fwd: If You're Serious About Carbon Storage...Don't Burn the Slash!  
To: <[steve.clark@oregonstate.edu](mailto:steve.clark@oregonstate.edu)>  
Cc: <[trustees@oregonstate.edu](mailto:trustees@oregonstate.edu)>, Bennett Hall <[Bennett.Hall@gtconnect.com](mailto:Bennett.Hall@gtconnect.com)>, Sen Gelser <[Sen.SaraGelser@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Sen.SaraGelser@oregonlegislature.gov)>, <[jason.miner@oregon.gov](mailto:jason.miner@oregon.gov)>, <[vicki.walker@dsl.state.or.us](mailto:vicki.walker@dsl.state.or.us)>, Rob Davis <[rdavis@oregonian.com](mailto:rdavis@oregonian.com)>

Dear Mr. Clark,

Another (unacknowledged and unanswered) email to add to the previous list I sent you.  In case I didn't make it clear in my message below, I'd like a response to the following questions:

1) Will the Dean commit to NOT burning the slash piles at 'No Vacancy' and elsewhere in the OSU forests?

2) If not, how does the Dean justify the enormous carbon impacts of burning the slash, given his own (and President Ray's) statements about the importance of reducing OSU's carbon emissions?

3) Given the significant amount of visitation (both public and OSU groups) and the important recovering native vegetation and ecology of the 'No Vacany' cut, will the Dean commit to not spraying herbicides there?

I appreciate your help in getting answers to these questions.

Sincerely,

Doug Pollock

(& Friends of OSU Old Growth)

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**My original email to Dean Davis regarding the slash burning at 'No Vacancy':**

---------- Forwarded message ---------  
From: **Doug Pollock** <[friendsofosuoldgrowth@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofosuoldgrowth@gmail.com)>  
Date: Wed, Oct 16, 2019 at 4:44 PM  
Subject: If You're Serious About Carbon Storage...Don't Burn the Slash!  
To: <[forest.input@oregonstate.edu](mailto:forest.input@oregonstate.edu)>, <[anthony.davis@oregonstate.edu](mailto:anthony.davis@oregonstate.edu)>  
Cc: <[steve.clark@oregonstate.edu](mailto:steve.clark@oregonstate.edu)>, <[ed.ray@oregonstate.edu](mailto:ed.ray@oregonstate.edu)>, <[ed.feser@oregonstate.edu](mailto:ed.feser@oregonstate.edu)>, <[trustees@oregonstate.edu](mailto:trustees@oregonstate.edu)>, <[anita.azarenko@oregonstate.edu](mailto:anita.azarenko@oregonstate.edu)>, <[susan.capalbo@oregonstate.edu](mailto:susan.capalbo@oregonstate.edu)>, <[rebecca.gose@oregonstate.edu](mailto:rebecca.gose@oregonstate.edu)>, <[bill.ripple@oregonstate.edu](mailto:bill.ripple@oregonstate.edu)>, <[ryan.brown@oregonstate.edu](mailto:ryan.brown@oregonstate.edu)>, <[michael.collins@oregonstate.edu](mailto:michael.collins@oregonstate.edu)>, <[jim.day@gazettetimes.com](mailto:jim.day@gazettetimes.com)>, <[Bennett.Hall@gtconnect.com](mailto:Bennett.Hall@gtconnect.com)>, <[rdavis@oregonian.com](mailto:rdavis@oregonian.com)>, Sen Gelser <[Sen.SaraGelser@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Sen.SaraGelser@oregonlegislature.gov)>, <[jason.miner@oregon.gov](mailto:jason.miner@oregon.gov)>

Dear Dean Davis,

In your recent public meeting, you spoke of the important connection between climate change and forestry.  You mentioned the enormous amount of carbon stored in Old Growth forests (like the one destroyed at Baker Creek).  You should know that a significant part of that carbon is stored in the dozens of enormous slash piles your staff are planning to burn in the coming weeks.

We are calling on you to reconsider this ill-conceived forestry practice - and show your commitment to reducing the carbon footprint of OSU's forestry operations by choosing to NOT burn these slash piles.  As fungus expert Paul Stamets said on Today's "Think Out Loud" radio program (<https://www.opb.org/radio/programs/thinkoutloud/segment/richard-powers-overstory-pnw/>):

"When we deforest, we rob the menu of wood and plant material for the fungi to digest to create soils, so we are de-naturing our ecosystem by cutting the trees...give up the concept of the Elizabethan yard...when we remove the forest debris, we rob the menu for these fungi to create soils, we end up losing biodiversity and then we have to externally import nutrients..."

By collecting and burning enormous quantities of logging slash (not just at 'No Vacancy', but in nearly all of your recent cuts) you are destroying the very material that supports the ecosystem and builds the soil.  You are also polluting the air we breathe and warming our planet.  For what purpose?  All because your industrial-forestry staff have an outdated belief that "clean" ground is healthy ground, that debris should be gathered and burned.  Why add yet another injury to the ecology of the site by burning the remaining organic matter?  Please stand behind your words and act in a way that supports nature, not destroys it!

While I have your attention, I'd like to also request that you NOT blanket the ground with herbicides as part of your standard ground treatment.  Debbie and Norm Johnson have pointed out that there's already a significant amount of natural vegetation that is starting to regenerate.  Can we please get your commitment to not spray and kill it all and pollute the site with these toxic chemicals?

Back in August, French professor and expert in Douglas-fir forestry (Yves Poss) visited 'No Vacancy' with Mr. Clark and Mr. Fitzgerald.  He expressed disbelief and dismay about your intention to burn the logging slash piles - something which is banned and considered ecologically backward in Europe.  Clearly, burning slash piles is not leading our timber industry (and planet) to a better future.

Here are some specific reasons why we think you should leave the slash piles:

1) Burning of the slash piles would release an enormous amount of carbon, worsening the impact already caused by the destruction of the forest - and polluting the air we all breathe.

2) The impact on forestry (e.g. lost production area) would be minimal - trees could be planted all around them and the slash piles take up a very small % of the overall area.

3) If left in place, the piles would provide animal habitat and carbon storage for centuries to come.  The piles of debris would augment the down woody debris left on the site and provide topography to the damaged landscape.

4) There is minimal fire risk presented by the piles (which would retain moisture from the winter rains, store it through the dry months, and support new ecosystems).

5) The slash piles would present numerous research opportunities - the primary purpose of the OSU forests.

You've stated that even though you are the interim Dean, you have full authority to make decisions.  Please use your authority to do the right thing and commit to this positive change.  Burning slash piles is ecologically unsound and destroys our climate!

Sincerely,

Doug Pollock

& Friends of OSU Old Growth