



## **Propaganda vs. Fact – Exposing OSU’s False Narrative about the ‘Woodpecker Phase 1’ Harvest\***

Friends of OSU Old Growth – [www.friendsofosuoldgrowth.org](http://www.friendsofosuoldgrowth.org)

July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024

(\*compiled from the [dean’s 7/10/24 email](#) and his [“Woodpecker Harvest Background”](#) document shared with the College of Forestry, plus two documents posted to the CoF webpage: [“long-term ecological objectives”](#) (of the harvest) and [“Woodpecker Harvest Q&A”](#))

| OSU/Dean's Claim   | Fact/Response  |
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| <p><b>The dean claimed:</b> <i>“Unfortunately, much of what has been shared via the Gazette-Times, various letters to the editor, and in sensationalist blogs is highly inaccurate.”</i></p>   | <p><b>Untrue and inflammatory:</b> In his recent letter to the College of Forestry community, the dean (Thomas DeLuca) did not provide any specific examples to support his broad assertion that much of what has been shared is <i>“highly inaccurate”</i> or <i>“sensationalist”</i>. His adversarial characterization of those opposed to OSU’s cutting of this older forest does not reflect well on OSU or the College of Forestry.</p>   |
| <p><b>The dean claimed:</b> <i>“The messaging around the harvest is the direct result of an orchestrated misinformation campaign started ~three weeks ago by a neighbor of the McDonald-Dunn who has long opposed active forest management on the college forests.”</i></p>  | <p><b>The statement by the dean equates to a personal attack.</b> He is attempting to frame substantial community opposition as the work of a single person who he claims is simply opposed to OSU’s <i>“active forest management”</i>. His behavior is clearly unethical and unbecoming a dean of a public university.</p>  |
| <p><b>The dean claimed:</b> <i>“...the fearmongering campaign yielded numerous emails and complaints sent to the OSU Research Forest staff, to myself, President Murthy, the OSU Board of Trustees and many of you. All of these reflect a lack of understanding of the objectives of the harvest or the larger picture of management on the McDonald-Dunn.”</i></p> | <p><b>Inflammatory and blatantly false:</b> By characterizing community concerns over the cutting of older forest as a, <i>“fearmongering campaign”</i>, the dean is using provocative language designed to cast concerned citizens in a disreputable light. Furthermore, by relegating all of the complaints to a, <i>“lack of understanding of the objectives of the harvest or the larger picture of management”</i>, the dean is intentionally mischaracterizing and demeaning the diverse group of citizens who opposed OSU’s logging of this cherished older forest.</p> |
| <p><b>The dean claimed:</b> <i>“To help dispel some of the misinformation being shared, and to provide you with resources in case you receive questions from</i></p>   | <p><b>The <a href="#">4-page document</a> that the dean refers to is full of inaccurate and deliberately misleading information.</b> He and his marketing folks have</p>   |



*students, collaborators or community members, I've attached a document that provides...factual responses to some of the most common inaccuracies that are circulating."*

created an orchestrated misinformation campaign, intending to use the College of Forestry community as their propaganda army. Their defensive response is divisive and misguided. This will only further diminish public support for College of Forestry leaders and the OSU administration.

Rather than making personal attacks, dismissing substantial community concerns and spreading misinformation, the dean should be seeking to resolve conflicts and change OSU's outdated forestry practices. The dean must recognize that the College has lost its social license to cut older, public forests. President Murthy and the trustees must play an active role in changing the outdated management of these public forests under their stewardship.

**The dean claimed:** *"It is never easy to have your work or reputation disparaged, especially when what is being said is riddled with inaccuracies. And in this case, it is sad that a harvest with the right intentions and positive motivations is being sensationally cast as an environmental disaster. It is not a disaster; it is an appropriate treatment and demonstration project that is forward looking and in line with the collaboratively-developed mission and goals of our research forests."*

**Inflammatory and false characterization:** By accusing citizens of disparaging the reputation of himself and his staff, and using language like, *"riddled with inaccuracies"*, and *"sensationally cast as an environmental disaster"*, the dean is clearly trying to demonize those opposed to the current logging.



OSU's 'Woodpecker' project: How is cutting 4-5' diameter trees, "an appropriate treatment" and "forward looking"?

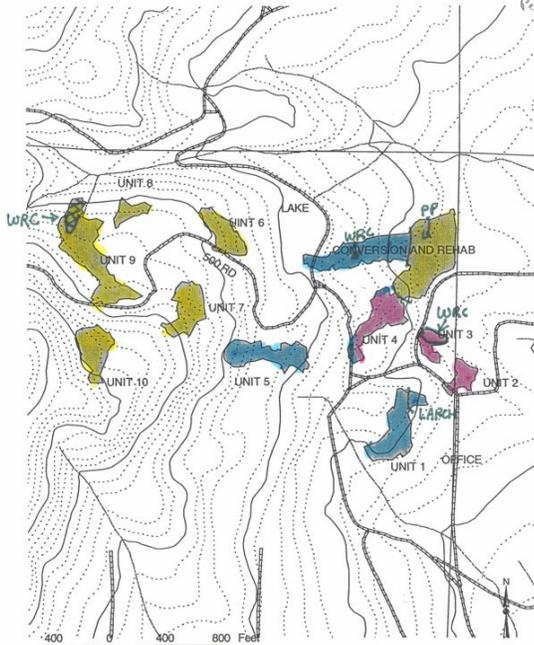


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|  | <p>The dean's assessment that, "<i>It is not a disaster; it is an appropriate treatment and demonstration project that is forward looking and in line with the collaboratively-developed mission and goals of our research forests.</i>" is not only exceptionally naive, it is entirely incorrect.</p> <p>The "<a href="#">Vision, Mission, and Goals</a>" governing OSU's <a href="#">research forests</a> were developed in a <i>non-collaborative</i> process (internal to the College of Forestry, without any public notice or participation). It is absurd for the dean to contend that it was "<i>collaboratively-developed</i>".</p> <p>By characterizing the cutting of a substantial number of large, old trees as, "<i>an appropriate treatment</i>" and "<i>forward looking</i>", the dean is displaying a profound lack of awareness of forest ecology and public values.</p>  |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> "<i>Despite inaccurate claims that are circulating, the current conditions of the McDonald-Dunn reflect its decades-long history as a working forest and do not reflect the natural structure nor function of the historical forests of the area, which were primarily oak savanna and likely open conifer forests, stewarded by the Kalapuya for generations prior to Euro-American colonization.</i>"</p> | <p><b>This statement is factually incorrect and misleading.</b> OSU's reference to the, "<i>decades-long history as a working forest</i>" seems intended to justify its extractive management regime. But the acknowledgment that "<i>current conditions...do not reflect the natural structure nor function of the historical forests of the area...stewarded by the Kalapuya for generations</i>" and the many references to re-establishing oak savanna raise questions about OSU's overall management priorities for the McDonald-Dunn.</p> <p>The dean's "working forests" research model (which has been used to justify clearcutting many older stands) is fundamentally at odds with this claimed deference to the Tribes and the oak savanna justifications. It is also unclear what is meant by, "<i>historical forests of the area</i>". Is OSU referring to forests that <i>pre-date</i> the history of Euro-American colonization? Does the "<i>natural condition and structure</i>" OSU refers to include the impacts of indigenous stewardship on the landscape?</p> <p>To claim that the current conditions of the forest,</p> |



UNIT Woodpecker STAND NUMBER Various YEAR 00/01 ACRES 23 T. 10S. R. 5W SEC 36 QTR. NW 1/4 & SW 1/4 of NW 1/4. TREATMENT: Plant 10 x 10 foot spacing spacing 20 feet off of residual trees. Plant 2DF to 1GF in all units. Plant Western Red Cedar in parts of unit 5 and 9, and rehab unit. Tube the cedar. Plant Willamette Valley Pine in Hardwood conversion unit.

Per Acre Lake \$103.92  
Per Acre Tree \$21.83



|         | DF P-1<br>262-1.02sp<br>Kellay | GF P-1<br>262-1.0<br>Kellay | WRC<br>261-1.0<br>Silvastrod | PP P-1<br>262-1.0<br>Kellay | Hybrid Larch<br>Japanese Sibirian P-D<br>GR Cottage Grove |
|---------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1/10/01 | 595                            | 220                         | 120                          |                             |   |
| 1/11/01 | 700                            | 320                         | 660                          |                             | 100   |
| 1/15/01 | 1955                           | 240                         | 780                          | 1050                        |   |
| Σ       | 3250                           | 780                         | 960                          | 1050                        | 100   |

Tree-planting records from 2001 show a limited amount of planting within the current 'Woodpecker' project area. This and the current conditions of the forest lead one to conclude the stand was largely of natural origins (despite OSU's claims to the contrary).

**OSU claimed:** "This portion of the forest is dominated by dense stands of Douglas-fir..."

"...do not reflect the...function of the historical forests of the area" is to view the forests from an anthropocentric perspective. These forests have provided a wide array of ecosystem services for millennia. The fact that they were impacted by indigenous burning is no justification for substantially thinning this relatively mature, complex forest ecosystem.

Forests are always undergoing a process of change. An expert from the College of Forestry who knows the history of this stand well wrote, "There is no record that this area was planted long ago so it is probably all natural EXCEPT for the planting that was done in 2001." The original planting map and notes (at left) show that approximately 10 acres of the current (64-acre) 'Woodpecker' area had seedlings added in 2001. The old-growth and mature Douglas-fir trees dispersed throughout the forest, and the lack of remnant oaks show this stand is largely of natural origins (and was not previously oak savanna).

Forest science and the needs of society are continually evolving. To imply that these forests should be returned to some prehistorical condition or structure seems decidedly presumptuous and arbitrary. OSU's educational and research mission related to these public forests should not be limited to the production of wood fiber, nor should the forests be relegated to funding the salaries of OSU foresters and the various projects of the College of Forestry.

**Not true!** Anyone who is familiar with this section of forest (or who has viewed the numerous photos in our 'Gallery' section) will understand this claim to be false. OSU has not explained what constitutes a "dense stand" nor has it provided data to support this claim. In a "precommercial thinning" of Douglas fir plantations, trees are generally thinned to a 10 to 15 foot spacing. Dominant trees growing closer than this would be considered a "dense stand" (i.e. one that could be thinned to optimize timber production).



Old-growth Douglas-fir within the 'Woodpecker' unit. This older forest was definitely NOT a dense stand

In the case of the 64-acre 'Woodpecker Phase 1' project area, the spacing of established Douglas-fir trees far exceeded this conventional metric of stand density (meaning the forest would absolutely *not* be considered "dense"). Unlike a managed stand or tree plantation, the spacing of Douglas-fir trees is irregular because it came about largely through *natural regeneration*. The author(s) of the OSU document appear to be largely unaware of the history of the forest and the current conditions (or are deliberately choosing to mischaracterize it).

**OSU claimed:** "There are no trees marked for removal in the Reserve area, despite circulating photographs that use clever angles to suggest otherwise...There was one tree just over the boundary of a reserve adjacent to the Woodpecker Harvest that was inadvertently marked by a student."



One of several trees that were clearly marked for cutting within the 'Reserve Area' above Cronemiller Lake.

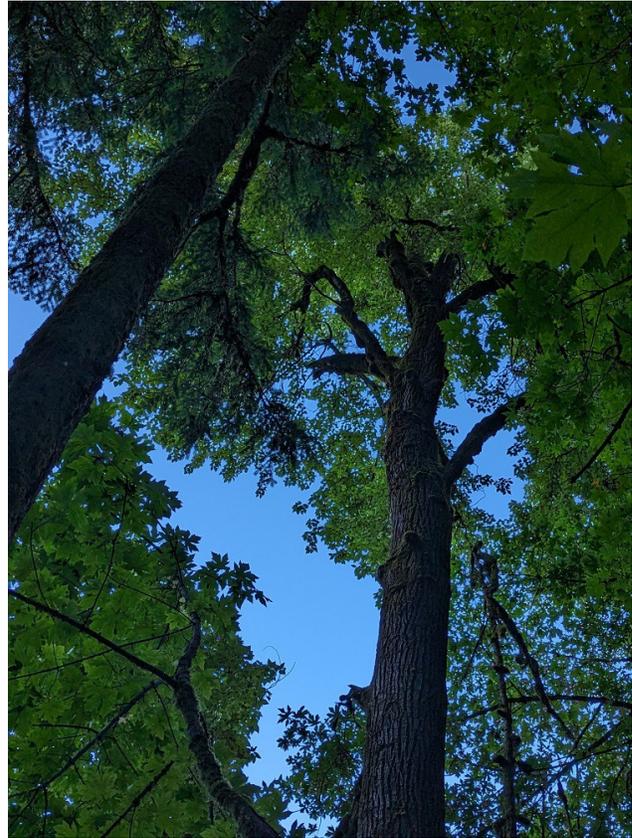
**Absolutely untrue:** As shown in photographs in our ['Gallery'](#), a number of trees within the reserve area (adjacent to the "Loop 36 Trail") were marked for cutting. It is completely disingenuous of OSU to claim that "clever angles" were used to deceive people.

**OSU claimed:** "The Woodpecker project aligns with the long-term interests of supporting, studying and restoring healthy forest ecosystems in the Peavy Arboretum area for many generations to come."

**This statement is substantially incorrect.** Cutting many larger trees in a relatively mature, complex Douglas-fir ecosystem (and clearing/damaging large areas of the understory forest in the process) does not equate to, "restoring healthy forest



*ecosystems...for many generations to come*". The ecological diversity of the forest, carbon reserves, wildlife habitat, and recreational character have now suffered significant adverse impacts due to OSU's logging.



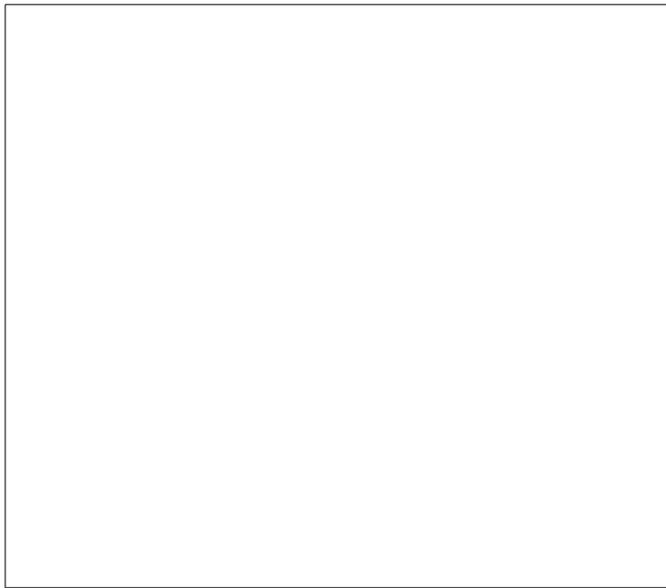
The canopy of the 'Woodpecker' unit showed it was already structurally-diverse before OSU logged it.

**OSU claimed:** *"There are many inaccuracies about the Woodpecker Harvest being shared as part of a blatant misinformation campaign..."*

**Untrue.** After making this false accusation, the author(s) of the OSU document present three pages of "blatant misinformation", with a number of false quotes.

**OSU claimed:** *"It is simply untrue that, 'The Woodpecker Harvest will destroy scores of 108+ year-old trees across 64 acres'"*

**This OSU statement is entirely FALSE!** As shown in the photo [galleries](#) from before and after the cutting, a substantial number of large, old trees were cut. A number of trees were between 4 and 5 feet in diameter. The annual growth rings of one indicated it was approx. 150 years of age.



This old tree in the 'Woodpecker' area was nearly 5 feet in diameter before OSU had it cut.

**OSU claimed:** *"It is also important to note that this is not a "natural forest." It is a managed forest that has been previously thinned, most recently in 1999, with another selective thinning planned now to release larger trees to continue to grow well and restore conditions to allow native oak to flourish."*

**This statement is substantially untrue and misleading.** As noted previously, this dominant Douglas-fir forest came about largely through *natural regeneration*. Therefore, claiming it is not a "natural forest" is largely incorrect. While OSU did thin a portion of the forest and plant seedlings on ~10 acres in 2001, the structure of the stand has never resembled anything close to a tree plantation as they are now implying. The relatively sparse spacing of the larger trees (as shown in the photographs) disproves OSU's argument that they needed to be, "released". In actual fact, OSU has cut a substantial number of large, old trees. As there is no significant population of native oak trees in this stand, the claim about *"allowing native oak to flourish"* is factually incorrect.



*Contrary to OSU's assertions, this was a structurally-diverse, complex forest ecosystem before OSU began logging.*

**OSU claimed:** *"It is incorrect that, 'The college is removing scores of large, old trees from popular recreation areas'...After the last thinning in this area in 1999, the Woodpecker Harvest is a follow-*

**This statement is blatantly false.** OSU has cut scores of large, old trees from this popular recreation area (as documented by the photographs). Contrary to their assertions, many



*up selective thinning project with the intention of continuing to release larger trees to continue to grow well, among other ecological objectives”*

of the larger, legacy trees were cut. The stumps of these trees will be enduring evidence of OSU’s false characterization of their logging project.



Contrary to their claims, OSU marked and cut many older trees in the ‘Woodpecker’ uni

**OSU claimed:** *“It is a baseless claim for people to say, ‘At the rate OSU continues to increase its harvests, soon there will be no forest left.’”*

**This is a false quote.** We have never stated, *“soon there will be no forest left”*. We take exception to OSU’s deliberate logging of older stands (up to three times the industry’s average harvest age). Since the 2019 old-growth cut, OSU’s foresters have continued to log many areas of old forest. The December 2023 ‘Pleco’ harvest clearcut an 89 year-old stand just west of Peavy Peak. The ‘Nerd’ cut from earlier this summer destroyed an 80+ year-old stand. Several recent cuts in the Sulphur Springs area have targeted ~70-75 year-old forest.



*OSU’s ‘Pleco’ cut destroyed an 89 year-old stand just west of Peavy Peak in December, 2023*

As detailed in a [comprehensive review](#) by experts from the College of Forestry, OSU directed 13 clearcuts of older forest in the south zone of the McDonald Forest in recent years (in violation of their 2005 management plan). OSU’s foresters destroyed a total of ~166 acres of northern spotted owl habitat that the plan had promised to protect.

**OSU claimed:** *“The existing conditions on the McDonald-Dunn as a whole are not a “natural condition.” Stating otherwise ignores the fact that Kalapuya people stewarded the land that is now*

**This statement ignores the considerable amount of old-growth forests growing at the time of settlement in the area that is now the McDonald-Dunn.** Substantial remnants of these old-growth



*the McDonald-Dunn for generations prior to Euro-American colonization...The fact is that the majority of the lands that make up the McDonald Forest would have historically been in oak savanna and fairly open Douglas-fir conifer forests”*



*Many old legacy stumps are found across the McDonald Forest, showing that old-growth forest was once quite prevalent (note the springboard notch used when the tree was cut long ago). There are scores of similar stumps on this ridge west of the Sulphur Springs watershed.*

forests remain in the Soap Creek, Baker Creek, and Sulphur Springs watersheds. In addition, there are a great many legacy stumps (of trees that were 4-8’ in diameter) that likely predate OSU’s acquisition of the forests. While the lower elevations and slopes were subject to indigenous burning, the larger trees survived and thrived despite the frequent fires.

Based on reconstruction of the vegetation described by an 1851 (“General Land Office” or GLO) survey, roughly 3500 acres or ¼ of the area that is now the McDonald-Dunn was covered in old-growth conifer forest, ¼ was prairie, and ½ was oak woodland mixed with prairie.

The precise composition of the forests at the time settlers arrived is no basis for destroying complex, older Douglas-fir ecosystems (as OSU seems to be implying). Older forests are essential to mitigating climate change, improving wildfire resilience, providing wildlife habitat, and as a recreational resource for our local community. OSU should be stewarding these public forests to *substantially increase* the amount of older forest reserves. Currently, only ~3.5% of the McDonald-Dunn is protected in “mature forest reserves”.

**OSU claimed:** *“It is false to claim, ‘OSU’s forests are public lands, and the community should have input on all management decisions.’”*

**It is entirely incorrect for OSU to make this claim.** We have never insisted that the community should, *“have input on all management decisions”*.

**Per State law (ORS 352.025 (2) (c)), the titles for all “real property” (which includes the McDonald-Dunn Research Forests) are held by the State of Oregon** (not OSU or the College of Forestry). This, and the fact that OSU is a *public* university, clearly equates to *public* ownership of these forests (despite the dean’s frequent claims to the contrary).

A “Q&A” document published on the College of Forestry website in 2020 stated, “The OSU Research Forests are not owned or managed by



the State of Oregon and do not receive tax funding.” It is irresponsible of College leaders to make these kinds of false statements. While the State of Oregon does not manage the forests directly (but rather administers them via the president and trustees), the State absolutely holds the property titles of research forests lands. This effectively means the State of Oregon owns these forests. OSU does not pay taxes on research forest lands, nor does it pay the Forest Product Harvest Tax associated with timber harvests. Both of these tax subsidies can be considered a source of public funding.

**Oregon Law (ORS 352.025 (2) (c)) states: “Legal title to all real property, whether acquired before or after the creation of a governing board, through state funding, revenue bonds or philanthropy, shall be taken and held in the name of the State of Oregon, acting by and through the governing board.”**

State law makes it clear that the State of Oregon, NOT OSU or the College of Forestry, holds the titles to the research forest lands (and thus owns them). It is ridiculous for the dean of a public university to adamantly insist the university’s lands are not “public lands”.

**OSU claimed:** *This is a “sustainably managed forest system...Active management...provides a proven sustainable model for forest operations.”*



*The dean’s claim of a “sustainably managed forest system” overlooks the obvious adverse impacts of OSU’s forestry operations, like this slash burning in the Dunn Forest that smoldered for many weeks in 2021.*

**This statement is substantially misleading.** OSU has provided no basis to conclude it is managing this forest system sustainably. Indeed, OSU’s active management of the McDonald-Dunn (with widespread herbicide use, slash burning, and clearcutting of older stands) fails to meet most of the basic tenets of sustainability (and ecological forestry).

For many years, College leaders have routinely confused/conflated “sustained yield” (i.e. producing a consistent supply of wood fiber) with *environmental or ecological sustainability*. A forest could be managed to produce a sustained supply of Christmas trees every 7 years, or cut on a 100-year cycle to yield much higher quality lumber (and drastically increase carbon sequestration). Both scenarios would produce a “sustained yield” (consistent supply of wood fiber) over many cycles, but neither would be considered “ecological forestry” (as the clearcutting of conventional forestry devastates the forest ecosystem).



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|   | <p>How does OSU define “sustainable management of a forest system”? What basis does OSU have for claiming it is, “<i>sustainably managing this forest system</i>”? Cutting a substantial number of older trees and destroying large areas of the understory forest seems at odds with “sustainable management” unless one is only considering “sustained yield”.</p>  |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> “<i>Other revenue generation options such as recreation and parking fees would limit equitable access to the forest and are therefore not a viable option.</i>”</p>  <p><i>This large boulder at the Lewisburg Saddle gate restricts access to ~21” (in violation of ADA requirements) and poses a substantial safety risk for recreational users (esp. cyclists).</i></p> | <p><b>This is a false conclusion.</b> Dismissing alternative funding models as, “<i>limiting equitable access to the forest</i>” demonstrates the insular thinking of OSU's research forest managers. Surely OSU could come up with options that would ensure equitable access (such as waiving fees or making them voluntary).</p> <p>OSU's Research Forest managers have demonstrated a glaring lack of commitment to safe and equitable access by placing large boulders at key access points at the Lewisburg Saddle (one of the most popular entrances to the McDonald Forest). The boulder shown below clearly violates ADA requirements and constrains accessibility. The OSU administration would not respond to repeated messages of concern documenting these violations. OSU's failure to address obvious access/safety issues makes these excuses about equitable access ring hollow.</p> |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> “<i>Due to the way carbon offset markets work, carbon revenue is not a viable [funding] option...even if all timber harvest were stopped...the “carbon revenue” would only cover a fraction of the forest operational costs – generally estimated at less than half of the annual road maintenance budget.</i>”</p>  | <p><b>OSU has not provided any facts to support this assertion.</b> If OSU were to substantially curtail logging in these public forests, its operational expenses would fall dramatically. It wouldn't need so many staff to plan and oversee logging operations, tree-planting, slash-burning, road maintenance, herbicide applications, and related forestry activities.</p> <p>How was it determined that, “<i>carbon revenue is not a viable option</i>”? Did the estimate (that carbon revenue would cover less than half the road budget) include road maintenance costs associated with logging operations? The heavy</p>   |



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|  | <p>loads associated with log trucks and logging equipment cause most of the road damage. If OSU stopped logging in these public forests, the road maintenance costs would fall dramatically. Since OSU hasn't provided data to back up these claims about carbon credits, its conclusions are questionable.</p> <p>During OSU's 2020 tour of the research forests, the research forest director claimed he couldn't find anyone to do the carbon assessments called for in the 2005 Plan (despite OSU having world-renowned experts in forest carbon). Given the long-standing failure to implement carbon assessments, it seems curious that OSU is now claiming carbon credits are not a viable funding source. How would they know?</p> |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>“An updated forest management plan is...being developed through a multi-stakeholder planning process”</i></p>  <p>In the wake of OSU's 2019 old-growth cutting scandal, the interim dean promised an outraged public that the College would commit to a collaborative forest planning process in the future. The current dean has violated that commitment in a number of obvious ways, greatly diminishing public trust.</p> | <p><b>This statement is misleading.</b> The dean's so-called “Stakeholder Advisory Committee” was chosen behind closed doors, without public notice, and without allowing members of the public to apply. This was a clear <a href="#">violation of the 2019 collaborative commitment</a> given by the dean's predecessor.</p> <p>While the OSU process involves multiple stakeholders, they were all chosen by the dean and his staff, without public notice or transparency. All of the stakeholders or the groups they represent have preexisting relationships with the College of Forestry, imparting an implicit bias to their work.</p>   |



**OSU claimed:** *“the McDonald-Dunn does not receive external support or public revenue for its management as is common for state forests or parks”*



The log trucks hauling OSU's logs take a heavy toll on local roads. A single truck can do damage comparable to 5,000 passenger vehicles.

**This is highly misleading.** The OSU Research Forest lands are *not* subject to state or local taxes (property taxes or the Forest Products Harvest Tax). This equates to a substantial public subsidy of the operation of the McDonald-Dunn. In addition, the Research Forests benefit from a number of OSU services (including oversight of the president and trustees, marketing/communications, legal, public records, property management, and financial services). Finally, the high volume of heavy loads associated with OSU's logging causes significant damage to local roads. A fully loaded (80,000 lb.) truck is estimated to cause the same road wear/damage as 5,000 passenger vehicles. Neither OSU nor their logging contractors pay for this damage, so the log and equipment transportation is effectively subsidized through public road funds.

Oregon Agricultural College (the precursor of OSU and the College of Forestry) was founded with substantial government funding and public donations. The Dunn Forest lands came from the US government (from that lands that were taken during WWII to establish Camp Adair). Public donations (in addition to those provided by Mary McDonald) were used to purchase the McDonald Forest. In short, the OSU Research Forests were established with a considerable foundation of public funding, and they still benefit from a number of important public subsidies.

**OSU claimed:** *“Recreational activities on the forest generate no revenue but incur numerous costs which are all paid for by timber harvest activities on the forest.”*

**This is true, but also misleading.** Most of the trail network in the McDonald Forest came about through the dedicated efforts of local volunteers, *not* OSU employees. OSU first hired a dedicated recreation coordinator for the forests in 2014. While this position is currently funded through timber revenue, College leaders could easily choose a different funding model (such as parking or user fees). Most of the trail construction and maintenance is still done by volunteers (e.g. Team Dirt members). College leaders seem to be implying that recreational use of the forests cannot continue without timber harvests. The



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|   | <p>reality is that recreational use of these public lands existed long before OSU officially sanctioned it - and will almost certainly continue with or without OSU's timber harvests.</p>  |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>"The 'Woodpecker' harvest was designed in accordance with the guidelines provided by the 2005 Plan"</i></p>  <p><i>Converting the older forest above Cronemiller Lake to this mess is inconsistent with "maintaining structural diversity and associated habitats" called for in the 2005 Plan.</i></p> | <p><b>This statement is open to debate.</b> As OSU points out, this section of the forest is managed under "Theme 4", described as, "multi-aged, mixed species forests of primarily Douglas-fir established and managed using group-selection harvests, while maintaining structural diversity and associated habitats within stands".</p> <p>Is OSU <i>"maintaining structural diversity and associated habitats"</i> by removing substantial numbers of older trees and destroying large sections of the understory forest? Since the forest was already structurally-diverse (and was NOT <i>"dominated by dense stands of Douglas-fir"</i>, as OSU claims), one can make a strong case that the current logging has <i>significantly diminished</i> the structural diversity and preexisting habitat.</p> <p>If one buys into OSU's argument that cutting older trees <i>"maintains structural diversity"</i>, then one has to ask, "How many older trees can be cut before the structural diversity and habitat is adversely impacted?" The cutting of older trees in a mature forest ecosystem is also at odds with stated protections for northern spotted owl habitat in the 2005 Plan. In short, it is questionable whether the 'Woodpecker' harvest is consistent with the guidelines or original intent of the 2005 management plan.</p> |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>"These forests have been planted, thinned and nurtured with the intention of future forest management..."</i></p>   | <p><b>This is irrelevant.</b> Just because previous generations of OSU foresters decided these public forests should be relegated to the production of wood fiber does not justify continuing this antiquated, extractive approach. Concerns about climate change, wildfire resilience, and forest carbon are largely absent from the 2005 Plan for the McDonald-Dunn.</p>  |



*In 2019, OSU cut ~16 acres of old-growth forest in violation of its 2005 Plan. While the dean labeled it a “mistake”, OSU’s Research Forest Director openly disagreed.*

A couple of generations ago, foresters believed old-growth forests were “decadent” and “diseased” and needed to be converted to managed plantations in order to maximize “productivity”. While OSU faculty are renowned for their expertise in forest carbon, wildlife, and ecology, College leaders have never embraced or prioritized these factors when it comes to management of the McDonald-Dunn. The cutting of 16 acres of old growth in the McDonald Forest in 2019 was a painful example of OSU’s outdated forest management. The fact that OSU has only protected ~3.5% of the McDonald-Dunn as “mature forest reserves” is also telling.

**OSU claimed:** *“The ‘Woodpecker’ project represents both extended rotation lengths with retention of legacy trees and provides research and demonstration projects achieving structural and compositional complexity on the forest.”*

**This statement is misleading.** OSU has cut a substantial quantity of large, old trees in the ‘Woodpecker’ project, and some of these trees could be considered, “legacy trees”. Any research and demonstration projects would not be, “achieving structural and compositional complexity”, because OSU foresters have arguably *diminished* the structure and composition of the forest through this misguided cutting. As for “extended rotation lengths”, OSU has yet to complete the carbon assessments of harvests called for in the 2005 Plan. Without this baseline, it is hard to argue the deliberate targeting of older trees is part of a concerted effort to extend rotations. The substantial number of clearcuts of older forests in recent years suggests College leaders are deliberately targeting these stands before the public understands what they are doing.

**OSU claimed:** *The three silvicultural themes are, “designed to support diverse plant and wildlife communities and healthy forest ecosystems.”*

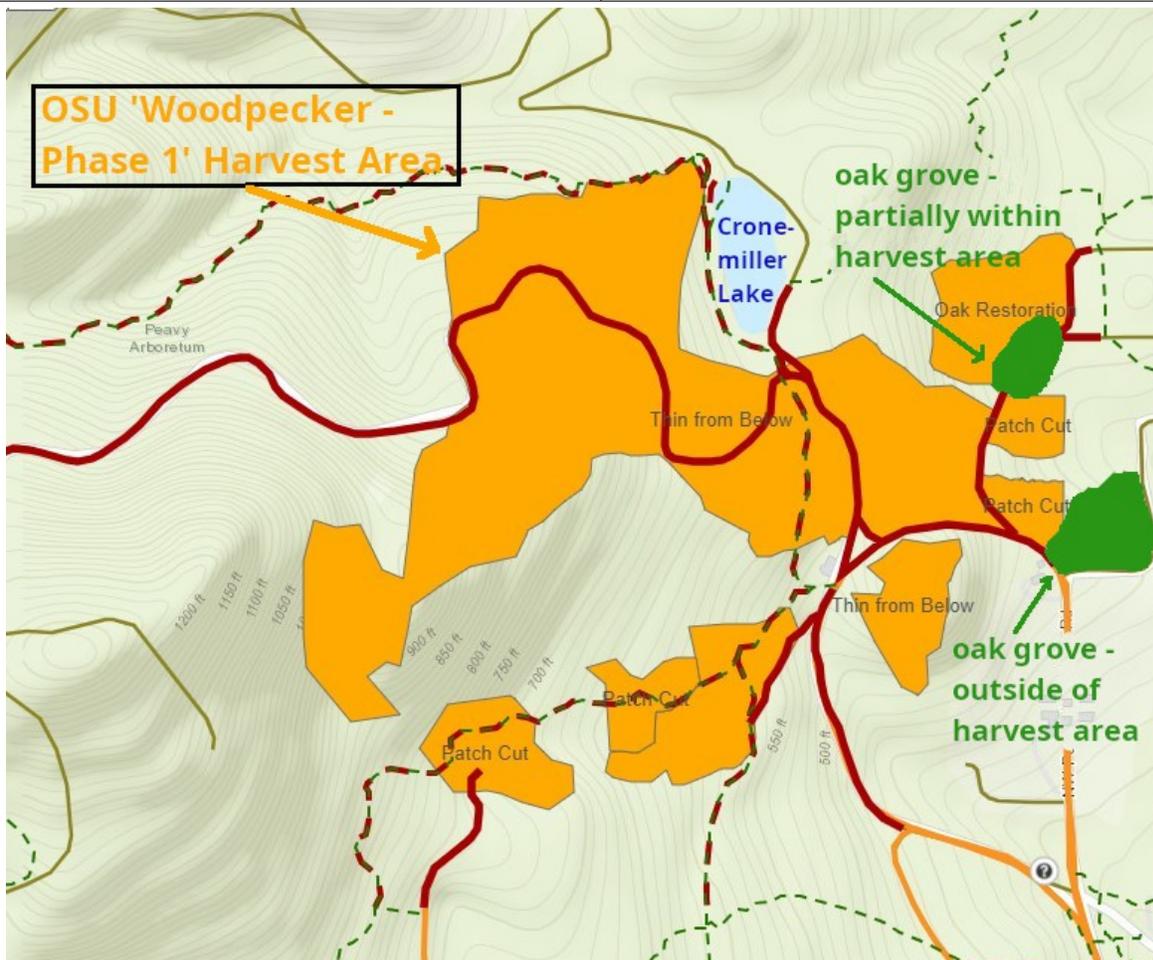
**This is a meaningless, value-laden assertion.** OSU could make this same claim about the 2019 old-growth cut (since the early seral conditions which develop after a clearcut support a diversity of plants and wildlife). Did OSU foresters consider the “diverse plant and wildlife community” supported by this older forest ecosystem (which is relatively rare in the McDonald-Dunn)?



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| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>“The first of the three silvicultural approaches support the health and vigor of the forest by reducing competition for resources between mature trees growing too close together. Reducing the total number of trees can decrease stress from competition among trees, reduce susceptibility to insects and disease and support continued growth and vigor of the retained trees.”</i></p> | <p><b>This is totally misleading.</b> The existing forest was absolutely NOT characterized by <i>“mature trees growing too close together”</i>. While thinning an overstocked stand can reduce susceptibility to insects and disease, this has no relevance for the ‘Woodpecker Phase 1’ project. The older trees OSU has cut were generally healthy, as shown by the photos in our <a href="#">‘Gallery’</a> section.</p> <p>Dr. Jerry Franklin (an OSU alumnus, former faculty member, and world-renowned expert on old-growth forests) has stated, <i>“These older trees are not competing with each other, they are collaborating. It is possible that some may die, but that is okay, because then there will be some nice snags.”</i></p>  |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>“The Woodpecker Project calls for a thin from below, meaning that the largest, dominant trees are retained. The trees marked for harvest are in the low-mid range of diameters in the stand...”</i></p>   | <p><b>Not true!</b> As the photos (from before and after cutting) clearly demonstrate, OSU’s foresters have cut a substantial number of large, old trees (in addition to many medium-sized ones). It is dishonest of the dean to claim otherwise. Thinning large, overstory trees (as OSU has done) is considered, “thinning from above”.</p>  |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>“co-dominant trees that are in close proximity to large dominant trees will be removed”</i></p>   | <p><b>It is entirely false for OSU to frame the harvest in this manner.</b> Most of the large, old trees that have been cut were NOT “co-dominant” (in close proximity to) other large trees.</p>  |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>“We have received strong guidance from Oregon Tribal Nations that as a land-grant institution, we are obligated to do oak savanna restoration on College forests. Portions of the Woodpecker project fulfill this request from Oregon Tribes.”</i></p>  | <p><b>This is a misleading and disingenuous statement.</b> The College of Forestry established a Legacy Oaks Task Force in 2007 to evaluate and rank oak resources on the McDonald-Dunn. The inventory covered more than 400 acres of oak groves on the research forests. <b>It identified only a single grove (approx. 1 acre in size) in the 64-acre “Woodpecker Phase 1” project area.</b> The <a href="#">2008 Legacy Oaks Task Force report</a> classified this grove in the lowest category (“Tier 3”), recommending “no restoration”. The grove had 75 oak trees, none of which was considered a “legacy oak”.</p> <p>Given the paucity of oak groves in the harvest area (and the complete lack of legacy oaks), it is highly misleading for OSU to use oak restoration as a</p> |



justification for the 'Woodpecker' logging. College leaders are clearly trying to imply that the Tribes have endorsed their current logging project, without providing any evidence of this. Indeed, OSU's liquidation of many older stands of the McDonald-Dunn (and the [recent sale of 176 acres of older Dunn Forest land to a timber company donor](#) for a small fraction of its value) seems to be in direct conflict with Tribal values.



OSU's 2008 Legacy Oak Task Force identified only a single, ~1-acre oak grove within the 'Woodpecker' harvest area, so it is misleading for the dean to use this as a justification for the harvest. The task force did not recommend restoration for this ("Tier 3", low priority) grove .

### **5.1.3 Tier 3 Groves – No Restoration**

Oak groves in Tier 3 are average to poor in quality or are currently at little risk of loss to competition from other tree species (e.g., Berry Creek grove). The Task Force recommends no restoration in these groves. However, individual trees in these groves could be designated as "character trees" during future harvest operations to retain structural and compositional



**OSU claimed:** *“This approach to create landscape scale complexity is aimed at increasing the diversity of structure and wildlife forage to support a greater diversity of native plant species, particularly those that are culturally significant and provide Kalapuya first foods and medicine and enrich the soil, and wildlife species across the forest.”*



The College of Forestry had identified tall bugbane habitat in the center of the 'Woodpecker' project area. It should have surveyed for this rare plant and protected its habitat prior to logging.

**Highly misleading.** With this statement, OSU has attempted to use technical terms and language expressing cultural sensitivity to convince readers that their cutting of older trees is a positive thing. Using these justifications (of increasing diversity of structure, wildlife forage, and culturally significant plants) seems disingenuous where there is so little oak habitat (less than one acre) in the 'Woodpecker' project area.

OSU's 2008 Legacy Oaks Task Force identified ~400 acres of oak habitat in the McDonald-Dunn. These areas are much better suited to increasing the diversity of native plants and first foods. How did OSU determine this older Douglas-fir ecosystem is an appropriate habitat for increasing “culturally significant first foods”?

Why has OSU not promoted similar restoration goals for their many recent clearcuts of older forest stands (which could conceivably be converted to oak savanna ecosystems)? How has OSU determined that cutting a substantial number of older trees will “*increase the diversity of structure*” and “*support a greater diversity of native plant species*”?

Has OSU decided that re-establishing old-growth (Douglas-fir) forests is less important than creating oak savanna habitat? If so, what basis was used to arrive at this opinion?

Which native plant species will be introduced and how will they be protected as OSU continues to actively manage this forest?

What precautions did OSU take to protect the tall bugbane (*Cimicifuga elata*) habitat located within the 'Woodpecker' harvest area? Did OSU conduct surveys for this rare plant (which is a candidate for listing as threatened or endangered with the State of Oregon)?

How do these ecological goals justify the



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|  | substantial destruction of the understory forest and vegetation as documented in the photos?  |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>“The Woodpecker project is in the long-term interests of supporting, studying, and restoring healthy forest ecosystems in the Peavy Arboretum area for many generations to come.”</i></p>  | <p><b>This statement amounts to blatant propaganda:</b> Who determined this and how, exactly, does cutting a substantial number of older trees <i>“contribute to a healthy forest ecosystem...for generations to come”</i>?</p>   |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>“this project provides extensive opportunities for teaching and outreach demonstrations, in addition to the research opportunities associated with evaluating alternatives to large clearcut-based even-aged forest management.”</i></p> | <p><b>This statement exhibits substantial bias:</b> What specific, <i>“teaching and outreach opportunities”</i> are provided by thinning lots of older trees in a structurally-complex and diverse 108 year-old forest?</p>   |
|    | <p>The message for forestry students seems to be that even an older forest that is already diverse and complex must be heavily thinned (with an eye toward future timber harvests). This teaching is at odds with the value of older forests in storing carbon, and providing wildfire resilience, recreational opportunities and habitat for endangered species.</p>                                 |
| <p><i>How does the cutting of 108 year-old forest, “provide extensive opportunities for teaching and outreach demonstrations”?</i> OSU seems to be teaching students that even a diverse, mature forest ecosystem must be managed by “harvesting” older trees.</p> | <p>By ignoring community concerns and thinning this popular section of forest, OSU has greatly diminished “outreach opportunities” and community support. This, too, sends a powerful, negative lesson to forestry students. It tells them that “managing the forest” (by cutting older trees) is far more important than respecting community values, resolving conflicts, and rebuilding trust.</p> |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>“The current selective-thinning project will release larger trees, allowing them to continue to grow well.”</i></p>  | <p><b>This statement is a blatant mischaracterization.</b> There was no need to “release larger trees”, as this was NOT a densely planted forest to begin with! The trees were already thriving, with no obvious signs of disease.</p>  |
| <p><b>OSU claimed:</b> <i>“The McDonald-Dunn is an actively managed research forest that is achieving outstanding ecological conditions...”</i></p>  | <p><b>This is pure propaganda.</b> The widespread liquidation of older forest stands and their conversion to even-aged, mono-culture plantations that we’ve seen across the McDonald-Dunn has greatly diminished ecological conditions.</p>   |



Is this recent clearcut of 70 year-old forest representative of the “*outstanding ecological conditions*” OSU is creating through its active management of these public forests?

**OSU claimed:** “...due to the high costs associated with this approach, there will be very limited revenue generated from the harvest. Any revenue that is generated will be reinvested directly back into the forest through replanting, road and trail maintenance, research, recreation management and staffing.”

**This characterization is misleading for several reasons.** The College has not provided any information about the expected revenue or harvest volume, but we know their logging contractors make a substantial profit.

Between 2014 and 2023 (a 10-year period), OSU's Research Forests generated \$54.8M in “gross revenue”. The “net revenue” during this same period was \$17.8M. The difference (\$37M), was classified as “operating expenses”. A sizable chunk of this money went to pay the logging contractors. A substantial portion also paid the salaries of the OSU Research Forest staff. A public records request a few years ago reportedly revealed that only about 1% of the logging revenue went to research. To state that “*any revenue that is generated will be reinvested directly back into the forest...*” is simply not accurate.

Since the research forest managers and staff are paid from logging revenue, they have a significant financial conflict of interest when it comes to managing these public forests. There is little incentive for them to implement ecological forestry practices when this will diminish the revenue that pays their salaries.



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|  | <p>As a public institution, OSU should commit to providing complete transparency when it comes to its forestry operations. This must include sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a detailed timber cruise for each “harvest”</li> <li>• a complete set of financial records for each “harvest”</li> <li>• an annual disclosure of all financial information associated with the McDonald-Dunn Forests</li> <li>• detailed carbon assessments for each harvest unit (called for in the 2005 Plan)</li> <li>• an independent annual audit of forestry operations to ensure they are consistent with OSU’s educational and research missions</li> </ul> |
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**OSU Q&A:** *“I read that the Woodpecker Harvest is old growth. Why are you cutting old trees?”*



*Despite the 108-year average age of the ‘Woodpecker’ stand, many considerably older trees have been cut. The annual rings of one indicated it was ~150 years of age (just 10 years less than what OSU currently considers “old growth”).*

**OSU claimed:** *“The largest trees and legacy trees within the stand boundary will be retained, unless they are structurally deficient and/or pose real hazard to infrastructure (nearby roads and structures) or recreational forest users.*

**Misleading.** The majority of citizens who’ve expressed concern over the cutting of older trees have not characterized the forest as, “old growth”. A number of old-growth trees are growing in the 64-acre ‘Woodpecker Phase 1’ area. In addition, there are many older trees of indeterminate age that have old-growth characteristics (e.g. large diameter and deeply-furrowed bark). OSU has cut many of these trees.

Trying to split hairs about what constitutes “old growth” is a distraction. It is more important to ask how OSU could justify cutting so many older trees in a forest that had many old-growth characteristics. In a little over a half century, this forest would have become old growth (using OSU’s current classification of  $\geq 160$  years).

**FALSE!** OSU has cut many of the larger trees (as shown by the photos in our “Gallery” section). The vast majority of these older trees were obviously not structurally deficient and did not pose any hazards. OSU is substantially misrepresenting the cutting they have undertaken.

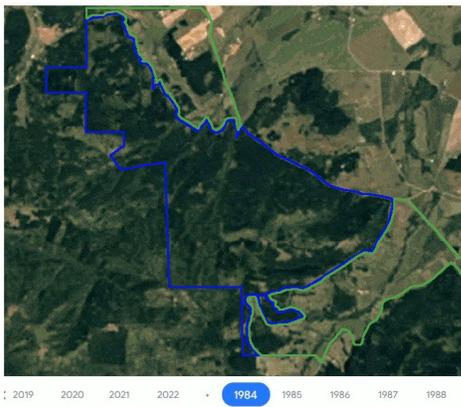


Contrary to the dean's claims, OSU has cut many of the large trees in the 'Woodpecker' stand. None of them appeared to be, "structurally deficient and/or pose real hazard to infrastructure or recreational forest users".



**OSU Q&A:** "Q: It seems like there has been a lot of logging on the McDonald-Dunn lately. Why is it increasing? A: It isn't. Harvest volume on the McDonald-Dunn has remained consistent, and is below the anticipated harvest volume outlined in the existing 2005 Forest Plan of 6 million board feet per year."

To view an animated GIF image showing logging in the Dunn Forest (outlined in blue) between 1984 and 2022 click [here](#). OSU's Agricultural lands are outlined in green.



**This explanation is very misleading.** Over the past 10 years, OSU has increasingly focused their logging on the McDonald Forest. This is because they cut much of the harvestable timber in the Dunn Forest.

The focus on *harvest volume* ignores the *age classes* of the forests OSU has been logging. OSU has routinely cut stands that are ~2-3X the industry average rotation (of ~40 years). This liquidation of the older forests is at odds with OSU's educational and research mission.

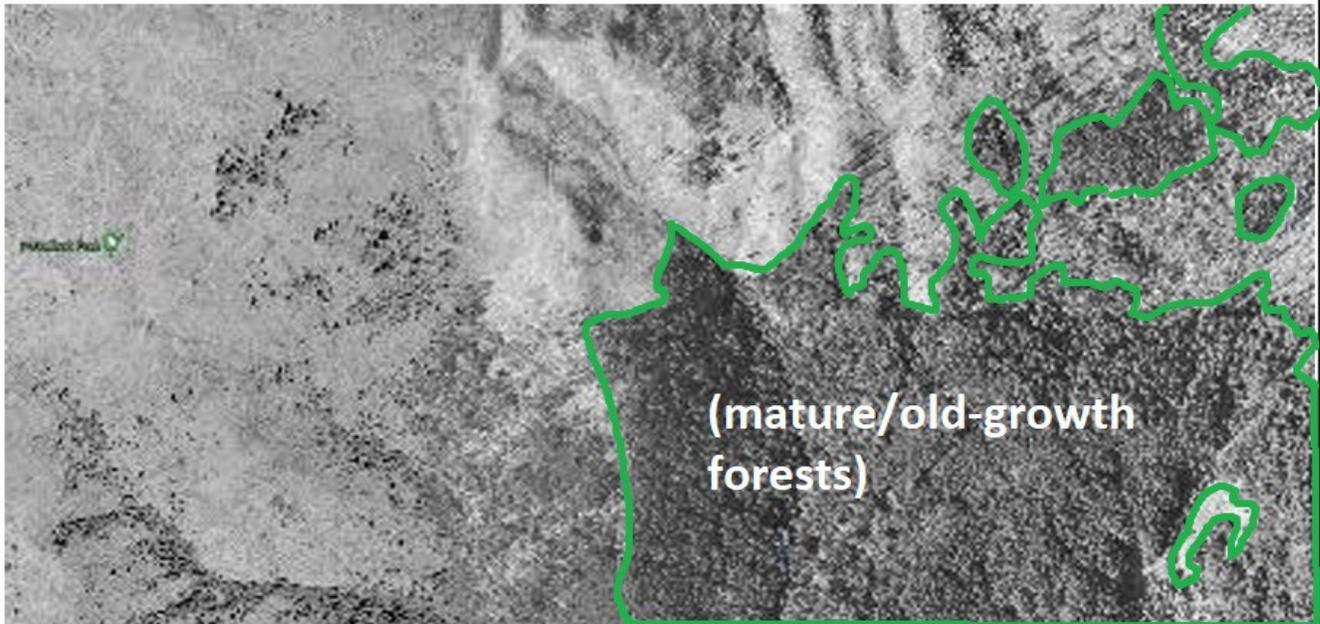
OSU's "working forest" approach is an antiquated, one-size-fits-all model that prioritizes timber production above all other values of these public forests. This is a choice made by generations of College leaders, in alignment with their timber industry collaborators and donors. The research forests could be funded from OSU's general fund or by establishing an endowment with support of the OSU Foundation. The annual operating costs of the research forests are roughly 1/1000 of OSU's current fundraising donations.

While the volume of timber cut on the McDonald-Dunn may have remained relatively constant, that does not equate to "sustainability", nor does it



excuse the cutting of older forests. [OSU's forest managers have routinely violated their own management plan](#). They abandoned their plan for a full decade and are now relying on harvest levels from a plan that's nearly 20 years out of date. Reputable timber companies would not operate like this.

## 1940 Condition



The photo of McCullough Peak used in OSU's misinformation campaign shows a substantial area of what appears to be mature/old-growth forest (which we've outlined in green). Much of this older forest has been subsequently logged.

**OSU Claim:** *"There are far more trees on the forest today than at any point in the past 120 years. As an example, the photos below compare the conditions in 1940 with today for Lewisburg Saddle and McCullough Peak"*

**This comparison is exceptionally biased and essentially meaningless.** The number of trees growing is far less important than the age classes, composition, and structure of the forests. If OSU were to clearcut the entire McDonald-Dunn and immediately replant, it could make the same claim (that there are more trees on the forest than at any point in the past 120 years).

Comparing black and white photos from the past vs. colored photos from today is such a biased approach, it makes one wonder who came up with this exhibit. Differences in resolution, image quality, color, and shadows make a comparison



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|   | <p>exceptionally difficult.</p> <p>It is notable that the photo of McCullough Peak from 1940 appears to indicate that much of the forested area consisted of mature or old-growth forests (compared to the current conditions, where much of the old growth has been cut)</p>   |
| <p><b>OSU Claim:</b> <i>“While rotational timber harvests may create temporary disturbances to recreation, the college carefully considers — and researches — the impacts of harvest on forest aesthetics near popular trails and landmarks.”</i></p>  <p><i>Did OSU foresters, “carefully consider — and research — the impacts of harvest on forest aesthetics” near this popular trail when it was logged in 2023?</i></p>   | <p><b>Misguided at best:</b> If one accepts this statement at face value, one must ask how College leaders have so greatly misjudged public perceptions related to many of their recent cuts. Did they conclude the <i>“impacts of harvest on forest aesthetics”</i> of the ‘Woodpecker’ project would be insignificant? What about the 2019 cutting of old growth in the heart of the popular Sulphur Springs area? The former research forest director was quoted as saying it was <i>not</i> a mistake to cut the old growth, rather it was a mistake of anticipating public perceptions. It seems College leaders still have much to learn when it comes to public perceptions about their forestry operations.</p> |
| <p><b>OSU Q&amp;A:</b> <i>“Q: Is it true that the OSU Research Forests are public lands? A: No. The OSU Research Forests are not funded or managed as “public lands” by the state...Although OSU Research Forests are legally held in the name of the State of Oregon, acting by and through the OSU Board of Trustees, ORS 352.113 gives the university custody and control of all real property. This means that the ultimate authority and responsibility for decisions on the use and management of university resources reside with the Board of Trustees either directly, or as delegated to university staff, as in the case of the research forests.”</i></p> | <p><b>This answer is deliberately misleading.</b> As noted previously, state law (ORS 352.025) clearly dictates that the State of Oregon holds the titles for these forests (NOT OSU or the College of Forestry). This means the McDonald-Dunn Forests belong to the State of Oregon, which serves and represents all Oregonians.</p> <p>Generations of College leaders have claimed that the forests “belong to” or are “owned by” the College of Forestry or OSU, despite the clear language of state law. The dean has often tried to obscure this basic fact by declaring the forests are not “public lands”, even though OSU is a “public</p>  |



institution”.

A careful reading of this misleading statement exposes some obvious inconsistencies. The authors declare that the research forests are not public lands (even though they admit they are legally held by the State of Oregon), but then try to create a distinction by claiming the forests are not “*funded or managed as public lands*”.

As described previously, the research forests have been subsidized with substantial public funding (including various OSU administrative services, a complete waiver of taxes, and donations for the original purchase).

To argue that the research forests are not “public lands” because the leaders of the College of Forestry have not chosen to manage them as such is irrelevant and inaccurate. The former director of the research forests frequently referred to the McDonald-Dunn as, “community forests”.

The long history of recreational use and proximity to the community are also key factors. OSU actively encourages and promotes the recreational use of the forests, at the same time it is desperately defending its sovereignty when it comes to forest management.

University and College leaders need to acknowledge the obvious implications of state law: the McDonald-Dunn Forests (like all OSU real property) are *public lands*. The trustees' oversight responsibilities means they should be stewarding the McDonald-Dunn in ways that meet OSU's educational and research missions, as well as the needs and expectations of Oregonians. Perpetuating the ecologically-destructive practices of industrial forestry in these public forests is clearly at odds with OSU's mission and public values.