

WOODPECKER HARVEST BACKGROUND:

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 savannah and likely open conifer forests, stewarded by the Kalapuya for generations prior to Euro-American colonization.

The portion of the forest where the Woodpecker Harvest is taking place is dominated by dense stands of Douglas-fir, planted and stewarded by the College of Forestry after the forest was acquired by OSU via generous donations nearly 100 years ago. These forests have been planted, thinned and nurtured with the intention of future forest management, including the types of harvests currently planned.

There is much interest in lengthening rotations and evaluating alternatives to large clearcut-based, even-aged forest management. 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. Forestry is a long-term practice, and our efforts are aimed at achieving forest conditions 10 – 50 years into the future.

The Woodpecker project is planned in two phases, using three silvicultural approaches outlined in Theme 4 of the existing [forest plan](#). The phases are designed to support diverse plant and wildlife communities and healthy forest ecosystems. The three silvicultural approaches in the Woodpecker project include:

- 1: Thinning to support the health and vigor of the forest by reducing competition for resources (e.g., light, water, nutrients) between mature trees growing too close together.
- 2: Oak restoration, which entails removing Douglas-fir and other species growing close to native Oregon white oaks to allow the oaks to flourish. Oregon white oaks are an important part of both the historical and current cultural and ecological landscape on the McDonald Dunn Forest and surrounding areas. 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.
- 3: Patch cuts, which create structurally diverse and complex forests with trees of varied sizes (diameters), heights, and ages. The intent of these operations is to remove trees from small patches (each <4 acres) to create a multi-aged forest with small gaps across a landscape scale.

No harvest is occurring in reserve areas of the McDonald-Dunn Forest. We strive to preserve legacy trees unless they are determined to be structurally deficient and/or pose a significant threat (or hazard) to infrastructure (such as roads or structures) or recreational forest users.

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. By integrating three silvicultural approaches in close proximity to one another, 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.

[Learn more here.](#)

WOODPECKER HARVEST FACTS:

There are many inaccuracies about the Woodpecker Harvest being shared as part of a blatant misinformation campaign. A summary of the inaccurate claims and factual responses can be found below.

Claim: *The Woodpecker Harvest will destroy scores of 108+ year-old trees across 64 acres.*

Fact: This is simply untrue. While the Woodpecker Harvest is taking place in a stand aged 108 years-old, the stand age is based on the average of all trees within the boundary. 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. The overall footprint of the harvest is 64-acres, however much of the Woodpecker Harvest is a selective thinning project to support forest health and resilience. There will also be three smaller patch cuts (<4 acres) to create future conditions for multi-aged forest across a landscape scale. However, the largest trees and legacy trees will be retained, unless they are structurally deficient and/or pose real hazard to infrastructure (nearby roads and structures) or recreational forest users.

Claim: *This harvest is a blatant example of greed and is only being done to generate revenue for the College.*

Fact: False. This type of selective-thinning and restoration harvest, aimed at achieving a number of ecological objectives, is a complex and labor-intensive project meant to support long-term forest health and resilience. 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.

Claim: *OSU’s forests are public lands, and the community should have input on all management decisions.*

Fact: This claim is false. The research forests are not funded or managed as “public lands” by the state. By design, the OSU Research Forests are fully self-funded through sustainable harvests, with zero funding provided by the College of Forestry, Oregon State University, the State of Oregon or taxpayers. 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. The college is open to input from the public regarding management decisions, but ultimately must choose what best fulfills the research, education and outreach missions of the university. As with all OSU-owned real property, the university is not required to open the property to the public. However, the College of Forestry has chosen to provide recreation opportunities on the McDonald-Dunn Forest and supports these efforts with revenue generated by the forest.

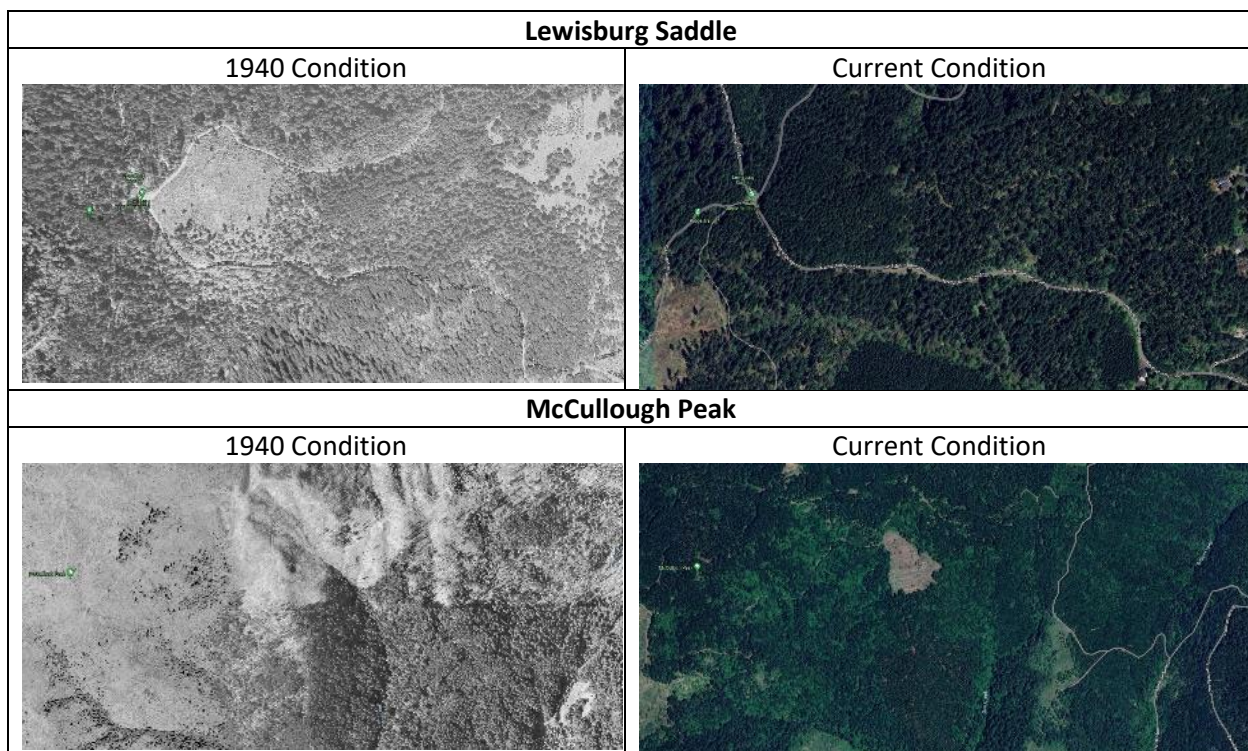
Claim: *The college is removing scores of large, old trees from popular recreation areas.*

Fact: This is incorrect. After the last thinning in this area in 1999, the Woodpecker Harvest is a follow-up selective thinning project with the intention of continuing to release larger trees to continue to grow well, among other ecological objectives. The largest and legacy trees will be retained, unless they are determined to be structurally deficient or pose real hazard to infrastructure or recreational forest users.

While timber harvests may create temporary disturbances, the college carefully considers forest aesthetics in projects near popular recreation areas. Forestry is a long-term practice, and our efforts are aimed at achieving forest conditions 10 – 50 years into the future, to ensure that the forest is healthy for generations to come.

Claim: *At the rate OSU continues to increase its harvests, soon there will be no forest left.*

Fact: This is a baseless claim. Harvest volumes on the McDonald-Dunn have remained consistent over time, and [below the 6 million board feet anticipated annual harvest outlined in the 2005 plan](#). The acquisition of the McDonald Forest started in 1926 with lands around Peavy Arboretum and expanded with the majority of the McDonald Forest purchased by 1936. The college has planted, harvested, managed and nurtured these forests since that time. The fact is that the majority of the lands that make up the McDonald Forest would have historically been in oak savannah and fairly open Douglas-fir conifer forests. 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.



Claim: *Saying that the harvest will promote “structural diversity” is just an excuse to cut big, old trees that are worth more money.*

Fact: The truth is that harvesting and milling big, old trees is incredibly difficult and cost-intensive given the way today’s industrial mills are set up and optimized. Regardless, the actual intention of this project is to follow-up on a thinning completed on the same stand in 1999. This selective thinning will continue to allow the largest trees in the area the room they need to grow and set the stage for future multi-aged forest conditions, while also helping restore conditions for native oak to grow and thrive. The largest and legacy trees will be retained, unless they are determined to be structurally deficient and/or pose a threat to infrastructure or recreational forest users.

Claim: *The college is cutting more larger trees in areas that are harder to see, including reserves.*

Fact: This is not true. There are no trees marked for removal in the Reserve area, despite circulating photographs that use clever angles to suggest otherwise. Students participate in multiple aspects of harvest on the research forests as part of their learning, including marking. There was one tree just over the boundary of a reserve adjacent to the Woodpecker Harvest that was inadvertently marked by a student. This was corrected on a follow-up walk prior to the harvest beginning.

Claim: *This harvest, and others like it, will irreparably damage the natural ecosystems in the forest.*

Fact: False. This is not a “natural forest.” The harvest area is a managed forest that has been managed for the past 90+ years through thinning and several small patch cuts. 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 the McDonald-Dunn for generations prior to Euro-American colonization. During that time, the lands were primarily oak savannah. When the college began management of the forests starting in 1926, they were primarily cut-over Douglas-fir conifer forests. Since that time, the college has planted many forest units that range from 80-100 years-old, using long rotation, and in many cases, a continuous cover approach. Currently, approximately 3% of the McDonald-Dunn Forest is also permanently set aside as older forest reserves with no active management. One of the objectives of the Woodpecker Harvest is to begin restoring some of the original condition back to the landscape, and to actively manage the forest in a way that allows it to continue to thrive, especially in a warming climate.

Claim: *OSU forced this harvest through quickly to prevent the public from noticing.*

Fact: This is not true. The Woodpecker Harvest was planned using the same process as all other harvests on the OSU Research Forests. In order to secure contractors, conduct ecological and cultural surveys and minimize impacts on the forest ecosystem and recreation, harvests on the OSU Research Forests are planned at least 1.5 years in advance. The harvest schedule is posted publicly for each year on our [harvest updates website](#), with an interactive closure map available for recreational users [here](#). Upon receiving input from the community following the misinformation campaign, the college briefly paused the harvest. This allowed for a secondary ecological assessment, resulting in very minor adjustments to the harvest plan, prior to proceeding with the project that is designed to support diverse plant and wildlife communities and healthy forest ecosystems.

Claim: *There are other ways to fund the forest operations, including selling carbon offsets.*

Fact: OSU has and continues to explore [alternate ways](#) to generate revenue for the forests. Active management will always remain a core tenet of the research forests’ mission as a tool for teaching and demonstration. However, the amount of additionality that could be claimed for a carbon offset project given the level of harvest activity expressed in the existing and forthcoming forest management plans is relatively small. Beyond issues with current [carbon offset protocols](#), greatly reducing or eliminating timber harvest for “carbon revenue” that could be generated on the McDonald-Dunn forests would only cover a fraction of the forest operational costs.