

The Oregon Eastside Forests Restoration, Old Growth Protection and Jobs Act

Long-term Planning for Large-Scale Forest Management Projects

- The legislation directs the Forest Service to shift its focus to large restoration projects designed on a “landscape scale.” This designation applies to a large geographic area, such as a watershed or other areas larger than 25,000 acres in size;
- The Forest Service will have a two-year window in which to perform an Eastside Landscape Forest Restoration Assessment, analyzing the health of forests and watersheds on millions of acres of federal forest land in Eastern Oregon;
- The Forest Service must identify areas in most urgent need of restoration, looking for opportunities for large ecological restoration projects which will produce enough volume of timber to support local mills, local jobs and rural infrastructure;
- The Forest Service is to foster collaborative approaches by bringing together a diverse group of industry, conservation representatives and county government to weigh in on the Forest Service assessment and restoration projects;
- The legislation establishes an Eastside Forest Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel to provide guidance on forest management and review the success of the bill after five years;
- The Forest Service will have three years to begin large scale restoration projects of not less than 25,000 acres per year in each national forest on the Eastside; and
- The legislation creates a new streamlined “objection process” through which administrative challenges are heard by establishing timelines for the Forest Service to advance projects expeditiously.

Permanent Protection for Oregon’s Natural Heritage

- The legislation makes existing watershed protections a permanent baseline to ensure streams and riparian areas will be preserved throughout forest management process;
- The Forest Service is instructed to protect large trees with some scientific and administrative exceptions for species, age or emergencies;
- The Forest Service will develop experimental projects that protect trees over 150 years of age as a method for determining whether protections can eventually be based on trees’ age rather than size; and
- Permanent and temporary roads will be limited, while seeking to cut the overall number of roads in forested areas.

Creating Jobs with Interim Forest Management

- The bill requires that, during the interim period prior to the start of the large-scale projects, the Forest Service will be given a minimum acreage treatment target for each of the three years. The first year at least 80,000 acres will be managed, 100,000 acres in year two, and 120,000 acres of the most at-risk forests will be treated in the final year;
- Administrative appeals – that are often used to block proposed timber sales – will be prohibited until the Forest Service commences the large-scale projects;
- The legislation bolsters the economic health of rural communities by requiring the Forest Service to perform an estimate of the potential volume of biomass available sustainably over a 20-year period to ensure that there is enough harvest possible to provide material to mills for long-term contracts and create jobs; and
- The bill seeks to shore up local economies by urging use of local contractors and stewardship contracts.