

Dear Legislature,

I am a full time resident and property owner of Tillamook County. A portion of the drainage that supplies my culinary water is on Tillamook State Forest Land. I use the state forest heavily for hiking, solitude, fishing, mushroom and elk hunting. I recognize that other interests use the forest for private profit and timber production however those uses should not continue to dominate the landscape in the future.

As we enter an uncertain period of climate change it is critical we manage our public forest lands conservatively. Now and in the future it is probable that clean cool water will be the most important product of our forests. Public water supplies and valuable species such as salmon and steelhead depend on this valuable product of our public lands which is produced at no cost to the taxpayer. Currently the rivers in Tillamook County run mud with every significant winter storm choking off spawning gravels and filling our bays and estuaries. This has been going on for so long people think it is normal. It is not. It is an alarming symptom of damaged watersheds. Millions of dollars have been spent and many sacrifices made on the one hand to recover endangered coho salmon and wild steelhead. Allowing activities and management practices on our forests that subvert those efforts makes no sense.

Maintaining healthy ecosystems will help maintain the values that the majority of the public seek from our land management. Ecosystems do not recognize property boundaries and when assessing ecosystem health the full ecosystem must be considered. In many cases our ecosystems include both public state forest and private timber lands. It is obvious that the private timber lands in our area are being harvested at the maximum level. It is therefore important the public forests be managed far more conservatively to balance out the extreme clearcutting that is occurring on adjacent and inter-mixed private lands.

Oregon is behind our neighbor states in providing adequate protection for our watersheds and forests. Our stream buffers are less than half of what is needed - 100 feet on both sides should be the minimum. Smaller buffers blow down in the first significant wind. We do need wood products and they are pouring off the private timber lands in our area. Times have changed. Timber was once king but now maintaining watershed and ecosystem health should be the management priorities especially on the public lands.

Lastly, timber harvest levels on state lands should be driven by what scientists determine is sustainable for overall ecosystem health, not county budget needs as determined by politicians. Legislation may be needed that will allow counties with significant public lands to levy adequate property taxes. No one lives on public lands consequently they don't require the services that occupied private lands generate.

Sincerely,
Ted Chu
41400 Anderson Rd
Nehalem, OR 97131