



To: Honorable members of the Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery Committee
From: Josh Laughlin, Executive Director, Cascadia Wildlands
Re: Support for SB 1546-1 to create the Elliott State Research Forest

February 2, 2022

Good afternoon Chair Golden and members of the Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery Committee:

For the record my name is Josh Laughlin. I'm the Executive Director of Eugene-based Cascadia Wildlands testifying on behalf of our 12,000 members and supporters. We have been deeply involved in Elliott State Forest advocacy and policy for nearly 20 years, and appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on SB 1546-1 to create the Elliott State Research Forest.

As mature and old-growth forest advocates, Cascadia Wildlands closely monitors and opposes reckless logging proposals on federal and state lands in the region through grassroots organizing, litigation and policy creation. It was back in 2002 that we determined that the most aggressive and reckless old-growth clearcutting taking place on public lands in the Northwest was occurring on the Elliott State Forest. And it was being done to fund K-12 school due to the forest being an asset of Oregon's Common School Fund. We were quickly convinced that that if could put a human on the moon, we find a solution for the Elliott that didn't pit school children vs. the environment.

A few successful lawsuits, public opposition campaigns, and many State Land Boards later, here we are, with an innovative, stakeholder-driven solution packaged up for your consideration to finally solve this unique policy challenge. Big thanks to the advisory committee for its hard and sometimes difficult work to get us here.

As you heard in the informational hearing on February 1, the legislation will:

1. Retain the Forest in public ownership.
2. Create a new Elliott State Research Forest Authority as an agency within the State overseen by an independent stakeholder advisory board appointed by the State Land Board and subject to relevant state public record laws to ensure transparency and accountability.
3. Appoint Oregon State University to lead the research-driven management of the Forest on behalf of the public and with a commitment to public access and use.
4. Advance collaborative partnerships, including notably with western Oregon Tribes and incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge.

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5. Vest oversight authority in the State Land Board, including approval of and/or changes to Elliott State Research Forest foundational management documents and/or response to emergency situations.
6. Provide at least \$121 million to complete the decoupling of the Elliott from the Common School Fund.

Cascadia Wildlands is particularly excited about the conservation gains within SB 1546-1, which include:

- Creation of a contiguous 34,000+-acre, permanent reserve on the west side of the Elliott State Forest, and smaller reserves across the rest of the Forest. These permanent reserves will act as a hedge against climate change through their ability to sequester and store incomparable amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and provide essential habitat for a host of fish and wildlife species teetering on the brink of extinction.
- Protection of over 90% of the remaining mature and old-growth forests on the Elliott, and protection of all known spotted owl activity centers on the Forest.
- Approval of a Habitat Conservation Plan for endangered species by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries to benefit imperiled spotted owls, marbled murrelets and Oregon Coast coho salmon (anticipated in 2023).
- Approval of a Forest Management Plan that further specifies agreed upon species, watershed, scenic and other protection measures (anticipated in 2023).
- Improved streamside protections to benefit salmon, steelhead and other species.
- Sideboards minimizing the aerial application of herbicides, which may be used only as a last resort.
- A plan which will ensure that the Elliott increases in both age and complexity over time.

This is a historic opportunity to transcend differences that have marred the Elliott for two decades and to create a durable plan for the Forest that generations to come will be proud of.

Cascadia Wildlands encourages you to support SB 1546-1 without changes to establish the Elliott State Research Forest and appropriate the revenue required to fully decouple the Elliott from the Common School Fund.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Josh Laughlin
Executive Director