

Submitter: Bob Zybach  
On Behalf Of: Oregon Websites and Watershed Project Inc  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery  
Measure: SB1546

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our strong opposition to this costly boondoggle. Our educational 501 c(3) nonprofit website, [www.ORWW.org](http://www.ORWW.org), recently celebrated its 25th year of being continuously online, making it the oldest educational website in history. Further, it has been constructed entirely by and for Oregon students and teachers, with a singular focus on the scientific management of our State's natural and cultural resources.

For the past five years we have worked full-time and over-time on the Elliott, with much of that effort devoted to working with Southwestern Oregon Community College forestry students and using the Elliott as an incredible "outdoor classroom." The results to date have been two permanent comprehensive educational websites focused on the history and management of the Elliott; 14 indexed "distance learning" videos featuring five "virtual field trips" to the Elliott and interviews and lectures with local experts regarding the land's history and management; and numerous articles, editorials and radio interviews on this topic. These results have been made possible by the donations of thousands of hours of volunteered time and donated private monies in the low six-figure range. With the exception of a small contract with OSU Archives, all of these resources have been entirely private with little or no government assistance.

Five years ago the Governor both publicly and privately requested a proposal to manage the Elliott, rather than selling it at the proposed "fire-sale" price. We spent considerable time and effort developing such a proposal: one that would continue generating 400 local jobs; continue providing millions of dollars into the Common School Fund every year; that would pay OSU to conduct needed research in the fields of carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and local economics; and that would continue to keep the Elliott open to public access and safe for our citizens and wildlife. This effort has never been seriously considered or even discussed since.

The Elliott is worth at least \$1 billion, not the \$220 million steal-from-Peter-to-pay-Paul backroom dealing that has characterized this recent history. The current "management plan" devised by environmental activists, the State Land Board, and OSU appears to be of little value to other forest managers, and at a great cost and risk to local communities. The defacto 17,000-acre Wilderness ("Reserve") suggested for the west side of the Elliott poses a major and increasing threat of wildfire, windstorms, and landslides to the communities of Reedsport, Winchester Bay, Lakeside, Hauser, Glasgow, Allegany, North Bend and Coos Bay -- at great economic cost and no discernible research value.

Instead, the State Land Board is proposing to sacrifice 400 local jobs in deference to a few lawyers, a handful of college researchers and staff, and some part-time projects. All while creating a growing and nearly certain wildfire risk to local communities and to forest wildlife with no plans to even harvest the resulting snags. Why? This costly exercise needs to end before it becomes even worse.

We strongly request that the management of the Elliott State Forest be put back in the hands of the Oregon Department of Forestry with the mandate that the State Land Board carry out its fiducial responsibilities as trustee of the Common School Lands and do what is right for our children. This boondoggle needs to stop before more damage is done and more taxpayer dollars are wasted. In our opinion.