

## **STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Item No.:	E
Presentation Title:	<i>Vision for Oregon's Forests</i>
Date of Presentation:	January 8, 2025
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### **SUMMARY**

- This consent agenda item is intended to close out work on the first iteration of the *Vision for Oregon's Forests* by entering the final product into the official Board record.
- Design work on the *Vision for Oregon's Forests*, effective January 2025, is complete. The 13-page, full color publication is now ready for broader release and incorporation into all facets of agency operations.
- The focus for 2025 is to build the necessary connections between the *Vision for Oregon's Forests* and all lines of Department business. See "Next Steps" below for more details.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- Post *Vision for Oregon's Forests* in key locations on the Department's website, including the Board's webpage.
- Rollout new mission, vision, values and priorities to Department staff throughout 2025, beginning in February.
- Develop and implement agency planning processes that build upon the foundation provided in the *Vision for Oregon's Forests*, are informed by other key agency plans and strategies, and promote aligned annual and biennial plans and operations across all levels of the agency.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- *Vision for Oregon's Forests*, January 2025

*The Oregon Board of Forestry and  
Department of Forestry's shared*

# **Vision for Oregon's Forests**

**Adopted: September 2024**

**Our shared vision:** Complex and resilient forest ecosystems that endure and adapt.

**Our shared mission:** To protect and promote resilient forests that benefit all Oregonians.

## **Our shared values**

### **Healthy ecosystems**

*Healthy, functioning ecosystems provide many benefits to people, including timber, food, clean air and water, recreation, habitat, regional biodiversity, carbon storage, and so much more.*

### **Ecosystems support**

*People's actions are critically important to the continued resilience and adaptive capacity of forest ecosystems, including habitat protection, wildfire management, seedling selection, cultural and natural resources stewardship, restoration activities, and water and soil protection.*

### **Forestry infrastructure**

*The forest products sector—including its workforce and infrastructure—plays a vital role in supporting healthy ecosystems and resilient forests and communities.*

### **Climate-smart forestry**

*Addressing the management needs related to climate change requires a holistic approach that considers adaptation, mitigation and the social dimension of forestry, which includes community and economic aspects.*

### **Relationships**

*Strong, respectful relationships are the backbone of our organization. Those relationships are built and maintained through transparent, honest, effective communication.*

### **Workforce**

*Our workforce is our greatest asset. We provide them with a safe, diverse and inclusive workplace that encourages continuous learning and improvement.*

### **Safety**

*Much of the work we do—including firefighting—is both inherently dangerous and necessary to accomplishing our mission. Therefore, safety of our workforce and the public must be a top priority.*

### **Public service**

*Through efficient and effective stewardship of natural and public resources, we strive for excellence in our service to the public.*

## **Sound decision making**

*We empower our workforce to make decisions in the best interest of Oregonians based on science, best practices and lessons learned.*

## **Accountability**

*We are transparent about our actions and take ownership of the outcomes. We do what we say we're going to do.*

## **Purpose**

Forests are an integral part of the social economic and environmental fabric of our state. The benefits we derive from our forests—clean air and water, sustainable forest products, biodiversity, public health and safety, and many more—are all reliant upon a foundation of resilient and healthy forest ecosystems.

The risk of catastrophic disturbances in our forests is increasing, due in part to ever intensifying climate driven stressors—such as insects, storms, heat and wildfire—as well as historic management decisions. This vulnerability requires bold action in our forests to ensure that our forests can continue to provide the many benefits that are essential to a good quality of life in Oregon.

Recognizing the importance and urgency of this work, the Oregon Board of Forestry and Oregon Department of Forestry collaboratively developed this bold, forward looking strategic *Vision for Oregon's Forests* that will best serve Oregon's forests and people into the future. The purpose of this document is to articulate the board and department's shared vision for the future of forestlands across Oregon. This strategic direction will guide the board and department's policy and operational decisions and serve as the foundation for key board and department planning efforts.

## **Context and Commitments**

The board and department recognize that:

Bold, science-based actions are needed to address the composition and structure of the forests in Oregon.

- Policies will be responsive and adaptable to global and local climate change while mitigating threats to ecosystems, human health and safety, and economies.
- Policies will strive for a reciprocal relationship between forests and human cultures representing multiple identities. There is a responsibility to take care of forests so that forests can take care of us.

- Policies will support development of local and regional economies. Diversification and innovation in all aspects of forest management should promote the adaptive capacity of forests.

Oregon’s rural, urban and suburban populations have varying social perceptions and expectations about forests and how forests should be managed to benefit humans and other species.

- The vision and goals put forth in this document are applicable statewide. The policies to enact these goals will be applied in a place-based manner at the regional and local level.
- Policies will seek to reflect and integrate the needs of all communities and identities including those which have been, and continue to be, marginalized.
- The board and department will provide clear and accurate information about forests in Oregon and accessible opportunities for all Oregonians to provide meaningful input on policies and decisions.

The state has unique and specific [government-to-government relationships](#) with the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon.

- Policies will honor government-to-government relationships with Sovereign Nations and meet obligations to protect tribal cultural resources.
- Policies will encourage collaboration with Tribes by pairing western science with indigenous knowledge.

Workforce supply continues to be a challenge, and there is a reduction in the ability of managed forests to cover associated costs in this dynamic state of climate and social change.

- Policies will recognize the changing educational requirements for a trained and skilled workforce that will support the work needed in Oregon.
- Policies will promote educational and employment opportunities that include communities and identities that have been and continue to be excluded from the profession.

The *Vision for Oregon’s Forests* is forward looking and aspirational, which means that not all strategies can be immediately implemented with the authorities and resources currently available to the board and department.

- The board and department will work together to identify opportunities and solutions to challenges.
- There is a shared commitment to working within state government budgeting and policy processes to promote and fulfill the needs to implement this vision.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Goal</b>
<b>Resilient Forests</b>	To reduce the vulnerability of Oregon’s forests from a myriad of catastrophic climate driven disturbances, ODF will direct its policy, management and educational actions to enable and promote all forestland managers to make intentional decisions that increase adaptive capacity of forest ecosystems.
<b>Resilient Communities</b>	Policy and management decisions foster healthy relationships between humans and forests, so that forests support resilient human communities through social, economic, and ecological change.
<b>Addressing the Wildfire Crisis</b>	Prevent, suppress and mitigate wildfire to protect communities and expedite forest restoration activities that promote the adaptive capacity of Oregon’s forests.
<b>Climate Leadership</b>	The Board and Department will build capacity for climate-smart leadership.
<b>Organizational Excellence</b>	Strengthen trust and confidence in ODF’s ability to effectively accomplish its mission and provide excellent service to Oregonians.

## Resilient Forests

### Goal

To reduce the vulnerability of Oregon’s forests from a myriad of catastrophic climate driven disturbances, ODF will direct its policy, management and educational actions to enable and promote all forestland managers to make intentional decisions that increase adaptive capacity of forest ecosystems.

### Context

Changes related to climate, social values and economics are resulting in changes to ecosystem functions and ecosystem services provided to our society. Society recognizes the importance of reciprocal relationships between humans and forests; relationships in which humans support forests so that forests can support humans and other species.

The range of components that describe forest complexity, structure and function in each ecoregion in Oregon will be defined at multiple spatial scales (individual forest stand-to landscape-level) and temporal scales (stand initiation to old-growth). Beyond the legal requirements of the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act, and state forest practices act rules, complex, functional forests representing a wide range of seral stages from early successional to old-growth contribute to maintaining populations of native species over space and time in each Oregon forest type. Forest complexity can be enhanced at all stages of stand development using management based on best available science and continuous learning.

Communities in rural, suburban, and urban environments can support forest management if communities can see their values considered and represented in the outcomes of that management, including clean water and air, fish and wildlife habitat, timber for jobs and housing, and recreational opportunities. Complex, functional forest ecosystems in each of Oregon forest types hold the greatest opportunities for providing these values over space and time.

The Board of Forestry believes that all forest owners and stewards have a social responsibility to improve the resilience and adaptive capacity of their lands. The Department of Forestry has the tools to incentivize and support this work.

## **Resilient Communities**

### **Goal**

Policy and management decisions foster healthy relationships between humans and forests, so that forests support resilient human communities through social, economic, and ecological change.

### **Context**

Forests have both direct and indirect effects on quality of life, economic opportunities for communities, and ecological conditions in rural, suburban, and urban areas across the state. Resilience varies regionally and between communities of place and culture. Forests provide a range of benefits to Oregonians and contribute to community resilience. Place-based and scientifically informed management approaches support forests to contribute a full range of benefits to enhance community resilience by meeting their needs.

## **Priority: Addressing the Wildfire Crisis**

### **Goal**

Prevent, suppress and mitigate wildfire to protect communities and expedite forest restoration activities that promote the adaptive capacity of Oregon's forests.

### **Context**

Wildfire has been a force that has helped shape Oregon's forests for millennia. Naturally occurring and prescribed fire, as well as suppression of fire, have played important roles in creating the forests we have today. Across Oregon, fire in forests has always existed in a variety of regimes, from frequent, low intensity fire to stand-replacing events, and mixed severity fires that present a spectrum of disturbance patterns.

Over the past decade, wildfires in Oregon have been trending toward larger, more complex, and more challenging and costly due to climate change and current forest conditions. With more people living in or near forests, there are far more lives, property and infrastructure threatened every year. Beyond immediate physical safety concerns, wildfire and smoke have broader impacts on public health, community wellbeing, local economies and our state's natural resources, including water and air quality.



This plan seeks a balanced approach that recognizes the role of fire suppression in protecting life and property, the role of active management to mitigate risk and control forest fuels, and the ecological role of fire on the landscape. Place-based solutions based on robust assessments of current conditions and desired outcomes will be essential to promoting forests that are resilient and can continue to provide abundant benefits to Oregonians.

## **Climate Leadership**

### **Goal**

The Board and Department will build capacity for climate-smart leadership.

### **Context**

The Board adopted its [Climate Change and Carbon Plan](#) in November 2023, which centered climate-smart forest management to guide activities contributing to adaptation and mitigation, as well as social dimensions of the effects of climate change. Climate-smart forestry is a holistic approach for addressing the management needs related to the existential pressures exerted from climate change.

## **Organizational Excellence**

### **Goal**

Strengthen trust and confidence in ODF's ability to effectively accomplish its mission and provide excellent service to Oregonians.

### **Context**

Oregon state agencies have an obligation to the Oregonians they serve to continually improve business processes to promote organizational efficiency and effectiveness in their delivery of services. Achieving this requires alignment: internally at all levels; with the direction provided by the Board of Forestry, Executive Branch and Legislature; with our partners; and with the public we serve. Organizational excellence requires a well-trained, highly competent and diverse staff of professionals and a culture that values and encourages individual and team learning and continuous improvement.

## About Us

### Oregon Board of Forestry (est. 1907)

For more than a century, the Board of Forestry and Department of Forestry have been caring for Oregon's forests. The board was established in 1911, along with the positions of state forester and deputy state forester. Together, they were charged with preventing forest fires and coordinating the response when fires did start. This was the start of Oregon's complete and coordinated fire protection system that is still a crucial part of our suppression success today.

Less than a decade after being founded, the Board of Forestry adopted a forest policy for the state that identified the need for increased forest protection, a forest nursery, insect control, and formation of state forests. This policy was the starting point for the broad portfolio of work the board and department are responsible for today.

The Oregon Board of Forestry is a seven-member citizen board appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the state Senate. The board's primary responsibilities are to:

- Supervise all matters of forest policy within Oregon.
- Appoint the State Forester, who also serves as the director of ODF.
- Adopt rules regulating forest practices.
- Provide general supervision of the State Forester's duties in managing ODF.

The board is charged with representing the public interest. No more than three members may receive any significant portion of their income from the forest products industry. At least one member must reside in each of the state's three major forest regions: northern, southern, and eastern. The term of office is four years, and no member may serve more than two consecutive full terms. The State Forester serves as secretary to the board.

### Oregon Department of Forestry (est. 1911)

The Department of Forestry's work is truly a team effort. The policy and direction established at the headquarters level guides the work happening in the field statewide. The department's headquarters are in Salem, but much of the on-the-ground work is done by the leadership and staff of ODF's 12 districts with 24 units from Astoria to Wallowa and all the way down to Lakeview and Medford. The dedicated public servants in these offices are the people responsible for fighting fires, assisting landowners and managing our state forestlands every day for their fellow Oregonians. ODF also partners with three forest protective associations as part of the fire protection program.

ODF's Fire Protection Division is the state's largest fire department and protects 16 million acres of private, state, and some federal lands. ODF has been protecting Oregon's forests for 110 years. The department emphasizes preventing human-caused fires, reducing wildfire risks through improved forest health and resiliency, and keeping those fires that do start as small as possible. This approach minimizes resource loss, fire danger and smoke impact to communities, and suppression costs. ODF leads Oregon's complete and coordinated fire protection system. This system relies on partnerships with local, state, tribal, and federal government; the structural fire service; landowners; forest operators; contractors and more.

ODF's Forest Resources Division is responsible for several key areas of operation that contribute to sustainable, healthy forests. The most prominent work they do involves the administration of the Forest Practices Act, which is a cornerstone of natural resource protection in Oregon that encourages sound management of forestlands.

Division staff also:

- Monitor and help preserve forest health across the state,
- Provide technical assistance to landowners, and
- Support local urban and community forestry efforts.

The division also houses the Federal Forest Restoration Program that, along with the Good Neighbor Authority, enables ODF to assist its federal partners in forest restoration and resiliency work on federally managed forestlands. Since the federal government is responsible for so much of Oregon's forests, the condition of these lands has a dramatic effect on the health of the state's total forestland.

ODF's State Forests Division manages more than 760,000 acres of working forests—also known as Board of Forestry lands—to provide social, economic and environmental benefits for Oregonians, which is not an easy task. The way the division's work is funded adds to the complexity. State forestland management is funded by a portion of the revenues received from timber sales on these lands. The majority of the revenue goes to the counties in which the timber sales are located and helps fund essential local services. ODF retains 36.25% of the revenues, which has to support all aspects of state forestland management. Essentially, all recreation and environmental work on state forestlands is paid for by timber sales. The ability to build trails, maintain campgrounds, and improve wildlife habitats are all dependent upon timber being harvested off those same lands.