



## OREGON PERSPECTIVES ON STATE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN FOREST CERTIFICATION

*"STEWARDSHIP IN FORESTRY"*

### CONTEXT

- In 2001, the Oregon Board of Forestry determined its role would be to directly interact with external forest certification systems operating in Oregon to influence and encourage those systems to operate on private and public lands consistent with Board of Forestry policy. The Board also established the following principles for its role addressing certification issues:
  1. Forest landowners who are economically successful are better able to practice sustainable forestry. Therefore, the State of Oregon has an interest in having forest landowners achieve the best possible prices for their products.
  2. If certification is proven to enhance landowner income, it is logical for the State to find ways to enable landowners to make informed decisions about certification and take advantage of this marketing strategy.
  3. Forest certification is not a necessary prerequisite for sustainable forest management or for a "well managed forest."
  4. Forest certification should remain a voluntary, market-driven process involving willing producers and willing consumers.
  5. For private forest landowners, certification is valuable only when it meets their management objectives and there is a way for them to recover the investment required to participate in it.
  6. Landowners desiring certification must retain the freedom to choose which path towards certification best meets their objectives.
  7. Landowners with well-managed forests who choose not to pursue voluntary forest management certification should not be considered by the State of Oregon to be less competent or protective of forest resources than those landowners who become certified.
- A 2001 study by Oregon State University comparing Oregon's legal requirements with the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative forest certification schemes concluded that compliance with state legal requirements also allows forest landowners to meet or exceed many of the requirements of these schemes.
- In 2002, the Board of Forestry endorsed draft Oregon principles and elements for the evaluation of forest certification systems.

- In 2003, the Board of Forestry approved *Forestry Program for Oregon* Key Action B.2.: *“The board will promote the development of programs that enhance Oregon's forest industry competitiveness, industrial development, and both in-state and global recognition that Oregon forest products come from sustainably managed forests.”*
- In the past, some forestland owners have requested in testimony to the Board of Forestry that the Oregon Forest Practices Act be used as a basis for communicating to the global forest products marketplace that Oregon forest products come from well-managed forests.
- In April 2006, the Board was presented the findings of the Pinchot Institute for Conservation study on the potential for an Oregon forest certification standard to be recognized by the international Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).
- In November 2006, Department of Forestry staff recommended that objectives for future Board of Forestry work on forest certification be the following:
  1. Interacting with external forest certification systems operating in Oregon to influence and encourage those systems to operate on private and public lands consistent with Board of Forestry policy.
  2. Continuing to consider the merits of third-party assessment and forest certification as potential tools for State Forests to harness marketplace dividends through “chain of custody” labeling.
  3. Assisting private landowners to make informed decisions about voluntary forest certification and to take advantage of this marketing strategy in a manner that meets their management objectives and allows recovery of the investment required to participate.
  4. Promoting voluntary access for Oregon’s industrial and family forest landowners to certification schemes that, at a minimum, are credible, internationally recognized, and use the Montreal Process criteria and indicators as a foundation.
  5. Revisiting, as needed, the draft Oregon principles and elements for the evaluation of forest certification systems
  6. Developing a position statement on certification of federal forestlands in Oregon.

The Board of Forestry has taken no formal action to date.

## **ADDITIONAL CONTEXT SPECIFIC TO STATE FORESTS**

In December 2005, The SmartWood Program of the Rainforest Alliance conducted a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) pre-assessment for state forestlands in Klamath Lake District (34,000 acres), including the Sun Pass State Forest (21,000 acres) in Klamath County.

The primary reasons the Department initiated certification efforts were that:

- Regular purchasers of Sun Pass State Forest timber sales are chain-of-custody certified. This means they are likely to seek certified wood.
- The competition for certified wood could lead to increased demand and higher bid prices for state forest timber sales.
- Some significant landowners in Klamath and Lake Counties are certified as “well managed” under the FSC certification system, including two landowners with land adjacent to the Sun Pass State Forest.

The estimated cost for applying for FSC certification in 2005 was determined to be \$34,000 (\$1 per acre).

At the conclusion of the pre-assessment process, the Department determined it would not, at that time, continue to pursue FSC certification on state forestlands in Klamath County. The primary drivers for that decision included:

- The desired long-term commitment FSC asks towards its principles and criteria, both of which have changed and continue to change through time;
- The request for the Department of Forestry to produce a statement explaining why the agency is seeking certification on only one parcel of state forestland versus all state forestlands;
- Anticipated conflicts with several criteria including sustainable harvest (interpreted as no variation from year to year or from decade to decade), required environmental impact analysis including cumulative impact analysis, regeneration harvest limits of 60 acres, required retention of individual trees in stands, exclusion of legal and acceptable chemical methods of pest management;
- The requirement for a new management plan every 10 years; and
- The response received from other FSC-certified landowners that assessors verbally articulate different and greater expectations from state landowners and become actively involved in trying to influence management direction, in effect becoming another stakeholder.

Department staff concluded in 2006 there was continued potential for certification of some or all state forestlands in the future, but more time was needed to explore ongoing changes and trends in certification and the experiences of other certified state landowners before initiating Oregon state-managed forest certification assessment processes.