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Clearcuts and Controversy as Wyden Logging Bill Introduced

Senator embraces logging while conservation groups representing tens of thousands members express disappointment.



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Senator Ron Wyden, Chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, released his much-anticipated O&C logging legislation this morning, called the [O&C Land Grant Act of 2013](#).

The Sierra Club and Oregon Wild, which represent tens of thousands of members and supporters in Oregon and millions across the nation, [have serious concerns](#) about the bill's impacts on public lands in western Oregon. "Oregon Wild has worked with Senator Wyden many times over the years to craft balanced environmental legislation," said Oregon Wild Conservation Director Steve Pedery. "But we must strongly oppose this bill because it is so heavily weighted towards clearcut logging and weakening environmental safeguards."

Senator Wyden has been under tremendous pressure from extremist politicians and the logging industry to embrace clearcutting to fund county governments. Unfortunately, this bill is a [dramatic departure from the balanced approach to county funding the Senator outlined in his "Principles for an O&C Solution"](#) released on October 9, 2012.

Instead, the new legislation will eliminate the old-growth reserve system of the Northwest Forest Plan, dramatically weaken Endangered Species Act rules for logging, and limit Americans' ability to have a say in how their lands are managed.

The bill embraces a form of clearcutting known as "eco-forestry" in order to maximize logging and county revenue. This controversial practice would be used to clearcut forests up to 120 years old, stands that help protect clean water and wildlife.

"We cannot clearcut our way to prosperity," said Rhett Lawrence, Conservation Director for the Sierra Club Oregon Chapter. "This bill will not solve the counties' financial problems, but it will put Oregon's clean water, wildlife, and salmon runs at risk."

While Sen. Wyden's bill includes measures to safeguard clean drinking water and offer some protection for areas important to hunters, anglers, and other users of the O&C lands, its focus on logging ignores the structural changes that have taken place in Oregon's economy over the last 20 years. Logging is a relatively minor factor in the state's economic picture today, surpassed both in jobs and economic revenue by the thriving tourism and outdoor recreation industry. A recent analysis of likely job growth found employment in recreation-related industries in Oregon is expected to grow by 31 percent by 2020 – exceeding the expected three percent job growth in logging and related industries.

"Senator Wyden has a long history as an environmental champion, which is why this legislation is disappointing," concluded Pedery. "We stand ready to work with the Senator on a solution to county funding shortfalls that better protects clean water, wildlife, and Oregon's Wilderness heritage."

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