

O&C Legislative Framework

The following outlines Senator Ron Wyden's framework for O&C reform legislation that can pass both the House and Senate and get signed by a Democratic President. Proceeding currently, the Wyden Office is consulting a cross-section of Oregonians, including representatives of local communities, federal, state and local forestry experts, tribal and conservation leaders who are making recommendations as to which O&C lands should be dedicated to sustainable timber harvest and which lands will be set aside for permanent protection. Recommendations will also help guide the legislative language controlling how that harvest and protection will be carried out.

Oregon's O&C lands are truly unique among federal land holdings and deserve separate treatment within the confines of the O&C Act. We have learned a great deal about conservation, clean air and water and habitat preservation since the Act was adopted and it must be updated to reflect that understanding. This update must also give new life to the original guarantee of jobs and timber production in the Act. Sustainable harvest will be consistent with the most advanced forest management practices advocated by Northwest experts and demonstrated in pilot projects and collaborative efforts across the state, including the pioneering and successful efforts in the Siuslaw Forest and Medford BLM district.

The division of land will be based on the following guidelines intended to guarantee increased jobs and timber harvest while protecting large areas of habitat and old growth. They take into account the public feedback to Senator Wyden's 2011 *Principles for O&C legislation* as well as the work of Governor John Kitzhaber, Senator Merkley, and members of the Oregon House delegation.

- 1) A substantial portion of O&C lands will be set aside for sustainable economic activity with ultimate harvest levels governed by rules established in legislation.

The legislation will modernize existing federal laws as they apply to O&C lands so that harvest can continue at a steady, sustainable, and uninterrupted rate once an initial review of all lands set aside for management is completed and as long as subsequent timber sales comply with the legislation.

- 2) The legislation will create wilderness and other permanent land use designations whose primary management focus will be to maintain and enhance conservation attributes. This acreage will be roughly equivalent to lands designated for sustainable harvest. The focus should include protection of both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, sources of clean drinking water, contiguous lands, and old growth stands older than 120 years of age.

These lands will include wilderness protections as well as a variety of protections that safeguard clean water and treasured resources and focus on long term conservation of habitat, but will also include areas emphasizing recreation and areas that would allow for restoration based thinning in previously managed stands.

3) Voluntary land exchanges between Federal and private landowners should be encouraged. The Federal lands exchanged should be confined to those lands outside of protected areas. Along with improving management of O&C Lands, exchanges should focus on reducing costs to the taxpayer and protecting private forest landowners from the impacts of less intensively managed federal lands and more limited wildfire management.

4) A substantial portion, if not all, of the revenue from these lands, minus federal costs, will be returned to the counties where the lands are located. Accompanying the legislation that implements this division of land will be legislation to provide a permanent and stable source of funding for O&C counties encompassing existing county payments and other federal payments. While the legislation will not prescribe any local tax levy, the formula in the accompanying legislation will consider a local tax level that is not on par with the average resource-dependent rural county.

The senator is requesting input as to the designation and consolidation of BLM, State and private lands that best meet the economic and conservation goals outlined above. The legislation will put into effect the recommendations of a broad group of Oregonians including land swaps, movement of lands between governments and agencies, and redesignation of lands for harvest or conservation.

Senator Wyden has made passage of forestry reform legislation, for both the O&C lands and the East Side a top priority for this Congress. He believes that this work identifying the lands to be included in legislation can be completed promptly.