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Elliott State Forest

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In the Southern Oregon Coast Range, northeast of Coos Bay, lie 93,000 acres of state-owned forestland. The Elliott State Forest contains more than 41,000 acres of untouched mature native forest and some of the most productive and pristine streams for Coho and Chinook Salmon in the Coast Range. The forest provides a stronghold of critical habitat for federally threatened Marbled Murrelets and Northern Spotted Owls. While the Elliott is open to the public, it does not have a trail system and offers incredible opportunities for forest solitude.



Photo by Tim Giraudier

The History of the Elliott State Forest

Approximately 90 percent of the Elliott State Forest's 91,000 acres are a land asset of the Common School Fund. When Congress admitted Oregon to the Union in 1859, they granted land to our new state specifically to help fund public education. For decades the State has interpreted this out of date structure as a mandate to engage in aggressive, illegal and unsustainable clearcut logging in order to maximize revenues. In 2011 the Oregon Department of Forestry adopted a Forest Management Plan that would have nearly doubled an already unsustainable and illegal timber harvest rate for the Elliott.

In 2012, Portland Audubon, the Center for Biological Diversity, and Cascadia Wildlands, represented by Crag Law Center, sued the state of Oregon for logging occupied Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat in violation of the Endangered Species Act. In 2014, after the federal court indicated a strong likelihood that it would rule in our favor, the State settled the case and cancelled 28 timber sales, agreed to new logging protocols and reducing its projected annual timber harvest from over 40 million board feet per year to approximately 15 million. The scale of change reflected the degree to which the State was illegally harvesting this incredible forest.

The settlement should have resulted in a more sustainable approach to managing the Elliott Forest. Instead, the State Land Board rashly sold off more than 1,000 acres of these public lands later in 2014, triggering another lawsuit from Portland Audubon, Cascadia Wildlands, and the Center for Biological Diversity that resulted in the court ruling for the plaintiffs and determining that the sale was illegal. Worse yet, the State announced plans that would sell off the remainder of the Elliott to the highest bidder. This resulted in massive public protests throughout 2016 and 2017, which ultimately caused the State to reconsider and agree to permanently retain the Elliott in public ownership and cease logging activities until a long-term management structure could be put in place



Elliott State Forest clearcut, photo by Francis Eatherington

Today, the State is working on multiple strategies to develop a long-term solution for the Elliott including:

- Decoupling the Elliott from the Common School fund so that it will no longer have to be managed to provide revenue for schools. To do this the State will need to raise \$220 million to purchase the forest from the Common School Fund. In 2017, the Oregon legislature allocated \$100 million in bonds toward this goal so only another \$120 million remains to reach this goal.
- Developing a permanent management structure for the Elliott. In early 2019 the State Land Board selected the Oregon State University School of Forestry as a primary partner around which the new management structure would be developed.
- Working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for the Elliott to ensure that future management activities comply with the Endangered Species Act.

Portland Audubon's work to protect the Elliott includes:

- Actively tracking and advocating on all aspects of the Elliott State Forest
- Litigating to stop clearcut logging in Marbled Murrelet habitat on a small parcel of the Elliott that was sold in 2014 before the State reversed course and agreed to retain the Elliott
- Representing conservation interests on a Stakeholder Advisory Committee that was set-up in April 2019 to advise the State on a permanent management structure for the Elliott

How you can get involved:

- Become a Portland Audubon Activist and advocate for places like the Elliott and Oregon's other forests
- Join Portland Audubon on a field trip to the Elliott to learn first hand about this amazing forest
- Contribute to Portland Audubon's litigation fund so that can litigate when necessary to protect places like the Elliott.

Learn More

	<u>Elliott State Forest Government Website</u>	→
	<u>OPB (2019) Oregon Moves on to Repurpose Elliott State Forest as Research Forest</u>	→
	<u>OPB (2018) Court: State Should not have Sold Portion of Elliott State Forest</u>	→
	<u>Oregonian (2017) Its Unanimous: Elliott State Forest Will Remain Publicly Owned</u>	→
	<u>Oregonian (2016) Elliott State Forest, Timber, Threatened Species and Politics Collide</u>	→
	<u>OPB (2012) Logging Sales put on Hold Due to Environmental Lawsuit</u>	→
	<u>Oregon Wild Map of Elliott State Forest Old Growth Stands</u>	→

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Oregon's wildlife and wild places.

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