

# New CRA Report Follows the Money State Forests: The Empire Strikes Back

## Federal Forests: Protect Mature & Old Growth

### Who Gets Timber's Wealth?

After two years of work, the Coast Range Association (CRA) released a new report titled ***Wealth, Income and Rural Communities***. The report follows the money in a typical big timber company to shed light on where forest wealth goes.

The report looks at timber sales dollars in two ways not previously explored. First, how many timber dollars stay local to where trees grow? Second, when sales dollars end up as someone's income, who is that someone and where are they on the spectrum of wealth?

For example, when a logging crew is replaced with a one-person tracked harvester, the dollar flow changes dramatically. Instead of sales dollars going into logger wages, the logging company now makes a payment on a loan or lease. Where do loan or lease payment dollars end up? They certainly don't end up as income to a family living up the Smith River or the upper Nehalem area. Instead, 60% of all equity income goes to the richest 1%.



Papé Machinery advertises a 2017 John Deere 909MH tracked harvester for sale at their Tangent location. \$341,000 is the asking price.

We couple our follow-the-money timber discussion with the land reform proposal we

advanced in our 2020 Green New Deal & Forests report. Again, we argue for converting Wall Street owned forests into locally owned, community-based, nonprofit companies.

In the new report, we add a bit of realism about the cost of buying timberland by speculating on two strategies to purchase The Weyerhaeuser Company. I'm sure Weyerhaeuser isn't worried, but we wanted to illustrate that a large timberland purchase is much different and less expensive per acre than how land prices are normally discussed.

Here are three things I'm asking you to do:

1. Download ***Wealth, Income and Rural Communities*** and read the report. A link to the report is on the front page of **coastrange.org** Along with the report, we have an updated population study poster and, of course, our corporate forest ownership maps.
2. Share the paper in an email to neighbors, friends and family. Ask them to join the Coast Range News list. They'll be in the loop for our next move to challenge Wall Street control of forests.
3. And please don't forget to donate to keep our unique advocacy strong. As always, a donation link is at **coastrange.org**

## State Forests: The Empire Strikes Back

The state forest habitat conservation plan (HCP) has come under coordinated attack by lumber interests who stand to gain from increased timber cutting. As is common in Oregon, political leaders dread a fight with the big players in the wood products industry. So it falls to the conservation community to demonstrate public support for good forest management.

Recently, I sent colleagues comments I wrote in 1997 about a proposed habitat conservation plan for state forests. At the time, the state of Oregon, at the behest of the timber industry, conspired with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to **not** list the coastal coho under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Coast Range Association (CRA) and others sued NMFS over the coho's non-listing. We won big-time in court and the coastal coho were listed. The timber industry had a hissy fit over the listing and declared there would be no further work on Habitat Conservation Plans. Fast forward to today and Oregon is working to catching up to 1997.

The **private forest accord** worked out between various conservation groups and big timber was, in part, a catch up effort to overcome big timber's 1997 hissy fit. Currently the Board of Forestry is working to finish a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for 630,000 acres of state forests. This effort, like the forest accord, is in many ways **catch up to 1997**.

Over the past several years, things were progressing with the state forest HCP. Last summer, NMFS issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the HCP. The four options described by NMFS were about the same – each cut a lot of timber. Here are the numbers from the DEIS (Page 3.1-2 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan).

Modeled **Average Annual Harvest Volume** by Alternative (First 25 years of the Plan)

<b>No Action</b>	<b>ODF’s Proposed Plan</b>	<b>Alt. 3</b>	<b>Alt. 4</b>	<b>Alt. 5</b>
179.3	247.0	246.1	247.0	258.0

Each number above is in **millions of board foot** timber.

Modeled **Average Annual Clearcut Acres** by Alternative (First 25 years of the Plan)

<b>No Action</b>	<b>ODF’s Proposed Plan</b>	<b>Alt. 3</b>	<b>Alt. 4</b>	<b>Alt. 5</b>
4,159	5,727	5,703	5,727	6,026

The HCP’s proposed timber harvest for all options is in the same range as the state forests’ average yearly harvest of about 250 million bf between 2010 to 2019.

The **No Action** harvest of 179 million bf is the timber harvest without a HCP. Without the habitat and species protections of a HCP, the higher standard of **No Take** is in effect under the ESA. Which is to say that past state forest timber harvests in the 250 million bf range were likely illegal. I do acknowledge that the No Take timber harvest is based on one or more new species listed under the ESA. Without a Take permit, Oregon was heading toward a state forest shutdown for killing endangered species. And you can’t get a take permit with a HCP.

If you’re scratching your head as to why lumber mill interests and their minions on the north coast are now up in arms – I admit I’m a bit confused. Here are two theories as to what’s going on.

1. Never underestimate the timber and milling elite’s ability to believe and argue in something that’s wrong. These are smart, educated and highly paid people who have a record of talking themselves into unwise things. The failed Linn County lawsuit, where counties claimed the state owed them zillions of dollars in past state forest timber revenues, is one example.
2. My second theory is that free timber money is a very sweet candy and when counties think they will lose some of their candy they childishly kick and scream. Clatsop County officials are crying crocodile tears over imagined future state forest timber revenue loss due to error filled arguments and overstated concerns. Last October, Clatsop County commissioners passed an embarrassing proclamation opposing the proposed state forest HCP.

So what is going on? I think it boils down to several north coast lumber corporations having far more milling capacity than they have timberland. Perhaps all the investment in automation and higher production equipment over the past decades was premised on a belief that our state forests were going to be their corporate tree farm. If so, it is one more example of the wood products

industry seeing itself entitled. Just because you build a great big sawmill doesn't mean you are entitled to any trees.

Here is what I urge you to do. Please go to the CRA's state forest action webpage at this address: <https://coastrange.org/public-comments/>

There, you will find what you need to let the Board of Forestry know that they must stay the course and finish the HCP. The Board has a meeting on June 7<sup>th</sup> and they need to hear from you and everyone else that **the greatest permanent value of state forests is based on all Oregonians not simply lumber interests in the north coast area.**

## Joe Biden's Mature and Old Growth Forest Initiative

On Earth Day 2022 President Biden issued an Executive Order calling on the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA)–**Forest Service** and Department of Interior (DOI)–**BLM** to conserve mature and old growth forests as a climate solution. In response to the President's Executive Order, both Forest Service and the BLM have begun rulemaking to implement the President's order. Both agencies have opened public comment periods on their proposed Rules through June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Currently, a scientist's sign-on letter is circulating to be submitted to President Biden and the rulemaking processes. The letter reads in part:

*"Large, old trees are among the biggest terrestrial organisms on the planet but are on the decline globally mainly due to logging and development. These trees and old forests that harbor them are the most critical terrestrial sinks and easily scalable climate mitigation opportunities at our disposal. They are also essential to soil integrity and complexity, water circulation, stable microclimates, nutrient exchange, and wildlife habitat, regardless of whether the trees are alive or dead. Protecting them enables irreplaceable ecosystem services and biodiversity benefits, including habitat for hundreds of imperiled species. Importantly, while large trees make up just 1% (globally) to 3% (eastern Oregon) of the overall tree density in older forests, they contain 50% to 42%, respectively, of the above ground carbon in forests. As they age, large trees and old forests continue to sequester and accumulate massive amounts of atmospheric carbon in biomass and soils. From a climate and biodiversity perspective, it is essential not to log the large trees and old forests. Broad-scale thinning (e.g., ecoregions, regions) to reduce fire risk or severity results in more carbon emissions than fire, creating a long-term carbon deficit that undermines climate goals."*

Keep in mind the BLM is the largest owner of Coast Range public forestland. One would think that it's a fairly straight forward task to follow the President's order—just stop cutting trees that are mature

[coastrange.org](https://coastrange.org)

# The BLM Rule: In their Own Words

**"SUMMARY:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes new regulations that, pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), as amended, and other relevant authorities, would advance the BLM's mission to manage the public lands for multiple use and sustained yield by prioritizing the health and resilience of ecosystems across those lands. To ensure that health and resilience, the proposed rule provides that the BLM will protect intact landscapes, restore degraded habitat, and make wise management decisions based on science and data. To support these activities, the proposed rule would apply land health standards to all BLM-managed public lands and uses, clarify that conservation is a "use" within FLPMA's multiple-use framework, and revise existing regulations to better meet FLPMA's requirement that the BLM prioritize designating and protecting Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs). The proposed rule would add to [and] provide an overarching framework for multiple BLM programs to promote ecosystem resilience on public lands."

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Federal Register / Vol. 88, No. 63 / Monday, April 3, 2023 / Proposed Rules

(>80yrs) or old growth. However, the BLM believes their mission under the O&C Act and other laws has to be balanced with the President's Order. So, the agency is **not asking** the public how it can **protect** mature and old growth forest. Instead, the agency is asking how to *foster ecosystem resilience of mature and old growth forests?*

From the BLM's Rule Summary above, no one can argue with "protect intact landscapes, restore degraded habitat, and make wise management decisions." But, ecosystem resilience.....really? What does that mean and why in the world does the agency think it can make forest ecosystems anything but less well off?

Perhaps the BLM has adopted a tough love forest management approach. The agency may see its mission like that of a parent that harshly toughens their offspring to prepare them up for an imagined hellish world that awaits. Given future climate change, I can see the agency talking itself into chainsaw-management for resilience.



I have news for the BLM, if you really want resilient forest ecosystems then get roads-and-chainsaws out of not previously managed native forests. Forest ecosystems naturally have redundant maximum resilience.

Here is what you can do right now to help protect the remaining mature and old growth forests. The BLM and Forest Service must **stop clearcutting** or **thinning** the remaining native forest stands in western Oregon. Full stop, it's that simple.

Go to the CRA's **protect mature and old growth forest action page** where we have placed the full scientists letter and other key materials.

Here's the web address: <https://coastrange.org/blmaction/>

Perhaps you might select a favorite passage from the scientists' letter and add this demand – *end mature and old growth tree cutting. We need large tree carbon in the forest not the atmosphere*. Then submit your comment directly to both the Forest Service and BLM comment webpages. Our Action Page provides links to both portals.

On the CRA's BLM Action Page we have also placed an excellent review article titled **The Status of Science on Forest Carbon Management to Mitigate Climate Change and Protect Water and Biodiversity** (March 9, 2022). Here to you might find another morsel of wisdom to add to your comment letter. The article corrects many false ideas about climate and forests and the role of fire.

Lastly, **please make a generous donation to the Coast Range Association**. Only your support allows our unique advocacy to be heard and our research to continue. No other group digs as deep into the impact of Wall Street money on our forests as the CRA. And we've fought to keep the big trees standing for over thirty years. A better world is possible!

With gratitude,



Chuck Willer  
Director

PS. Please be aware that I'm currently back doing community talks. I'm happy to speak in your community or to your local group. I'll be speaking in Roseburg and Cottage Grove in June. Consider sponsoring a local presentation. You'll hear the truth about issues few others address in depth.

# Coast Range Association

PO Box 2250 Corvallis, OR 97339

[coastrange.org](https://coastrange.org)