

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF STATE LANDS

Elliott State Forest Updates



State Land Board takes historic action toward Elliott State Research Forest

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Governor Kate Brown, Treasurer Tobias Read, and Secretary of State Shemia Fagan decoupled the Elliott from the Common School Fund, an essential step toward the future research forest.

SALEM, Ore. – The State Land Board took historic action today toward creation of the Elliott State Research Forest, decoupling the forest from Oregon’s Common School Fund and appointing the first board of directors for the new public agency to be established in 2024 to oversee the research forest in collaboration with Oregon State University.

As an asset of the Common School Fund, the Elliott was continually caught between the financial obligation of the forest to support public schools and the forest’s potential to provide benefits beyond harvest revenue.

Today’s decoupling vote – made possible by payment of \$221 million to the Fund – frees the forest of its historic obligation to generate revenue for K-12 public schools. The forest remains in public ownership, under the oversight of the new Elliott State Research Forest Authority agency created by Senate Bill 1546.

“This is a day to celebrate the creation of the largest research forest in North America, the Elliott State Research Forest,” said Treasurer Read. “The Elliott will provide a better approach for working forest management, improve conservation protections and, significantly, keep the forest in public hands. We can be proud that current and future generations of Oregonians will benefit from this valuable natural resource.”

The Land Board also prospectively appointed the initial nine-member Board of Directors of the Authority. See the appointment agenda item for board member terms and bios. The appointments are effective on the Jan. 1, 2024, with the establishment of the new agency. The members appointed today will serve as informal advisors to the Land Board and Department of State Lands as work continues on the remaining steps required by SB 1546 to establish the research forest.

Among those steps are publication of a final Elliott State Research Forest habitat conservation plan, a draft of which is currently available for public comment in the federal approval process, DSL approval of a financial plan for the forest, and Land Board approval of OSU's forest management plan.

The Elliott's transformation to a research forest as envisioned by the Land Board will ultimately result in a forest that has completed its obligation to funding Oregon schools, but will continue to contribute to conservation, recreation, education, local economies and more as a publicly owned, working research forest.

The Land Board this morning recognized the Elliott State Research Forest Advisory Committee with a Partnership Award, noting the committee's unflagging work toward a research forest. Read the award news release.

"Truly this is a Margaret Mead moment that wouldn't have happened without all of you working together – never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has," said Governor Kate Brown.

In a unanimous statement, committee members voiced their appreciation for the Land Board members.

"For the trust you have had in us and for your great support, the members of the Elliott State Research Forest Advisory Committee, to a person, wish to offer our sincere appreciation," said committee member Keith Tymchuk, who presented the statement to the Land Board. "Without the unwavering support of the members of the Land Board, this collaboration would not have succeeded as it has, and we would not be here today with the agenda items before you moving us several steps closer to formalizing the new research forest."

The State Land Board consists of Governor Kate Brown, Secretary of State Shemia Fagan and State Treasurer Tobias Read. Established by the Oregon Constitution in 1859, the Land Board oversees the state's Common School Fund. The Department of State Lands is the Land Board's administrative agency, managing the lands and resources that help fund Oregon's public schools and protecting the state's waterways and wetlands for the many benefits they provide.



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