

KeepTheChildrensForest.Org
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Michael Lopes-Serrao, Superintendent
Parkrose SD 3
10636 NE Prescott St
Portland, OR 97220-2699

Dear Superintendent Lopes-Serrao:

This letter asks your school district to take a small but important action concerning the Elliott State Forest. I hope you will put this letter in the packet of materials you distribute to School Board members for consideration at the next School Board meeting.

Let me explain my background. I spent 25 years teaching in the College of Business at Oregon State University, and I am now an emeritus professor, which is a fancy way of saying I retired honorably. I own 211 acres of timberland in Polk County, and I was the Polk County tree farmer of the year in 1991. Finally, I devote part of my time to volunteer activities, so I served four years on the Corvallis School Board.

More importantly, I am on the national Advocates for School Trust Lands (ASTL) Board of Directors. You can learn about ASLT at www.AdvocatesForSchoolTrustLands.org. The ASTL's motto is: "Working to ensure trust lands remain an endowment for today's and future generations of schoolchildren as intended since the founding of our country."

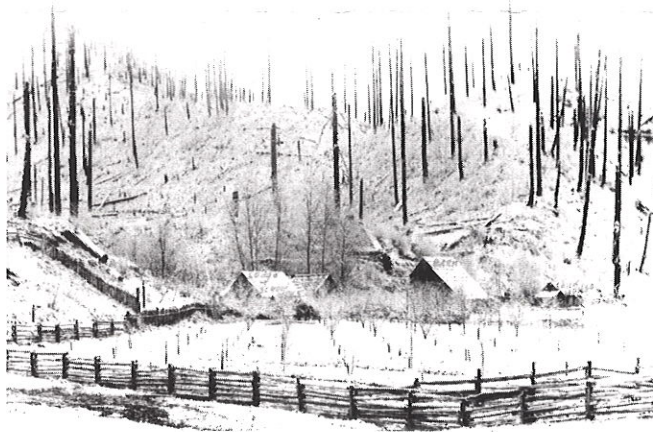
When Oregon was founded, the federal government gave Oregon two sections in each township to establish a School Trust for the education of Oregon's schoolchildren. The School Trust Lands are intended to be used productively to maximize revenue for public schools. States have the responsibility as legal trustees to ensure School Trust Lands are properly managed for current and all future generations of schoolchildren.

Sadly, as with many other states, Oregon's politicians have decided to steal from this Trust for their own political purposes. The nature of the political thefts varies. For example, ASTL is currently suing the State of Montana for giving water rights to ranchers without paying compensation to their School Trust. In Oregon, our politicians are stealing from schoolchildren to "sequester carbon." Specifically, State Land Board Trustee Kate Brown wants to convert the Elliott State Forest into a "research forest" while paying pennies on the dollar for the forest's value. This sort of theft is clearly illegal and will not withstand scrutiny in a federal court.

While environmentalists have good intentions when they ask to "sequester carbon" in the Elliott Forest, we all know the road to hell is paved with good intentions. In the Elliott State Forest's case, the long-term lack of harvesting has created a giant tinderbox near North Bend and Coos Bay along the southern Oregon coast. This tinderbox is ripe for an explosive firestorm like the Great Tillamook Burns or the 2020 Labor Day fires. Some historical context is necessary to understand this explosive and inevitable danger.

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In 1930, when the State of Oregon swapped thousands of scattered parcels of school trust lands with the federal government to create what we now call the Elliott State Forest, the timberland was nearly worthless: It had burned repeatedly, and people expected it to burn again. But by installing fire lookout towers and roads, active management and extensive salvage following the 1962 Columbus Day Storm, the Elliott hasn't had a major fire in the last 90 years.



Elkhorn ranch in what would eventually become the Elliott State Forest, winter snow, 1889. Lots of dead and dry snags -- few live trees.

The Elliott State Forest sustainably grows more than 80 million board feet of merchantable timber volume each year, but since 1990 we haven't harvested even half that growth, and for the last four years, ***nothing has been harvested commercially from the Elliott State Forest-- even requests to harvest huckleberries, mistletoe or mushrooms have been denied!***

The inevitable result has been to create densely packed stands of second-generation trees. These stands are so tight, the trees kill each other as they compete for sunlight and nutrients. In 1930 when Oregon acquired the Elliott State Forest, it had 600 million board feet of juvenile trees. Today the Forest has 3.1 billion board feet of mature timber – ***over five times as much.***

State Land Board Trustee Kate Brown's most recent plan is to convert the Elliott State Forest into a "research forest." The details of this plan would place 60 percent of the forest in a reserve, and only 17 million board feet would be harvested of the 80 million board feet the forest grows each year. These meager harvests would not generate enough revenue to cover the cost of administering the research forest, so the plan is expected to lose millions of dollars each year.

Converting the Elliott State Forest into a giant and largely untouchable research forest isn't necessary. The nearby Siuslaw National Forest is already being managed in the same way as the Elliott State Research Forest plan suggests, so we don't need to lock up the Elliott State Forest to learn what happens when forests are managed by politicians for carbon storage rather than to sustainably generate logs and jobs.

This plan has an inevitable end: a catastrophic fire. If we continue to pack more and more flammable carbon into this forest, ***it will burn.*** Maybe it won't burn next year or even in the next ten years, ***but it will burn. It will burn with the same certainty that Oregon will have another Cascadia earthquake.*** Some infrequent events cannot be avoided: pretending they won't happen leaves people unprepared.

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We have the technology to put out most small fires, but as the 2020 Labor Day Fires proved, we cannot stop fires in densely packed forests forever. Eventually a spark will get fanned by late summer east winds, and the resulting inferno will rage out of control. This has happened repeatedly to the Elliott State Forest before -- most recently in the late 1800s -- **and it will happen again.**

The denser the forest, the hotter and more explosive the inevitable firebomb will be. This will release the stored carbon back into the atmosphere: trying to store more and more carbon in the Elliott State Forest is shortsighted, self-delusional thinking. It would be better and safer to store the carbon in lumber and plywood inside wood buildings.

We know from Oregon's coastal fire history: The next catastrophic fire will happen in late summer and will be driven by hot easterly winds -- right into populated coast cities. We must not let this happen. Southern Oregon coastal cities do not deserve to become part of a long-term experiment that will inevitably end in a deadly firestorm.

How can you help? I hope Parkrose SD 3 school district will join ASTL. ASTL is a member-based nonprofit, educational organization, and it would cost the school district \$250 to join. This simple act would have an effect all out of proportion to the \$250 cost. Once ASTL has school districts as members, then ASTL can file a lawsuit on behalf of its members. Thus, by joining ASTL, your school district would allow ASTL to use a federal court to force Oregon to follow **Trust Law**; that is, to require Oregon to manage the Elliott State Forest for its legal beneficiaries, Oregon's schoolchildren.

How much money will this return to your school district? Each year the State Land Board has been losing several million dollars as it manages the Elliott because it hasn't allowed any harvesting. But if the Elliott was harvested in a sustainable manner, it would generate \$40 million of revenue each year. Oregon has about 500,000 public school children, so that would give each school district about \$80 more to spend on each child each year.

Please take a small but critical step -- please ask your school board to vote to sign up Parkrose SD 3 as a member of ASTL. Then ASTL can work on your behalf to reduce the fire danger to Oregon's coastal communities and return the Elliott State Forest as a productive source of funds for your schoolchildren.

Sincerely,

DAVE SULLIVAN

Dr. Dave Sullivan

P.S. Questions? Concerns? I am available to talk, either to you or your school board. Saving the Elliott State Forest as part of our children's heritage is important to me, and I would welcome the chance to explain how Oregon's politicians are trying to steal it. -- Dave