



Conservation Northwest

State forestland in Whatcom County in northwest Washington. The state Supreme Court has accepted a case brought by environmentalists alleging the Department of Natural Resources focuses too much on logging.

Washington high court takes case on state logging

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

The Washington Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case brought by environmentalists challenging how the Department of Natural Resources manages about 2 million acres of forests.

Led by Conservation Northwest, the plaintiffs are asking the left-leaning court to toss out the department's historic focus on funding public institutions, especially rural schools and counties, with sustainable timber sales.

The suit claims DNR cuts old-growth forests and plants Douglas fir trees to maximize logging revenue and benefit a "few designated institutions," while ignoring the state constitution's requirement to hold the land in trust for "all the people."

American Forest Resources Council general counsel Lawson Fite said Monday the suit relies on an incomplete reading of the state constitution and pursues a policy that's not supported by history or law.

"It's very much an attack on public timber from state lands in Washington," Fite said.

The suit specifically alleges the Board of Natural Resources in late 2019 authorized too much logging and too little protection for the marbled murrelet, a federally protected bird that nests in old trees.

The forest council and several rural school districts and counties also sued. They claim the board set aside too many acres for murrelets and cut harvests by too much, violating its duty to fund public services.

That lawsuit is pending in Thurston County Superior Court. Conservation Northwest's lawsuit has already been dismissed. The early dismissal gave environmentalists a chance to get their case to

the Supreme Court first.

Justices Steven Gonzalez, Charles Johnson, Susan Owens, Sheryl Gordon McCloud and Raquel Montoya-Lewis unanimously agreed March 2 to take the case, bypassing the appeals court. No date has been set for oral arguments.

DNR did not have a comment on the lawsuit Monday. Conservation Northwest Executive Director Mitch Friedman said in a statement that he "can't wait for the state Supreme Court to speak on the matter."

"These lands are a gift that should not have to be squeezed for every dollar when they already benefit us in so many ways, from storing carbon to providing clean water, wildlife habitat and healthy recreation access," Friedman said.

As a prelude to Washington becoming a state in 1889, Congress granted Washington millions of acres to support public institutions. Beginning in the 1930s, DNR acquired more timberland through tax foreclosures.

The forest board in 2019 reduced harvest levels over the previous decade and set aside 168,000 acres for marbled murrelets. The bird has been seen on 59,000 acres. As trees grow, DNR anticipates setting aside more land for the bird.

The forest council, whose members buy most of the timber cut on DNR land, argues that the board set aside habitat that murrelets will never inhabit.

The council estimated the lower harvest levels will reduce funding for public services over 10 years by 23% or \$200 million compared to the previous decade. It warns the reduction will cause a further deterioration in the economies of rural communities.

In contrast, Conservation Northwest alleges DNR has chosen to "operate like a private timber company."

Phil Ward named CEO of Oregon FFA

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press



Phil Ward

As the son of a high school agriculture teacher, Phil Ward was introduced to FFA at a young age.

"I remember going to FFA events with him from the time I could walk," Ward said with a chuckle.

Ward, 66, would later earn his bachelor's and master's degrees in agricultural education from Oregon State University, becoming a high school agriculture teacher and FFA adviser himself for seven years. That would launch a career spanning decades serving farmers and ranchers while heading various government agencies.

Now Ward is coming back to where it all started. He was introduced Tuesday as Oregon FFA CEO, kicking off the

first day of the annual state convention.

"I'm just really excited to be part of the Oregon FFA team," Ward said. "I think it's a tremendous organization that has made a difference in the lives of so many people."

Ward replaces Shawn Dooley, who stepped down in October. Dooley was hired as the first Oregon FFA CEO in 2019, which at the time was a brand new position created to oversee staff, finances and fundraising for the Oregon FFA Foundation, Association and Alumni.

The three groups had previously voted to join together under a single management structure, governed by a 10-person joint policy board.

Kirk Maag, chairman of the Oregon FFA Foundation board of directors, said the organization was able to secure financial footing under Dooley's leadership. In 2020, Oregon FFA raised more than \$1 million, Maag said, including a \$500,000 donation from Northwest Farm Credit Services to establish a new endowment fund.

Ward started as a high school agriculture teacher and FFA adviser in Jefferson and Independence, Ore., before filling his resume with prominent roles at state agencies. He spent four years as director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture from 1999 to 2003, and 10 years as director of the Oregon Water Resources Department from 2004-14.

Most recently, Ward spent three years as state executive

director for the USDA Farm Service Agency from 2014-17 and has served as an adjunct professor in the College of Agriculture at OSU. He is also a former executive president of the Oregon Farm Bureau, and served on the boards of directors for the Oregon FFA Foundation and Oregon Dairy Nutrition Council.

Ward's experience managing complex budgets, leading large teams of employees and working collaboratively with volunteer organizations were all key factors in the board's decision, Maag said.

"Oregon FFA is so fortunate to have someone with Phil's passion for agriculture education join our team," Maag said. "We look forward to collaborating with Phil to ensure that Oregon FFA not only survives, but thrives going forward."

USDA seeks comment on climate solutions

Capital Press



Tom Vilsack

USDA has called for public input on a climate-smart agriculture and forestry strategy, in a notice published in the Federal Register on March 16.

The notice is an important step toward implementing President Biden's executive order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, USDA said in a press release.

The order, signed on Jan. 27, states "America's farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners have an important role to play in combating the cli-

mate crisis and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, by sequestering carbon in soils, grasses, trees, and other vegetation and sourcing sustainable bioproducts and fuels."

The order directs Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to solicit input from stakeholders as USDA develops a climate-smart agriculture and forestry approach.

"USDA is committed to addressing climate change through actions

that are farmer, rancher and forest landowner-focused and that create new market opportunities for the sector in a fair and equitable way," Vilsack said.

"We want your ideas on how to position the agriculture and forestry sectors to be leaders on climate-smart practices to mitigate climate change. This includes making the most of USDA programs, developing new USDA-led climate strategies, strengthening existing markets and developing new markets that generate income," he said.

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VIN = WP0AB299595721010
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NOTICE OF OREGON MINT COMMISSION PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING - TO: ALL OREGON MINT GROWERS
Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held pursuant to ORS 576.416 (5), on Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 8:00 a.m., via Zoom upon a proposed budget for operation of the Mint Commission during the fiscal year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. At this hearing any producer of Oregon Mint oil has a right to be heard with respect to the proposed budget, a copy of which is available for public inspection, under reasonable circumstances, in the office of each County Extension Agent in Oregon. For further information, contact the Oregon Mint Commission business office, P.O. Box 3366, Salem, Oregon 97302, telephone 503-364-2944. The meeting is accessible to persons with disabilities. Please make any requests for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodation for persons with disabilities at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting the Commission office at 503-364-2944.

LEGAL
NOTICE OF BLUEBERRY GROWERS COMMISSION BUDGET HEARING TO: ALL OREGON BLUEBERRY PRODUCERS
Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held pursuant to ORS 576.416 (5), on Monday, April 26, 2021 at 7:30 a.m. via Zoom, upon a proposed budget for operation of the Oregon Blueberry Commission during the fiscal year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. At this hearing any producer of Oregon Blueberries has a right to be heard with respect to the proposed budget, a copy of which is available for public inspection, under reasonable circumstances, in the office of each County Extension Agent in Oregon. For further information, contact the Oregon Blueberry Commission business office, P.O. Box 3366, Salem, Oregon 97302, telephone 503-364-2944. The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. Please make any requests for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodation for persons with disabilities at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting the Commission office at 503-364-2944.

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