

Redefining Values

Measure 34 sees the forest for the trees.

A current Oregon statute requires the Forestry Board to manage state forests for the "greatest permanent value." But proponents of Measure 34, arguing that the board too often interprets this mandate as free reign to log, want better protections for the forest.

"Right now, the primary value on our forest is timber production," says Yes on 34 campaign manager Mari Ann Gest.

The new management plan for the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests expands logging to more than 85 percent of the lands. The projected timber harvest for 2004, at 250 million board feet, is 61 percent greater than the 2002 harvest.

Measure 34 seeks to curtail the timber industry's influence on the forestry board by redefining the "greatest permanent value" of state forests. The measure would:

- Consider conservation to be as beneficial to the state as logging;
- Conserve 50 percent of the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests, leaving the other 50 percent open to timber harvests;
- Balance logging with all other forest uses, including conservation of wildlife and fish habitat, protection of drinking water, and expansion of recreational uses;
- Establish an Independent Restoration Science Team to make management recommendations to the Board of Forestry;
- Finance restoration work with 10 percent of timber revenues;
- Give 5 percent of state forest timber receipts to the Oregon Common School Fund, ensuring that local schools continue to receive ample funding; and
- Guarantee a family wage for forest workers.

MONEY MATTERS

The No on 34 campaign, spearheaded by the Alliance to Keep our State Forests Working, has raised \$2.3 million as of their Sept. 27 finance report. Ninety-eight percent of the contributions are from timber companies. The Yes on 34 campaign has only raised \$84,000, most of it from individual donors.

Opponents to Measure 34 argue that public schools in Tillamook, Clatsop and Washington Counties will lose funding if logging is restricted. But the measure's supporters counter that local public schools will continue to receive about \$18.5 million annually from the forests, and lost timber revenue can be recovered through recreation fees and tourism.

Opponents also claim that the measure would cost thousands of jobs in the timber industry. "It's particularly devastating in the rural communities," says No on 34 spokesperson Pat McCormick. "These are already communities that suffer from a lack of family-wage jobs."

But timber jobs are already eroding. According to the Oregon Employment Department, jobs in the wood product sector have been declining for half a century — from more than 3,000 Tillamook County jobs in 1952 to about 500 in 1999.

Regions that are heavily dependent on timber jobs are likely to face more unemployment than those with diverse economies.

"In general, greater diversification is very beneficial, and there is some doubt about the sustainability of the timber industry," says UO economist Trudy Ann Cameron.

A more sustainable source of jobs, says Gest, is tourism. A 2002 Oregon Tourism Commission report shows that 8,600 jobs — or more than 20 percent of total employment — in Tillamook and Clatsop counties are dependent on tourism. The forests draw an estimated 100,000 visitors annually to engage in recreational activities such as fishing, camping, hiking, hunting, bird-watching, kayaking, biking, and riding off-road vehicles.

More than 100 coastal business owners endorse Measure 34, concerned that Tillamook and Clatsop Counties could face declining tourism revenue and property values under the current forest management plan.

"There are a lot of things that worry me about the current plan," says professional fishing guide Bob Rees, who relies on live fish from the Tillamook. "We've already lost five of our six fisheries, and it's just going to lead to more closures."

'The timber industries are treating the Tillamook like it's their forest. It's not. It belongs to the citizens of Oregon.'

— MARI ANN GEST
Yes on 34 Campaign Manager

SPECIAL INTERESTS

State law specifies that no more than three of the seven members of the state Forestry Board are permitted to have financial conflicts of interest, but Measure 34's authors suspect closer ties.

"By our estimation, it's arguable that all seven have conflicts of interest," says Yes on 34 Outreach Director Lyndon Ruhnke.

Opponents argue that Measure 34 challenges a plan informed by seven years of public process, instead allowing an independent team of scientists to guide forest management. "Without any public input, they are responsible for writing the plan that will establish reserves in the Tillamook and Clatsop Forests," says McCormick.

But in written comments received by the state, the public favored watershed protections and improved recreational opportunities over logging by a ratio of 10-1, says Gest. And the forestry board may have subverted the public process by making side deals with the timber industry (see "Dispute over extra staffing derails plans for cutting in state forests," *The Oregonian*, 4/10).

Measure 34 is not radical; it is a compromise, says Gest. It allows for logging on half of the Tillamook and Clatsop state forests while conserving water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreational values.

"The timber industries are treating the Tillamook like it's their forest," says Gest. "It's not. It belongs to the citizens of Oregon."

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