



Steve Lundeberg/Oregon State University

Mount Jefferson is the dominant feature of the Mount Jefferson Wilderness, where more than 100,000 acres of forestland is protected from logging, grazing and mining.

Scientists call for more forest protection to fight climate change

Researchers outline plan for strategic forest reserves

By CASSANDRA PROFITA
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Researchers with Oregon State University say the U.S. needs to establish new strategic forest reserves to protect wildlife and reduce the carbon emissions that contribute to climate change.

A new study maps the Western forests that would store the most carbon and help the most species if they were given the same level of protection from logging, grazing and mining as designated wilderness areas receive.

Researchers analyzed which forests are protected in 11 states and which ones should be prioritized for protection in the future, outlining a plan for creating strategic forest reserves across the region.

Their findings were published in the journal *Nature*.

The scientists are calling on state, federal and tribal governments as well as private landowners to use their research and protect certain forests to reduce the impacts of climate change and protect biodiversity.

“Policymakers, including those in the Biden administration, frequently talk about the need to protect forests in developing countries,” Oregon State University Professor Emeritus Beverly Law said. “Forests in the Pacific Northwest have enormous carbon storage potential but U.S.

public lands are often overlooked.”

Law and other researchers identified how much additional land would need to be protected to meet international climate goals of protecting 30% of land and water by 2030.

The Biden administration has set similar domestic goals to protect 30% of U.S. land and waters by 2030 but has yet to develop a specific plan to do so. Law said she has been sharing her science with the administration.

“We’re saying, ‘Look here. Look here.’ Are these good candidates for protection?” Law said.

She said the key forests for storing carbon and protecting species diversity in Oregon and Washington state are along the coast.

“We have probably the best forests in the lower 48 states for storing carbon and continuing to accumulate carbon because these trees live 800 years or more in the Northwest,” she said.

In previous research, Law found that not logging certain forests would store more of the carbon that contributes to climate change while also reducing carbon emissions from logging.

“When you have a disturbance such as fire, and when wood is removed and harvested and put into wood products, you have to follow the carbon,” she said. “And it turns out that ... harvest-related emissions are five to seven times that of the fire emissions in Oregon.”

Nick Smith, the public affairs director

with the American Forest Resource Council, said creating protected reserves will not reduce the risk of severe wildfires that will emit carbon from the forest. He said severe wildfires have hurt species, such as the northern spotted owl, by burning forest habitat.

“Climate change requires actively managing forests for mitigation and adaptation, as well as to maintain healthy, growing trees needed to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere,” Smith said in a response to the proposed reserves. His organization is a trade association that advocates for timber harvests on public timberlands in the West.

For her latest study, Law and her colleagues analyzed data on biodiversity, carbon storage and vulnerability to drought and wildfire in forests across the Western U.S. to determine which forests should be high priorities for protection. They also looked at how much carbon the forests could potentially store by 2030 and 2050.

They found the best forests for storing carbon and protecting imperiled species are mostly on federal land, where government agencies or elected officials could use executive action, regulation or rule-making to install permanent protections. That could mean banning logging, mining and grazing indefinitely.

“The key to this is that it needs to be permanent,” Law said. “That means you’re going to keep the carbon there. You’re not going to cut the forest. The high carbon density forests are mature and older forest.”

Law said older forests can store more

carbon in trees, plants and soil, and they are also valuable places for large, threatened carnivores, such as the gray wolf and Canada lynx. Protecting certain forests strategically could help address both climate change and biodiversity concerns, she said.

“What it provides is protection from human influences,” she said. “We tend to mess things up. So, this allows those forests to continue to grow. It’s the reservoir. We obviously have to reduce our fossil fuel emissions, but we also need to protect the reservoirs of carbon in the ocean and on the land.”

Researchers also found a significant amount of the high-priority lands are on private land, where they say governments could offer incentives and support voluntary protections or the land could be purchased for conservation.

Law said they also looked at the data on a state level and found Oregon only has the highest level of protection for 7% of its forestland.

“That’s nothing,” Law said. “We’re not doing so well compared to other states. When we look at how much states have put aside for protection, Oregon comes in last, surprisingly.”

The Oregon Department of Forestry declined to comment. A spokesperson for Gov. Kate Brown said her office is still reviewing the research and would likely need to talk with federal, local and tribal governments as well as stakeholders about the forest reserve proposals.

Oregon military apologizes for ‘inadvertent’ sonic boom

Associated Press

SALEM — Military officials in Oregon said a sonic boom that caused widespread concern on the Oregon Coast that an earthquake had happened was caused by an aircraft that “inadvertently went supersonic.”

The 142nd Wing of the Oregon Air National Guard said the sonic boom on Tuesday was caused by aircraft.

Master Sgt. Steven Conklin, a spokesman for the 142nd Wing, said the military is authorized to fly supersonic 15 miles beyond the coastline, but pilots should not have the nose of the jet pointed toward the coast.

The 142nd Wing in a Facebook post

apologized for causing concern among coast residents.

“During this training, we inadvertently went supersonic, and caused a sonic boom while pointed slightly toward the coastline while greater than 15 miles away from land,” the 142nd Wing posted. “We understand that this caused concern from our coastal residents and for that we sincerely apologize.”

Conklin said the aircraft were a single-pilot F-15C and a two-person F-15D Eagle.

While speeds fluctuate during training, “it is not uncommon to go supersonic during basic fighter maneuvers, sometimes referred to as dogfighting,” he said.

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Union workers end strike at Fred Meyer, QFC stores

By APRIL EHRLICH
Oregon Public Broadcasting

The union representing thousands of Oregon grocery workers reached a tentative labor agreement with management Friday night, ending a strike that was scheduled to run through Christmas Eve.

The United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555, representing many employees at Fred Meyer and QFC stores, said the new agreement provides significant wage increases and workplace protections, new retirement and health care benefits.

The union has been in negotiations for months with the Kroger-owned supermarket chains. Last weekend, union announced its members had authorized a strike, which began Friday morning at stores in Portland, Bend, Newberg and Klamath Falls.

After the strike authorization, at least one Fred Meyer store posted a sign saying it was seeking temporary workers willing to cross picket lines.

Prior to reaching a tentative agreement, union representatives said that Fred Meyer has been underpaying certain workers in violation of contract terms. A union spokesperson has also said the grocery chain hasn’t been providing necessary information to the union to refute or verify its concern, or to address it through the grievance process.

The union said this inadequate pay and lack of documentation constitute unfair labor practices — and it’s on the basis of these unfair labor allegations that the union had been preparing to strike.

A spokesperson for Fred Meyer has said the company is following, and plans to continue to follow, applicable labor laws.

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