

OSU Research Forests

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How many different forests do you manage, and where are they located?

Oregon State University owns **15,000** acres of OSU Research Forests across the state where students learn, study and work. Timber sales from the forests are used to support the College of Forestry and its mission. Cutting-edge research on trees, streams and managed ecosystems is conducted throughout the ten individual forests.

[The forests](#) include the Blodgett Tract, Cameron Tract, Collins Demonstration Forest, Matteson Tract, Marchel Tract, McDonald and Dunn Forests, Oberteuffer Forest, Ram's Dell and Spaulding Tract.

2. Who owns the Forests, and what is the mission for managing them?

Oregon State University owns the OSU Research Forests, with operations led by the OSU College of Forestry. Each of our forests is unique in terms of its mission and purpose. Many are open for recreation. Others serve as experiment sites. All of the forests share the same goal: to provide diverse opportunities for learning, discovery and dissemination of new knowledge.

3. What drives management decisions and why do you manage for multiple uses instead of maximizing revenue generation?

The health of our forests and communities drives our management plan and we [actively manage forests](#) for multiple uses. The management of the forests aims to meet a broad suite of values and goals. We work to provide habitat for myriad species, provide an aesthetically pleasing landscape, create recreation opportunities, generate timber revenue, and more. Revenue goes directly towards meeting these objectives, as well as supporting the OSU College of Forestry's education, research and outreach mission. While our forests are not public forests, we manage for public values.

4. How are the Forests funded?

We are tax exempt and most of our funding comes from timber harvesting. Other small income includes gas royalties and rent from communication towers on our property. We do not receive funds from Oregon State University or the State of Oregon.

5. How is revenue generated on the Forests used?

We use revenue generated on the forests to manage for multiple values and provide support for College of Forestry research, education, and outreach initiatives. Revenue also funds forest operations, maintenance, and infrastructure. We occasionally fund new recreation activities through grants, but all existing programs are funded through forest revenue.

A summary of Research Forests' revenue and expenses from the last five years for the McDonald, Dunn, and Blodgett forests [is here](#). Revenue during this time supported College of Forestry research, education, and outreach initiatives, including providing funds to support the Oregon Forest Science

Complex project and purchasing a portion of Peavy Arboretum from the Oregon Department of Forestry.

Increases in revenue in the last five years can be attributed to numerous factors, including a strong market for log prices, salvage logging from the 2014 ice storm, a decision by the College to retain the Blodgett Forest, and funding a portion of the OFSC project.

6. Are the HJ Andrews Experimental Forest or Elliott State Forest included in the OSU Research Forests system?

No. The H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest is a United States Forest Service research forest. The Elliott is a state forest owned by the Department of State Lands and managed for the Common School Fund.

7. Who do I contact with more questions?

Call 541-737-2004 or fill out the [contact form on our website](#).

About Forest Management and Timber Harvests

1. Why does the OSU Research Forests harvest timber?

To support our mission of providing teaching, research & demonstration opportunities for students, faculty and the public. We provide these opportunities to foresters, civil engineers, wildlife specialists, ecologists, silviculturists, social scientists, the Corvallis community, and more.

To provide revenue to the OSU Research Forests and the College of Forestry. Revenue from harvest operations is used to support research, outreach and engagement programs, education programs and Research Forests operations. Net revenue generated from timber sales is a component of the college's annual and long-term budgeting, including fiscal reserves.

To manage and maintain forest health. About half of our harvests this year are tackling insect problems in our tree populations.

2. What is revenue from harvests used for?

Revenue from harvest operations is used to support College of Forestry research, outreach and engagement programs, education programs and Research Forests operations. Net revenue generated from timber sales is a component of the college's annual and long-term budgeting, including fiscal reserves.

3. Where do the logs go, and what are they used for?

The logs from our harvest units are delivered to a number of different mills throughout the Pacific Northwest. While some mills are designed to operate using Douglas-fir trees, other mills prefer to produce products from grand fir, hemlock, etc. In addition to preference of tree species, different mills also prefer different diameter trees, which dictates where logs are delivered. Harvested trees are not exported overseas per Oregon Administrative Rules.

4. How does OSU Research Forests follow State Forestry laws?

Our forest operations and management comply with all regulations and standards as identified by the Oregon Forest Practices Act (FPA), which outlines rules and regulations surrounding harvesting, reforestation, herbicide applications, road construction, stream protection, and more.

5. Why do you burn slash piles?

Reducing slash is recognized as a necessary forest management tool by the State of Oregon for the protection of reproduction and residual forest stands from risks of fire, insects and disease, to prepare a site for future tree growth productivity, and to minimize the risk of material entering streams ([relevant code here](#)).

Other alternatives, like chipping, are cost prohibitive. We regularly evaluate alternatives to removing slash.

6. Why do you use herbicides?

Harvest sites are treated with herbicides to allow Douglas-fir seedlings to become established by temporarily suppressing vegetation. Herbicide applications reduce the competition for vital resources including water, sunlight, and nutrients between Douglas-fir seedlings and other plants such as blackberry, vine maple, salal, sword fern, and other fast-establishing shrubs and grasses.

7. What are your typical silvicultural prescriptions, and how do you choose which ones to use?

Thinning operations are a standard treatment intended to reduce the number of trees per acre by removing the suppressed, broken, or deformed trees and leaving the healthy trees to continue growing. Thinning not only improves tree growth, promotes habitat features, and improves health and longevity, but can also inhibit the spread of insects and diseases.

Clear cut harvests are the most operationally efficient harvesting method and create-even aged stands by increasing light availability. Other common treatments we employ, when appropriate, include selective harvesting and shelterwood cutting, which typically leaves 10-15 trees per acre standing to assist with regeneration.

We consider a number of different factors to decide which treatments to use including stand age, stocking density, trajectory (what do we want that area to look like in the future), health and vigor, wildlife habitat and aesthetics. We also consider research opportunities, cultural and natural resources, revenue generation, impacts to recreation and neighbors, and road access.

8. What are your typical harvest methods and how do you choose which ones to use?

We use several methods for timber harvesting, including steep slope cable systems and ground-based systems (wheeled or tracked machines that move logs to a landing) used for thinning and clear cuts.

We utilize LIDAR and field verification to determine which type of harvest method to use in each unit based on topography, and we take into account soil moisture, equipment capabilities, safety, residual stand damage, and much more. The time of year and weather conditions also influence harvest operation decisions.

9. Why do you close areas to the public during harvests?

We close harvest areas to ensure the safety of the public and the contractors, as harvesting is extremely hazardous.

In 2018, logging was identified as the [most dangerous job in the United States](#). Harvest operations are extremely dangerous due to a combination of steep and rugged terrain, harsh environmental conditions, use of hand-held power equipment, falling and rolling trees, and limited visibility and hearing associated with operating large equipment.

10. Do you protect cultural resources?

Our forests are rich with prehistoric and historic significance. Protecting these resources is required by law and aligns with our multiple-use values mission.

11. Why don't you send out notice of closures further in advance?

Harvest start dates are determined based on contractor availability, and are usually determined only days in advance. Every January, the year's upcoming harvests are thoroughly detailed in a Harvest Schedule Article. Information for each planned harvest is also available through our Interactive Webmap which updates in real time.

12. What is the difference between the OSU's research forests and privately held forests in Oregon and nationally that are managed for wood production?

The research forests, held by OSU and the College of Forestry, are managed for multiple forest values while also seeking to achieve the overall mission of the College. Our operations create more complex stands and community opportunities in comparison to a private, forest harvest operation, which manage lands primarily for wood production. [Read this article](#) to learn more information about differences between the OSU Research Forests and privately held forests that are managed for wood production.

13. Why are there more harvests in the McDonald and Dunn Forests in the past few years?

Although the number of harvests on the McDonald and Dunn Forests has remained relatively stable over the past several years, the harvests have recently occurred in locations more visible to the public. This shift has occurred to provide active management and promote forest health throughout the entirety of the two forests.

14. How is the community involved in decision making?

The community is invited to contact us through the form on our website with any comments, questions or concerns. They can [get involved](#) with the forests in a number of ways. The Forest Recreation Advisory Council provides feedback related to recreation-related management, and we actively involve the community in planning for recreation activities through surveys and outreach.

Community members are encouraged to sign-up for our [e-newsletter](#), [follow us on social media](#), and regularly [check our website](#) to learn about harvest and recreation activities and understand how they can engage, provide feedback and ask questions.

15. How do you take into account aesthetics when planning timber harvests?

When planning our timber harvests, we take many factors into account and pay close attention to where the activity will take place. We attempt to fit our harvest activity into the existing landscape. Our harvested areas typically have irregular boundaries. We leave more trees within harvesting areas than required by the Oregon Forest Practices Act, including trees along the road for shade. We ensure remaining stumps aren't jagged, clean up garbage and ensure the cleanliness of nearby roads.

16. How many miles of roads are on the OSU Research Forests?

Within the McDonald and Dunn Forests there are 110 miles of road.

17. Do you replant after harvest?

Yes. Operations at the OSU Research Forests comply with all regulations and standards as identified by the Oregon Forest Practices Act. We plant 50,000-90,000 seedlings per year.

18. Why do you clear-cut trees?

Harvesting is often conducted with the desired future condition of a stand as the driving element. In the case of Douglas-fir in western Oregon, this species grows best in open spaces. Douglas-fir species require a lot of light to grow, which clearcutting allows. As we manage forests for multiple uses, clear-cutting allows us to meet revenue goals.

To meet multiple values, our clear-cuts are smaller than private timber companies' – 30 acres and under – and we leave many residual trees for wildlife habitat and designed our clearcuts to fit into the landscape from an aesthetic perspective. We also employ other harvest options when appropriate, including selective harvesting and shelterwood cutting.

19. Why does logging need to happen near heavily used recreation areas?

We are zoned by Benton County for forest conservation – the growing and harvesting of trees – and that remains our primary use of the forest. Recreation is a conditional use. Due to the relative small size of the OSU Research Forests, and the need to manage for multiple objectives, harvests will take place near heavily used recreation areas at times. However, we have always and will continue to manage for multiple uses with public values in mind.

20. Do the OSU Research Forests manage for wildfire during extreme weather years?

Yes. Through fuel reduction in targeted areas and other prevention methods, our forests are managed for wildfire. We believe public education is an important part of this goal. We also follow a suppression plan to ensure the health of our forests protect research projects, and adjacent private property.

About Natural and Cultural Resources

1. Do you protect cultural resources?

Our forests are rich with prehistoric and historic significance. Cultural sites are identified during surveys, and we exclude these sites from management activities and work with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office to mitigate any disturbance we may cause. Protecting these resources falls under our managing for multiple values mission and is also required by law.

2. Do you have mature trees on the Forests, and how do you manage them?

We have mature forest reserves within our forests. No timber harvesting occurs within the approximately 384 acres of mature forest reserves.

3. Do you protect stream health?

Yes. As we manage for multiple uses, we consider the health of streams and other water sources. Operations at the OSU Research Forests comply with all regulations and standards as identified by the Oregon Forest Practices Act and maintain roads and ditches specifically to minimize sedimentation.

4. What kind of wildlife species can we find in your forests?

We have a wide variety of [wildlife](#) species within the forest. We have healthy game populations of turkey, deer and elk and predators including cougars and coyotes.

5. Do you manage dead wood and insects?

Yes. We manage for dead wood and we actively create dead wood in our site preparations. The Oregon Forest Practices Act requires that we leave a certain amount of large woody debris and we comply with all regulations and standards. Because most insects attack trees under stress, we maintain healthy trees by thinning to reduce competition for moisture. In recent years, the forests have seen a greater impact from drought and insects, which has driven some harvest choices over the last couple of years.

About Forest Uses

1. What kind of [recreation](#) activities happen on the forests?

We welcome picnickers, hikers, trail runners, mountain bikers, equestrians, dog walkers, hunters, nature enthusiasts, *and you* to explore our almost 30 miles of trails and over 110 miles of roads.

2. How does the College of Forestry use the forests?

The College of Forestry utilizes the OSU Research Forests for educational opportunities including classes, labs, research at all levels and other hands-on learning opportunities. One example is the Student Logging Training Program, which provides a unique opportunity for students to learn how to manage for multiple values and experience real-world logging applications on the McDonald and Dunn forests. We also hire students to do forest management, engineering, recreation, forest inventory and reforestation duties.

3. What kind of research happens on the forests?

Faculty and students conduct [research](#) on the forests within the areas of silviculture, water, wood products, wildlife, recreation and timber harvesting. This research is often conducted with the help of industry and community partners and has real-world applications.

About Community

1. How does the forest support community environmental education efforts?

We offer [engagement opportunities](#) to help meet Oregon State's vision to promote economic, social, cultural and environmental progress for the people of Oregon, the nation and the world. Our forests offer many opportunities for individuals, families and community groups to learn about the natural world through informal and guided settings.

2. How is the community involved in decision making?

The community is invited to contact us through the form on our website with any comments, questions or concerns. They can [get involved](#) with the forests in a number of ways. The Forest Recreation Advisory Council provides feedback related to recreation-related management, and we actively involve the community in planning for recreation activities through surveys and outreach.

Community members are encouraged to sign-up for our [e-newsletter](#), [follow us on social media](#), and regularly [check our website](#) to learn about harvest and recreation activities and understand how they can engage, provide feedback and ask questions.

About Recreation

1. Why do you manage for recreation use?

Outreach and recreation are part of our mission, and we are happy to invite members of the public to experience the beauty of our forests and see a well-managed, working forest up close.

2. How much recreation use does the forest get?

The forests have over 155,000 user visits annually. According to a recent report, recreation activity on the forests has a cost of illness savings (COI), or health benefit, of more than **\$750,000**. These COI savings accrue to health insurers, providers and outdoor recreation participants, and are associated with mitigating the symptoms of eight chronic illnesses.

3. How many miles of trails?

The forests manage a 30-mile system of high quality, non-motorized [trails](#), many of which are built and maintained by devoted community volunteers. They are open to pedestrian, bicycle and equine use.

4. Is hunting allowed?

[Yes, except](#) in the McDonald Forest, the Marchel tract and the Collins Demonstration Forest. Interested hunters can learn about the application process to access the Dunn Forest for hunting, and how to apply for a permit, [online](#).

5. Where can I park?

[Parking is available at many trailheads](#), but is limited. We encourage alternate transportation options and are actively exploring alternative options for trail access.

6. Are dogs allowed on the OSU Research Forests?

Yes. Our vision is for [our trails](#) to look and smell beautiful, and to be safe and fun places for pets and humans to enjoy the natural world. Dogs on the OSU Research Forests are required to be under voice control or on a leash. Owners are responsible for picking up after their pets and disposing of waste in the bins provided.

7. Are visitors at risk of cougar attack?

Although there are cougars in the forests, the risk of cougar attack is low. Visitors can reduce their risk by utilizing the forests during daylight hours, not wearing headphones and keeping dogs on leashes.

8. How do I learn more about visiting the OSU Research Forests? Are there resources for planning my trip?

[Please visit our website.](#)

9. How do I know when my favorite recreation area is closed for [harvest activities](#)?

We publish all closure information on our website and provide [email communications](#).