

Forestry Issues and Public Policy

An Action Guide for Woodland Owners

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Ballot measures that restrict forest management, new stream-protection requirements, changes to timber taxes, land use laws—hardly a year goes by without the emergence of a policy issue with important implications for family forest owners.

Yet many owners don't take an active role to help influence forest policies. In effect, they have been on the receiving end of policies conceived, developed, lobbied, and carried out by others. It does not have to be this way.

The challenge for Oregon's family forest owners is to become active in forest policy development rather than simply to wait for things to happen. Being active requires learning how forest issues emerge, how related policies are shaped, and how and when landowners can weigh in effectively during these processes.

This publication provides basic information about the policy-making process and guidelines for constructive personal and group involvement.

Public policies are developed at the federal, state, and local levels. In this publication, we focus primarily on state-level policy making, which has the most direct



Figure 1.—The Columbia County courthouse and environs symbolize the juncture of forests and public policy making.

bearing on private forest management. However, many of the principles discussed also apply well to federal and local policy development.

Policy – it's more than rules and regulations

Policy is simply an agreed-on course of action taken to achieve an objective. But even experienced policy makers sometimes forget that restrictive rules and regulations are not the only way to achieve desired objectives on forest lands. Incentives, education, technical assistance, and other measures can be equally or more effective in meeting public goals for private lands.

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How policy is made

Four processes are key in creating state-wide policies in Oregon: legislation, ballot initiatives, executive powers, and agency rule making. Let's take a look at each.

Legislation

In our representative system of government, legislation probably is the most familiar process of policy making. We are accustomed to seeing issues debated in the public forum, summarized in "bill" form, and voted on by elected representatives. To become involved effectively in this type of policy making, however, you'll need a good understanding of the legislative process.

Legislation begins when a group or individual identifies an issue, need, or problem and brings it to the attention of a legislator. Advocacy or interest groups (or the lobbyists that represent them) usually play this role; sometimes, public agencies or leaders do. The interested parties must convince the legislator that a problem or need exists and that a new or revised law is a reasonable solution. Legislators are key people in this process because they have the power to introduce bills for consideration. Usually

Building support for a bill *before* it is first discussed in a legislative committee hearing is critical to improving the odds of the bill's passage.

the legislator's staff develops the key concepts for a bill, but those also can originate with public and private groups. Legislative counsel typically drafts the actual bill language.

Once introduced in the legislative session, the proposed bill begins its run through a gauntlet of committees and hearings where it can be approved, defeated, or abandoned. Once out of a committee, a bill can be referred to another committee, particularly if it involves appropriations, or it can go on to the "floor" for consideration. If a bill is successful in navigating through both House and Senate, it is sent to the Governor, who can sign it into law, veto it, or simply let a legal deadline pass without acting on the bill, in which case it takes effect.

With some limitations, committees and their leaders exert great influence on the legislative process. The real legislative work is done in committee, where lobbyists and interested citizens may direct their comments or testify during public hearings to support or oppose a bill. Every bill is assigned to a specific committee, which can:

- Hold a bill without taking any action on it
- Recommend that the bill be referred to another committee
- Amend the bill and send it back to the House or Senate, or
- Return the bill to the House or Senate floor with recommendation for action

Both houses of Oregon's Legislative Assembly have several standing committees, each with from five to nine members. Each session, the legislative leadership appoints members to the committees as well as the chairs and co-chairs. In 2005, for example, the Senate used 18 standing committees, the House 17. Each legislator usually serves on two to four committees.

Just as important as committee work are the informal conversations and meetings during which lobbyists and other advocates "pitch" their ideas to legislators and argue for or against proposed legislation. Gaining access to, and building relationships with, legislators is key to making this work, and the chairs and co-chairs of important committees are key legislators to work with.

Like sausage making, the legislative process is messy (Figure 2). It involves give and take, debate and persuasion, conflict, and compromise. It's easier to kill or ignore a bill than to pass one: in a typical Oregon legislative session, only about a third of the several thousand bills introduced eventually are signed into law. Building support for a bill *before* it is first discussed in a committee hearing is critical to improving those odds. The broader and deeper the support, the better a bill's chance of success.

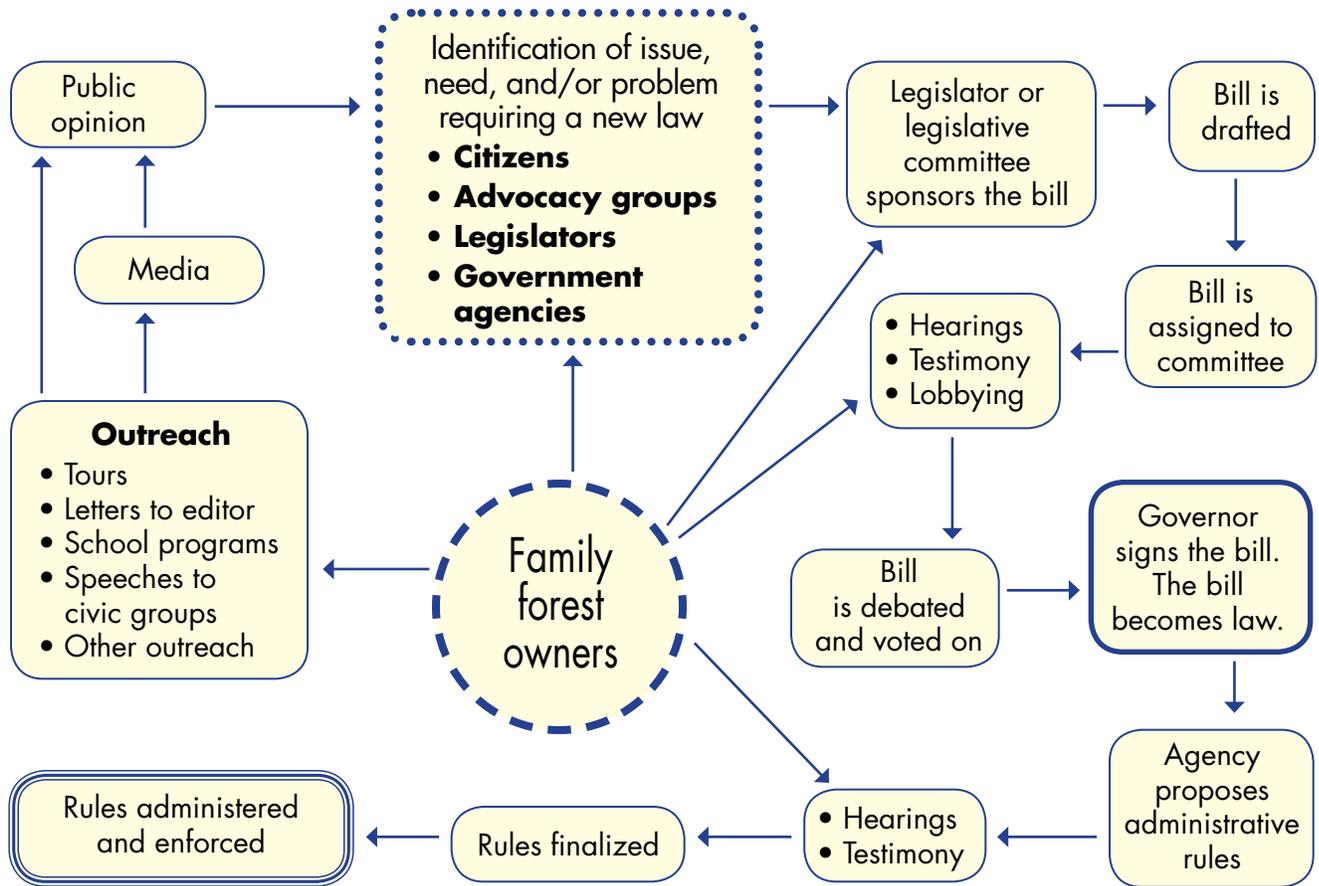


Figure 2.—Making the “sausage.” A simplified view of the forest policy making process and where family forest owners can fit in.

Ballot initiatives and referenda

Oregon’s constitution allows citizens to introduce ballot initiatives which, if approved by voters, can establish, amend, or repeal provisions in Oregon law or the state’s constitution.

Referenda are measures referred to voters by the legislature; referenda also can change laws or the state constitution. In some cases these are small “housekeeping” changes, while others may address controversial issues that the legislature may be unable or unwilling to resolve itself.

Key requirements for qualifying an initiative for the ballot include a legal screening by the state for single-issue focus

and clarity of the ballot title, a minimum number of signatures of registered voters, and an analysis of economic impacts to state government. Often there are just a few weeks between when an initiative officially is qualified for the ballot and when testimony must be submitted on the fiscal impact of the measure and arguments must be submitted for inclusion in the voter’s pamphlet.

Policy by ballot initiative has advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side, it allows for grassroots democracy, can address controversial issues that elected officials have chosen to avoid, and can establish clear mandates for government action. On the minus side, the initiative



Figure 3.—A certain number of registered Oregon voters must sign an initiative petition before the petition can be placed on the ballot.

process lacks the give-and-take and scrutiny of the legislative process; some argue the latter results in solutions with fewer flaws and more balance. Initiatives also can create “unfunded” mandates requiring state agencies to act but without providing the resources to implement those actions.

Ballot initiatives are a fact of life in Oregon and can have important implications for family forest owners. For example, Ballot Measure 64, which was defeated in 1998, would have dramatically restricted timber harvest and other practices on private forestlands throughout the state. Ballot Measure 37, which passed in 2004, could affect how land-use regulations are implemented and developed in the future.

State election laws prohibit state employees from advocating for or against an initiative or ballot measure. Even though state employees (including Extension educators) and agency leaders may have a strong opinion about an initiative within their area of expertise, don’t expect them to share those views while on the job. Although they can provide relevant factual information about the measure as a service to the public, state personnel must take care to avoid saying or doing anything that could be interpreted as political campaigning.

Executive powers

The governor can influence the policy making process in several important ways.

- By appointing members (subject to legislative approval) to key citizen boards and commissions, such as the Board of Forestry, which develop or influence policies that affect private forest lands. Other appointed boards include the Fish and Wildlife Commission, which sets policy for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Water Resources Board, which oversees the Water Resources Department. Individuals who are interested in serving on such boards and commissions can work with the Governor’s appointments office, accessible online at <http://www.governor.state.or.us/Gov/boards.shtml>
- By issuing Executive Orders, proclamations, and the like, which direct agency action or establish new programs, committees, or advisory groups. One such Order was former Governor John Kitzhaber’s “Oregon Plan” which set direction for state and voluntary private actions relating to salmon and watershed protection.
- By proposing legislation and by vetoing bills and agency or program budgets. Note that state agencies cannot independently introduce legislation. It must be done through the Governor’s office.

Administrative rules

Many laws that are passed by the legislature become statutes (ORS, or Oregon Revised Statutes) that simply establish some broad policy objectives and approaches for agencies or policy boards to follow. To implement the law and meet the objectives, the agency or board often develops and adopts detailed, how-to directives that are called administrative rules (OARs or Oregon Administrative Rules). We might think of a law (statute) as setting the target and think of the rules as

the specific requirements for meeting that target. Rules supplement rather than replace laws, although rules' legal foundation can make them seem much like laws. Boards and commissions can adopt administrative rules only within the scope of the authority granted to them by statutes.

The rule-making process presents another important chance for citizens to influence policy, particularly the detailed requirements that forest owners may need to follow as they manage their property. Rule-making hearings give opportunities to influence the wording of the final rule or to urge that no rule be adopted.

Before adopting, amending, or repealing any rule, Oregon agencies and policy boards must give public notice of their

intended action. Notice also must be given to people who have requested that an agency mail announcements of its intended action. Citizens must be given "reasonable opportunity" to submit data or views, and groups may be granted oral hearings.

The Oregon State Board of Forestry is a prominent forest policy-making body in Oregon. The board establishes policy for most Oregon Department of Forestry activities, including forest practices rule making and appointing the State Forester. The seven board members are private citizens nominated by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. Board members serve for 4-year terms and are limited to two consecutive terms.

Key players in the legislative process

Legislators Legislators introduce legislation, chair and staff committees, and debate and vote on bills.

Legislative staff Staff typically monitor issues, draft bills, and work with other legislative and agency staff. They may have specific knowledge in certain policy areas, and the legislator for whom they work relies on them for advice. Legislators often focus on broad policy issues; their staff focus on the details. Staff include those who work directly for legislators, those who work for committees, and those who work in key offices such as the legislative fiscal office (which controls appropriations) and the legislative revenue office (which controls taxation.)

Governor The governor has the power to introduce, sign, or veto bills, issue Executive Orders and directives, and appoint members of key commissions, boards (e.g., the State Board of Forestry), and agencies.

Governor's staff As with legislative staff, much of the detail work in the state's Executive Office occurs at the staff level.

Lobbyists Lobbyists monitor and influence policy making on behalf of advocacy and interest groups.

Though lobbyists often have a negative image, they represent groups in all segments of society and provide much detailed and relevant information for policy makers.

Advocacy and interest groups These groups promote the interests of their members and supporters. Some focus on political advocacy, while others have a broader mission and a tax status (e.g., many are not-for-profit organizations) that limit their political activity.

State agencies With the Governor's approval, state agency leaders may propose, oppose, or promote legislation, including bills that involve program budgets. Agency staff often are called on by legislators or by commissions and boards overseeing state agencies to discuss the implications of proposed legislation.

News media The media play a key role in building public awareness and forming opinion. Most citizens get their information about forest-related issues from the news media, although the Internet is an increasingly important source of information.

Where the rubber meets the road – administration and enforcement

By themselves, rules and regulations are simply words set down in documents and manuals. Merely passing a law and establishing administrative rules do not ensure that the intended results will be achieved. To be effective, policies must be administered and enforced. Compliance is enhanced when those being regulated support the law. Successful administration and enforcement is often as much about people, relationships, and communication as it is about the technical aspects of the policy.

Administering complex rules often involves:

- Specific written policies for operations and other action (i.e., the “rules” themselves)
- Formal and informal protocols and priorities for the policies (how the “system” really works)
- Multiple agencies (e.g., Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Division of State Lands) with differing missions
- One or more key staff (e.g., ODF Stewardship Foresters)
- How written policies actually are interpreted by staff “on the ground” (i.e., rule “guidance”)
- People and personalities (who are subject to individual biases, have strengths and weaknesses, etc.)

Since forest owners are concerned primarily with how rules and regulations work “on the ground,” they can help policy makers and administrators identify where policies have significant flaws or weaknesses that may become obvious only upon implementation.

The role of the courts

When serious conflicts arise in policy development, administration, or enforcement, the courts may become involved. Courts interpret the law, lay down decisions

and penalties, and establish precedents. Courts differ from the legislative and executive branches in some important ways. For example, except for ruling a law invalid, courts cannot “make” policy. However, their case rulings can affect (sometimes greatly) how laws and administrative rules are applied. Groups or citizens thus may file appeals or lawsuits as a way to influence how policies are implemented.

Forest policies of concern to landowners

Three state-level areas of policy of great concern to many family forest owners are forest practice rules, land-use regulations, and forestland taxation. All three areas have seen significant changes in recent years.

Forest Practices Rules

The Oregon Forest Practices Act (FPA), enacted in 1971, affects commercial forest operations and activities on nearly 12 million acres of nonfederal forestland statewide. Administrative rules developed under the mandate of the FPA address harvesting, reforestation, road construction and repair, slash disposal, chemical use, and protection of water, sensitive-resource sites, and threatened and endangered species. (For more information, see EC 1194, *Oregon’s Forest Practice Rules*, page 16). Over the years, these rules have been revisited many times in response to new information and social concerns, some of which also have led to amendments of the FPA itself.

Forest practice rule making is seldom without controversy. Interest groups, legislators, state and federal agencies, woodland owners, forest operators, and a host of others take an interest in rule development. Some woodland owners view the rules as increasingly, and inappropriately, restrictive, while others support rule changes as providing needed protections. Regardless, woodland owners will benefit from understanding how the rules are crafted and who gets involved in the process.

The Oregon Board of Forestry (BOF), whose members are nominated by the Governor, ultimately is responsible for reviewing, revising, and adopting rules. Impetus to change the rules may come from new legislation, agency recommendations, public input, or the Governor's office. Three standing, regional forest-practice advisory

committees review and comment on proposed rule changes. Committee members primarily are forest owners and operators. Committee and BOF meetings are open to the public and usually include a period for public comments.

The BOF can appoint other advisory committees to provide input about rule

Case study*

Evolution of the Stream Protection Rules

Few areas of Oregon forest policy development have been as contentious as the development of the water protection rules, specifically those related to requirements for retaining streamside trees and other vegetation.

Streamside vegetation provides a host of ecological functions including several important for salmon. Frequently, streamside areas also contain commercially valuable trees. Deciding on the appropriate balance between ecological benefits and economic impacts to private owners, under evolving scientific knowledge, is by its nature a politically challenging process.

Under legislation passed in 1991 (Senate Bill 1125), the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) was required to revise the Oregon Forest Practices Act stream classification and protection administrative rules. After ODF staff studied the issue, the agency submitted draft stream classification and protection principles to the Board of Forestry (BOF) in June 1992. Public input also was solicited.

In August 1992, ODF released draft revisions to the stream protection rule. The draft rules were discussed at regional Forest Practice Advisory Committee (FPAC) meetings, at which the Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA) testified.

In December 1992, ODF released modified draft rules. OSWA formed a "Stream Team" to analyze and comment on the rules.

In January 1993, six panels testified on the draft stream rules at a BOF meeting, including the OSWA "Stream Team."



In March 1993, the BOF created a committee to identify consensus on stream rules, with OSWA among the stakeholders.

In September 1994, the final draft of the stream rules was released, incorporating significant woodland owner input.

The stream rules continue to evolve.

A 1999 Executive Order from the Governor directed the BOF to assess forest practice rule changes that might be needed to meet updated state water quality standards and to protect and restore salmonids. This was an outgrowth of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, which itself was, in part, a state-level response to a potential Endangered Species Act listing.

As directed by the Executive Order, the BOF convened a Forest Practices Advisory Committee, consisting of agency staff, family forest owners, industry foresters, environmental group representatives, and others. Consensus on recommendations proved elusive, but the FPAC ultimately agreed on several rule changes, which it presented to the BOF in September 2000.

During the process, the BOF also sought input from the three regional FPACs and other advisory groups. However, passage of Ballot Measure 37 in 2004 slowed the rule-making process, as the interface of property rights and land-use restrictions became a key consideration.

*Note: This and other case studies in this report are provided only to illustrate family forest owner involvement in relevant policy issues. No endorsement of particular groups or policies is implied.

changes or other policy matters, especially on highly technical or potentially contentious issues. ODF staff usually draft the language of new or revised rules that the BOF considers, and other agencies often provide input as well. The case study on page 7 illustrates the complexities of forest practice rule development and how woodland owner input can help shape the process and results.

The Committee for Family Forestlands, established by the BOF in 2000, provides an important opportunity for woodland owners to advise the BOF and State Forester on matters concerning family forestlands. The committee is charged with monitoring the effects of policy changes affecting family forest owners and recommending new policies as needed. Of the seven voting members of the committee, four are family forest owners, one represents the forest industry, one the environmental community, and one the public at large. There also are three ex-officio members, one each from the OSU College of Forestry, Oregon Department of Forestry, and Oregon Forest Resources Institute.

Land use laws

Oregon's statewide comprehensive land use law was enacted in 1972. A major objective of the law is to conserve forestland for productive use. The law's Goal 4 requires each county to identify and zone forestlands and to review nonforest uses according to the land use statute. At the state level, the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) administers land use laws. The Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) has the authority to review any land use decision of a local government, special district, or state agency. Citizens may bring land use disputes to the LUBA.

Rules that restrict home sites on forestland are an important concern for some owners. These owners may wish to develop



Figure 4.—Oregon's timber tax system has evolved considerably, in part reflecting landowner concerns.

home sites or other structures on their properties but are prevented from doing so by minimum lot size and other land use restrictions. These rules are set at the state level but administered at the county level.

The application of land use rules entered an era of uncertainty under Ballot Measure 37, approved by Oregon voters in November 2004. M37 enables landowners to seek compensation when their property values have been reduced by state or local regulations enacted after they acquired their property. If a landowner's claim is upheld, state and local jurisdictions must provide compensation or must eliminate or modify the regulation. As of this writing, M37 has been declared unconstitutional by a Marion County Circuit Court judge. An appeal to the state Supreme Court is likely. Regardless of how the constitutionality of M37 ultimately is resolved, the underlying issues are unlikely to go away. Since M37 passed, several additional property-rights-related initiative petitions have been filed with the Oregon Secretary of State.

Taxation

Taxes on timber and land are important considerations for many family forest owners. Specific owner concerns include how much tax is paid, and when the tax is due (annually, or at the time of harvest).

Over time, Oregon's timber tax system has evolved considerably, in part reflecting landowner concerns. For example, until 1961 in eastern Oregon and 1977 in western Oregon, both forestland and standing timber were subject to annual property taxes. As

timber grew in size and value, annual taxes increased, resulting in pressure to harvest primarily to pay the tax.

Subsequent legislation created a Severance Tax system, removing timber from the property tax rolls. Major changes to the

(continued on page 11)

Table 1. Key laws, agencies, and rule-making bodies pertinent to family forest management.

Key laws and regulations	Agency	Rule-making body
The Oregon Forest Practices Act and Rules, and laws governing fire protection	Oregon Department of Forestry	State Board of Forestry
Statewide land use program	Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development; local governments	Land Conservation and Development Commission
Fill and Removal Act	Oregon Division of State Lands	State Land Board
Oregon Endangered Species Act	Oregon Department of Agriculture; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife	Board of Agriculture; State Wildlife Commission
Oregon Scenic Waterways Act	Oregon Parks and Recreation Department; Oregon Division of State Lands	Parks Commission; State Land Board
Laws governing the Willamette Greenway	Oregon Parks and Recreation Department; Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development; local governments	Parks Commission; Land Conservation and Development Commission; county boards of commissioners
Laws governing pesticide applicator licensing and pesticide product label enforcement	Oregon Department of Agriculture	Board of Agriculture
Implementation of federal clean water and clean air requirements and laws governing chemical spills and hazardous materials	Oregon Department of Environmental Quality	Environmental Quality Commission
Laws governing rock pits, stormwater drainage permits for quarries, and reclamation of mined land	Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries; Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development; and local governments	Land Conservation and Development Commission; county boards of commissioners

Case study

Forestland taxation

For some family forest owners, much was at stake in recent deliberations over Oregon's timber tax laws. Under changes resulting from 1999 legislation, owners were faced with higher annual forest property taxes. For those without substantial cash flow from regular timber harvests, this represented a disincentive to manage and might have encouraged premature timber harvesting, or even sale of the property, to generate cash to pay the tax.

The 1999 Oregon Legislature passed a law (House Bill 3575) that defined two classes of forestland owners: (1) those with fewer than 10 acres or 5,000 acres or more, and (2) those with 10 acres up to 4,999 acres.

Beginning in 2003, owners in the first class would be taxed on the basis of 100 percent of the forestland value. This was in contrast to the system in place from 1993 to 1999, in which most owners paid an annual tax based on 20 percent of the forestland value, with a tax based on the remaining 80 percent paid at harvest. Owners in the second class also would be taxed at 100 percent of forestland values, starting in 2003, or they could opt into a tax deferral program that was as yet undefined.

The legislation charged the Oregon Department of Revenue (DOR) to create a working group representing affected parties to make recommendations for "an economical, administratively efficient, and cost-effective small forestland owner deferred tax optional program." The working group consisted of several members of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA), county assessors' representatives, and representatives from DOR, the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), and the Oregon Forest Industries Council.



After many meetings, some preliminary recommendations were developed for a new forest deferral program. Members of OSWA, however, raised a number of concerns with the proposal. Ultimately the working group could not complete its task in the allotted time. OSWA, ODF, DOR, and the Governor's office agreed to convene a new working group to develop recommendations for the timber and forestland taxation system for family and other nonindustrial forest owners.

The new working group included seven nonindustrial forest owner representatives, two county assessors, a conservation community representative, and ODF and DOR representatives. Over the course of many meetings, the group reviewed a variety of approaches to forestland taxation. Ultimately, it hammered out a recommendation for a "Small Tract Forest" (STF) option which was presented to the 2003 Legislature and subsequently adopted into law. In essence, the STF maintains the old "20/80" system, although the Severance ("privilege") Tax is calculated differently.

timber tax system occurred again in 1993, 1999, and 2003.

Key players in timber tax policy include the legislature—especially the legislative revenue committees empowered to adopt and amend taxation statutes; the Oregon Department of Revenue, which administers the timber tax; county assessor offices, where property taxes are collected and administered; and the Oregon Department of Forestry. Family forest owners have played a key role in shaping recent changes to timber taxation, as detailed in the case study on page 10.

Other important policies

We've highlighted three of the most important policies of significance for family forest owners here, but there are numerous other policies of importance, ranging from federal laws and regulations such as the Endangered Species Act to incentive and technical assistance programs. Some of the key state-level policies, the agencies that administer them, and the rule-making authorities are listed in Table 1 (page 9).

How family forest owners can help shape forest policy

Can family owners help shape the forest policies that affect them? The answer is a resounding yes. Does the interested landowner need to be a policy “wonk,” intimately familiar with the inner workings of the state legislature, to make a difference? The answer is no. In fact, a variety of ways to help shape policy don't require specialized knowledge, personal relationships with senators or lobbyists, or unlimited time (Figure 2, page 3). Let's take a closer look.

The role of public opinion

Policy development does not occur in a vacuum. Policy makers typically respond to constituents and community leaders who are saying, “We need to do something about this issue.” Family forest owners can help shape policy, though indirectly, by working to inform the public and community

leaders about their goals, management activities, and issues that concern them.

Several key trends influence public opinion in Oregon, and forest owners should be aware of them:

- Oregon is geographically large and vastly rural, but its population is dominantly urban and suburban. About 70 percent of Oregonians live in or near the Willamette Valley, a relatively small area of the state.
- Oregon's population is growing rapidly, with a 20 percent gain in the 1990s. Most in-migration has been to population centers from urban and suburban areas in more populous states.
- Oregon's population growth has been fueled by employment opportunities in industries other than Oregon's traditional natural resource base of agriculture, timber, and fishing. While these industries remain economically important, especially in rural areas, their share of the state's economic pie has diminished.
- As a shrinking portion of the state population has a direct connection or experience with forest resource management, the news media have become increasingly important in shaping public perceptions and opinions about forest issues. Most Oregonians today learn through secondhand (or indirect) sources—rather than by doing—when it comes to natural resource issues.
- Oregon's “amenity values,” including the recreational opportunities afforded by nearby forestlands, are important attractions for many newcomers. The visual appearance of forests has become increasingly important, not only for purely aesthetic reasons but because a negative reaction by the viewing public can trigger concerns about the impact of forest practices on water quality, wildlife, and other values.
- Polls show a strong majority of residents now believe nontimber values are the most important values associated with Oregon forests. Clean water and fish and wildlife protection in particular are consistently at or near the top of the list of priority forest values.

- Oregonians generally support policies and practices that protect and enhance such values, although differences in support levels begin to emerge when some residents perceive that these policies significantly restrict private property rights or have negative economic or unintended environmental effects.

What can owners do to help shape public opinion?

Landowners are often effective storytellers and educators, especially when talking about their own properties and management. Unique to family forest ownerships are the personal ties to the land, sometimes spanning several generations. Woodland owners often demonstrate and articulate a strong stewardship ethic. These attributes can be shared with the public through tours, speeches to civic clubs, letters to the editor, and opinion pieces in local newspapers.

Not all owners are comfortable making a speech or writing a letter; however, simply hosting a tour to show the nature and benefits of family forest management to the general public or to a civic or school group

can be very effective in shaping perceptions. Consider inviting a news reporter or community leader on the tour also.

Key to the effectiveness of tours and similar events is reaching out to an audience broader than just the “choir” of fellow family forest owners. This can be especially challenging for owners in rural areas far from population centers. While such efforts may not pay immediate dividends, they are critical in the long run to educating an increasingly urbanized population.

The Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) plays an important role in public education efforts, especially with urban audiences. The Institute, established by the 1991 Legislature and supported by a tax on timber harvests, conducts tours, sponsors publications and workshops, and provides support to forestry education programs at the primary and secondary level. For woodland owners, OFRI may be an important source of educational materials to use with the public (see page 16).

Building relationships with reporters can be another valuable way of influencing how issues are presented. Reporters appreciate having good story leads and well-informed,



Figure 5.—Woodland owners’ strong stewardship ethic can be shared with the public through outreach activities such as educational tours of the owners’ forests and demonstrations of harvest and reforestation practices.

reliable sources. Be prepared to respond quickly to a reporter's request for information. Especially with smaller community or regional newspapers and other media, reporters may be approachable and interested in presenting stories on family-forest-related topics. However, don't expect the reporter to be your advocate on policy issues.

Within the broad public, there are often "opinion leaders"; that is, influential individuals to whom others in the community look for advice and guidance. These individuals are often members of civic groups and may or may not have a formal role in policy making. Seek to identify and get to know opinion leaders in your community.

Ways to speak up

Research shows that legislators and other decision makers respond to spontaneous mail—letters from individual constituents—more than any other single type of communication including mail campaigns, polls, and issue ads. A good letter *can* make a difference. Letters should focus on a single issue, be short and to the point, and be based on your experiences, observations, and any data at your disposal. Whining, threatening, or lengthy letters on multiple subjects will not make your case and can in fact be counterproductive. Timing is important—if the letter to a legislator arrives after the issue has been decided, it will have little influence (see "Communication Guidelines," on page 15, for more letter-writing suggestions).

Phone calls and faxes also can be effective. E-mail works also but has less impact than a letter or direct call. If you have an opportunity to talk to a legislator in person, keep it simple and concise. You have about 2 minutes to make an issue compelling and about another 5 minutes to make it convincing. A personal thank-you note to a legislator when you appreciate something he or she has done is also very appropriate and helps build the relationship.

For more suggestions about how to communicate successfully with legislators, visit the Extension website, <http://oregonstate.edu/government/contacting.html>

Providing comments and testimony at rule-making hearings and other public decision-making venues is another way to influence policy. Guidelines for testifying are similar to those for letter writing: be clear and concise, focus on the issue at hand, and provide supporting evidence for your position, including information or anecdotes from personal experience.

Family forest owners can serve on standing

and ad-hoc advisory committees. Examples include the regional forest practices advisory committees and the Committee on Family Forestlands, all of which advise the Oregon Board of Forestry. While these committees are only advisory, they often play a key role in rule making. Groups such as the Oregon Small Woodlands Association often are approached to nominate members for ad-hoc committees.

Advocacy and interest groups

As noted earlier, advocacy and interest groups can play a key role in the policy making process. Policy makers often look to them to represent the interests of a broad group, such as woodland owners. Family forest owners are more effective at influencing policy when they join together and speak as one voice on a particular issue. Groups may be able to hire a lobbyist, who should be familiar with the detailed workings of the legislative process. Of course, owners don't always agree on forestry issues, and this is one of the key challenges of family-forest advocacy.

Key to the effectiveness of tours and similar events is reaching out to an audience broader than just the "choir" of fellow family forest owners.

Staying informed

Staying informed about issues is the foundation of the policy process. Today's issues often are complex, and policy responses sometimes evolve quickly or unexpectedly. Study them by reading news accounts, technical reports, and policy proposals. Attend public meetings and field tours where issues and new policies are discussed.

Think through all the ways, both positive and negative, that current and new policies might affect your management decisions. Here are some ways to keep up to date.

- During the legislative session, go online (http://www.leg.state.or.us/bills_laws/) to look at proposed bills and their progress. Find bills by searching on the bill number or a keyword (such as “forest”). You also can track ballot initiatives this way at the Secretary of State Elections website, <http://www.sos.state.or.us/elections/elechp.htm>
- The Committee for Family Forestlands tracks issues affecting woodland owners. Find information about the CFF and its actions at <http://oregon.gov/ODF/BOARD/cff.shtml>
- The Oregon Board of Forestry meeting schedule, agenda, and minutes are at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/BOARD/index.shtml>
- Read *Capital Press*, a weekly newspaper published in Salem that focuses on agricultural and forest issues. The online edition is at <http://www.capitalpress.com/specpages/agriplus.htm>



Figure 6.—Providing comments and testimony at meetings is another way to influence policy.

- Organization newsletters for family forest owners often contain information about policy issues and proposals.
- Many nongovernmental organizations and advocacy groups also have newsletters and websites for their constituencies that include information about forestry issues.
- Keeping a file of relevant news clippings, newsletter articles, and so forth on issues important to you will help you recall key facts when composing letters or testimony.

Conclusion

Getting involved in policy making can be fascinating, challenging—and sometimes frustrating. In our complex social and political system, there is no easy, foolproof path that leads to successful forest policy changes. Policy making, just like other aspects of democracy, requires patience, innovative thinking, and some willingness to compromise. Nevertheless, family forest owners *can* and *do* help shape policy in a variety of ways, ranging from education to direct advocacy.

How family forest owners can help shape policy

Communication guidelines

- Emphasize your practical experience in owning and managing your family forestland.
- Highlight the interests and values that most family forest owners share: resource stewardship, ties to the land, work ethic, the joy of ownership and management, etc.
- Avoid a negative tone and language. Avoid “us vs. them” labels and approaches.
- Challenge faulty assumptions and concepts, not the groups or persons who are presenting them.
- Focus on the facts, especially those that may not be widely recognized.
- Use analogies or images your audience can relate to. This is especially important with rural issues that people in cities or suburbs might not readily understand.
- Remember that policy making is about people and communication. Build and maintain good relationships with legislators, reporters, and others involved in the policy process.

Ways to speak up

With legislators and other decision makers

- Letters, phone calls, faxes, and e-mails (including thank-you notes)
- Comments and testimony

With the broad public

- Letters to the editor and guest commentaries (“In My Opinion” articles) in the newspaper
- Build relationships with local media. Be timely, responsive, and accurate in the information you provide. Reporters may seek you out for quotes and background for forestry-related stories.

- Give speeches or host field tours for civic clubs, school and youth groups, local news media, local opinion leaders.
- Set up or staff display booth at fairs and other public events.
- Offer comments in group meetings.

Before you speak up, make sure you are informed about the issue under discussion. Maintain an issue file and seek information from a variety of sources to round out your understanding of the topic. Your knowledge and understanding of other perspectives, even if you don’t agree with them, will help build your credibility.

Other ways to get involved

Study proposals and support effective process

- Assess how current or proposed policies affect you, and communicate this to others.
- If agencies or other groups are conducting assessments of policy effects, offer your property for such a review.
- Discuss policy issues with other landowners.
- Support organizations that promote your views.

Support public education

- Use or offer your property for field tours.
- Offer to speak in schools, at civic meetings, etc.
- Support educational organizations and efforts.

For more information

Oregon's Forest Practice Rules, EC 1194.
1996. Paul Adams. 24 pp.

A number of publications offered by the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) can be helpful to forest owners, as background or as handouts, when preparing to lead or participate in educational and outreach activities. View the OFRI publications catalog online at <http://www.oregonforests.org/content/researchResources.asp?section=20&content=42>

OSU Extension publications are available via the catalog on the Extension website, at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/>

Many publications can be viewed and downloaded at no charge. Also, printed copies of many publications can be ordered; prices will vary, and there is a charge for shipping and handling. Printed publications also can be ordered through the office of OSU Extension that serves your county, or by contacting:

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