Last week I attended OSU’s “Landmark Assessment Of Oregon’s Forest Sustainability” colloquium in Corvallis. Although most the focus was on the Oregon Coast Range, there were many comments made that Columbia Gorge area woodland and farm owners might find useful. Overall, it was thoroughly outstanding with presentations by OSU’s College of Forestry Dean Hal Salwasser, Oregon Department of Forestry State Forester Jim Brown and Governor Dr. John Kitzhaber. The latter’s 40 minute speech demonstrated an extensive and clear grasp of forest ecosystem function, east-side forest health and related social and political issues; he offered thoughts on what has gone wrong with state and federal management and how the log jam might be opened.

Specific highlights included:

- Regarding public concerns and forestry, Governor Kitzhaber’s main message and that of the later public survey presentation was that in a word it’s water that provides the overarching public concern with respect to forest management. The Governor suggested that legislation and management of state forest lands will be driven first by water quality concerns. The public survey speaker suggested that this is the door for engaging the general public in forestry discussion.

- On timber supply in Oregon, models indicate that both woodland owners and industrial Coastal lands have a bulge in sub-merchantable age classes, thus supply looks good for the next few decades.

- On the east-side, wood availability will decline due to about 30% of the standing volume of east side forests being lost to disease and insects, though lots of trees are in smaller size classes; about 60% of east-side forests are at risk of catastrophic fire outside normal limits.

- The timber job multiplier is now 12 jobs per million board-feet of harvest, up from 8 due to increased use of engineered wood products.

- On the Oregon coast, old growth acreage is expected to increase due to lack of harvest on federal land; it’s at about 5 to 10% compared to a normal range of 25 to 75; the only endangered forest type is interior oak woodlands largely due to their proximity to the Willamette Valley and urban development.

- Land use laws have slowed urban development into forest lands, even during the prosperous 1990’s.

All speakers except the public survey presenter prefaced their remarks by linking them to specific points in the Montreal sustainable Forestry Protocol.