

Foresters use clearcutting

TO HARVEST TIMBER AND RENEW THE FOREST



Forests are a beautiful part of Oregon's varying landscape. Nearly half – or 30 million acres – of the state is covered in forests. Careful and responsible management, governed by forestry and land use laws, have kept that figure steady for more than 100 years.

Nevertheless, when people see recent timber harvest activity, such as a clearcut on their way to the Oregon Coast, they are concerned about visual blight, loss of habitat and potential for landslides. Why do foresters clearcut and what other options are there?

Tree species, economics determine harvest type

In western Oregon, landowners of commercial forestland most likely use clearcutting, followed by planting trees to replace the ones harvested. Clearcutting is efficient and cost-effective, which means more affordable wood products for the consumer. In eastern Oregon, because the tree species are different, landowners may use selective harvest methods such as thinning, and allow trees to naturally regenerate.

FEWER ROADS LIMITS SOIL DISTURBANCE

Clearcutting's "single entry" approach limits major logging activity on each plot of forestland to once every 40 to 50 years, or longer. This requires fewer roads, which means less disturbance to forest soils. Nearly all human-caused forest landslides are related to roads, so limiting them and ensuring their careful placement is crucial. Mechanized logging systems used by today's loggers are lighter on the land, creating better growing conditions for trees that will be planted after harvest. Examples include skyline logging, which uses cables and a carriage to lift logs above the ground, and tractors that drive over downed limbs instead of directly on the soil.

CLEARCUTTING AND FORESTRY



LETS IN SUNLIGHT

Oregon's most prolific native tree, Douglas-fir, as well as lodgepole pine and red alder, grow best when planted at the same time on land with full sun exposure. They require a large clear area of at least four acres. This clearing can be created by a natural disturbance, such as a forest fire, or by humans, such as a clearcut.

CREATES NEW HABITAT

The first several years of tree and plant growth in a young forest following a wildfire or a clearcut are an ecologically rich time for forest life. Bees and other pollinators, songbirds, deer and elk thrive in these cleared spaces with new vegetative growth, known as early seral habitat. Other species of wildlife don't prosper in this habitat, which is why we need a variety of forest landscapes to support biodiversity.

Select References:

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Clearcutting is strictly governed by state law

PROTECTING WATERWAYS AND WILDLIFE

The Oregon Forest Practices Act, enacted in 1971 and updated dozens of times since, regulates forest practices and safeguards water, fish and wildlife habitat, soil and air. The Oregon Board of Forestry has the authority to adopt new rules and make revisions to the law.

Oversight of private timber harvest includes:

- Reviewing the required pre-logging plans
- Ensuring reforestation
- Enforcing the law and investigating complaints

Key rules and safeguards include:

- Clearcuts must be replanted with at least 200 trees per acre within two years; the majority of landowners plant many more than that. New trees need to be well-established within six years.
- Buffers of trees must be left on either side of streams to keep them shaded and cool.
- Clearcuts must be less than 120 acres and be no closer than 300 feet to another clearcut.
- Clearcuts of more than 25 acres must have two large green trees or standing dead trees (snags) remaining per acre, as well as two downed logs per acre. These provide habitat for animals such as woodpeckers, owls, hawks, eagles, squirrels and salamanders.
- Logging is not allowed on steep hillsides where a landslide could affect homes or busy roads.
- Logging road maintenance and construction is regulated to avoid muddying streams.
- Fines of up to \$5,000 per violation of the forest protection rules are assessed.



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