

**From:** [DeLuca, Thomas H](#)  
**Subject:** Status Update on the Elliott State Research Forest  
**Date:** Monday, November 13, 2023 3:35:00 PM

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Dear College of Forestry Community,

Earlier today, President Murthy and Oregon State University leaders notified the State Land Board, Department of State Lands and the Elliott State Research Forest Authority Prospective Board that OSU will not be moving forward with a recommendation to the Board of Trustees to authorize the university's management of the Elliott State Research Forest (ESRF) at this time.

Over the past four years, we have overcome many challenges as we explored the potential of a world-class, publicly owned research forest managed by the College of Forestry. The cumulative effect of compromises among many competing groups, however, has constrained the research viability of the forest.

Recently, it has become increasingly difficult to resolve the competing interests of key partners and stakeholders while still achieving the research potential of the forest. The university did not take this decision lightly, but at this juncture, we feel it is the right approach based on several recent developments. Some of these include:

- Public opposition to the proposed habitat conservation plan and forest management plan by the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians (CTCLUSI) whose ancestral lands make up what is now known as the Elliott.
- Learning that the state intends to implement guidelines that would restrict variation in annual harvest volumes in a way that undermines our ability to conduct research and support the health and resiliency of the forest.
- The state's indication that it intends to move forward with an early carbon project on the Forest without a deliberate, research-informed approach that can inform sustainable management practices in Oregon and beyond.
- Continuing concerns that the project currently lacks adequate start-up funds that would help ensure the long-term financial success of the research forest.

Climate change, threats to biodiversity, and threats to society necessitate the creation of a research forest to explore alternative approaches to sustainable forest management that is resilient to threats posed by a rapidly changing climate. We firmly believe that there remains great potential in the Elliott as it was originally envisioned, but the decision-making process with regard to the research forest needs to be systematically improved if the project is to succeed in achieving its intent of serving the public good, honoring Tribal Sovereignty and cultural values, and advancing world-class forestry research and sustainable forest management practices.

While it is clear that the current trajectory of the project precludes the university moving the project forward, OSU and the College of Forestry remain ready to engage in the work of planning an Elliott State Research Forest on a recalibrated course and are prepared to serve as a resource to the leaders who will bring an effective model forward.

I would like to thank the project team, including Katy Kavanagh, Shannon Murray, Jennifer Bailey-Guerrero, Deanne Carlson, Matt Betts, Gordie Reeves, and so many others who have invested

countless hours and energy into the project. I recognize this news may bring a range of feelings to those of you who have been following and deeply invested in this process, and I encourage you to reach out if you have questions or would like to discuss more.

Take care,  
Tom

**THOMAS H. DELUCA, PhD**

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