

For Immediate Release, January 19, 2012

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Lawsuit Launched to Protect Threatened Marbled Murrelets From Clearcutting in Oregon State Forests

State of Oregon's Plans to Dramatically Increase Clearcutting Harming Wildlife, Water and People

PORTLAND, OR.— Cascadia Wildlands, the Center for Biological Diversity and Audubon Society of Portland filed a notice of intent to sue the state of Oregon today over harmful clearcutting practices on the Elliott, Tillamook and Clatsop state forests. The notice presents evidence that the state's practices are harming, harassing and otherwise leading to the demise of the federally protected marbled murrelet, which comes inland to nest and breed in mature and old-growth forests. The Endangered Species Act prohibits actions that injure threatened species, including destruction of their habitat.



“These coastal state forests provide some of the best remaining older forest habitat in the Coast Range for the imperiled murrelet,” said Francis Eatherington, Conservation Director with Cascadia Wildlands. “Yet in 2010 and 2011, the state approved vast logging increases on all three forests. 2012 is the year the public will ensure that we have a sound plan for our forests, not more clearcutting.”

Timber sales on the three state forests are harming marbled murrelets by eliminating the trees they need for nesting and by fragmenting the forest, which leads to trees blowing down in their habitat and increased predation of the birds and their nests.

“Logging on Oregon's state forests is driving the marbled murrelet to extinction,” said Noah Greenwald, endangered species director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “We have a network of clearcuts, but no network of protected areas for rare and precious wildlife and fish. Oregon has to do more to protect the murrelet and other endangered species that need our older forests to survive.”

Current research on marbled murrelet populations in the Pacific Northwest shows that populations are declining every year; continued logging on the three state forests is a likely factor. By playing fast and loose with the requirements for finding murrelets and their habitat, the Oregon Department of Forestry continually allows logging in the birds' nesting areas. Oregon is home to a vital part of the West Coast murrelet population, but

if the forestry department's practices are allowed to continue, the population declines could worsen.

"With nearly 600,000 acres of forest in the heart of Oregon's Coast Range, state forests are key to the murrelet's survival," said Bob Sallinger, Conservation Director for the Audubon Society of Portland. "It is long past time for the state to take a proactive approach to protecting the old-growth and mature forests needed by the murrelet."

For over a decade, the state was engaged in developing a habitat conservation plan that would have given it a permit for limited impacts to marbled murrelets in exchange for the bird's conservation; but it abandoned that effort. This lawsuit seeks to force the state to develop a plan that will truly protect the murrelet.



Revenue from clearcutting supports state forest management overhead and programs as well as county and state services. The conservation groups have long encouraged the state to pursue other options on state forests to generate revenue: capitalizing on emerging carbon markets, conservation acquisitions, and restoration thinning in young plantations. Much work can be done in the forest that will produce value for all Oregonians while also protecting imperiled species.

The Elliott is a 93,000-acre forest located in the Coast Range east of Coos Bay. The Clatsop and Tillamook state forests are made up of nearly 500,000 acres in the northwest Oregon Coast Range. In the last two years, the state has revised management plans for the three state forests to dramatically increase logging.

The conservation organizations are represented by outside counsel Daniel Kruse of Eugene, Tanya Sanerib of the Crag Law Center, and Cascadia Wildlands' Staff Attorney Nick Cady.

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Click [here](#) to read a copy of the 60-day notice.

Click [here](#) to read a fact sheet on marbled murrelets and logging on Oregon's state forests.