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Contact:

Josh Laughlin, Cascadia Wildlands, (541) 844-8182

Noah Greenwald, Center for Biological Diversity, (503) 484-7495

Bob Sallinger, Portland Audubon Society, (503) 380-9728

Tanya Sanerib, Crag Law Center, (503) 525-2722

## **Court Halts Clearcutting in Murrelet Habitat on Oregon State Forests** *Conservation Groups Call on Gov. Kitzhaber for Balanced Forest Planning*

PORTLAND, *Ore.*— A federal court judge has halted 11 timber sales and all logging activities in occupied marbled murrelet sites in the Tillamook, Clatsop and Elliott state forests. The ruling stops logging in murrelet habitat until the resolution of a case filed by Cascadia Wildlands, the Center for Biological Diversity and Portland Audubon Society asserting that the state's logging practices are harming the federally protected seabird.

Since the case was filed, Oregon has voluntarily suspended timber sales on more than 1,700 acres of older forest in marbled murrelet habitat in the three state forests. In her ruling, Chief Judge Aiken concluded the voluntary suspensions do not go far enough, writing, "Because the suspension of logging activities may be lifted at anytime with 60-days notice, and due to the imperiled status of the marbled murrelet, the status quo includes an imminent threat of irreparable injury under the ESA."

"The state of Oregon's forest practices are the most reckless in the Pacific Northwest and are pushing the marbled murrelet closer to extinction," says Francis Eartherington, conservation director with Cascadia Wildlands. "This ruling should send a signal to the leadership of Oregon that balanced forest plans are critically needed to truly protect the murrelet."

Murrelet populations are declining steadily, as is their breeding habitat. Oregon has the opportunity to provide for these birds while also ensuring timber jobs through either logging young plantations or entering into an agreement called a "habitat conservation plan" with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"This is an important ruling," said Bob Sallinger of the Audubon Society of Portland. "It ensures not only that the existing timber sale suspensions will stay in place until this case is resolved, but also prevents any additional sales in key murrelet areas."

Oregon recently abandoned its decade-long attempt to develop habitat conservation plans for the Clatsop, Tillamook and Elliott state forests that would have given the state a federal permit for limited impacts to marbled murrelets in exchange for habitat protection measures designed to enhance the bird's conservation.

“Logging the last remaining mature and old-growth forests and driving the marbled murrelet ever closer to extinction is plainly out of step with the values of Oregonians,” said Noah Greenwald, endangered species director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “I’m thrilled the court has seen the threat posed to these unique seabirds and granted them a reprieve.”

The conservation organizations are represented by outside counsel Daniel Kruse of Eugene, Tanya Sanerib and Chris Winter of the Crag Law Center, Nick Cady of Cascadia Wildlands, Scott Jerger of Field Jerger LLP, and Susan Jane Brown of the Western Environmental Law Center.

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