

Clearcutting 70% of State Forests: Not a Great Idea

On October 19th, a [subcommittee of the Board of Forestry met](#) to discuss alternative management plans for the Tillamook & Clatsop state forests. Any new plan needs to improve **conservation** AND make the Department of Forestry **financially viable**. This ongoing process has been dominated by a timber [industry proposal](#) to manage the forest as two zones: 70% for [industrial clearcutting](#) and 30% for conservation.

The Board directed the Department to model this proposal and [the results](#) are...not good.

Conservation: Under the current plan, 51% of the forest is open to clearcutting, 18% is thinned to create complex forest habitat, roughly 27% is not logged because it buffers streams, provides habitat to endangered species, or is too steep. The remaining 4% is roads, campgrounds, rock quarries, and power-line right-of-ways.



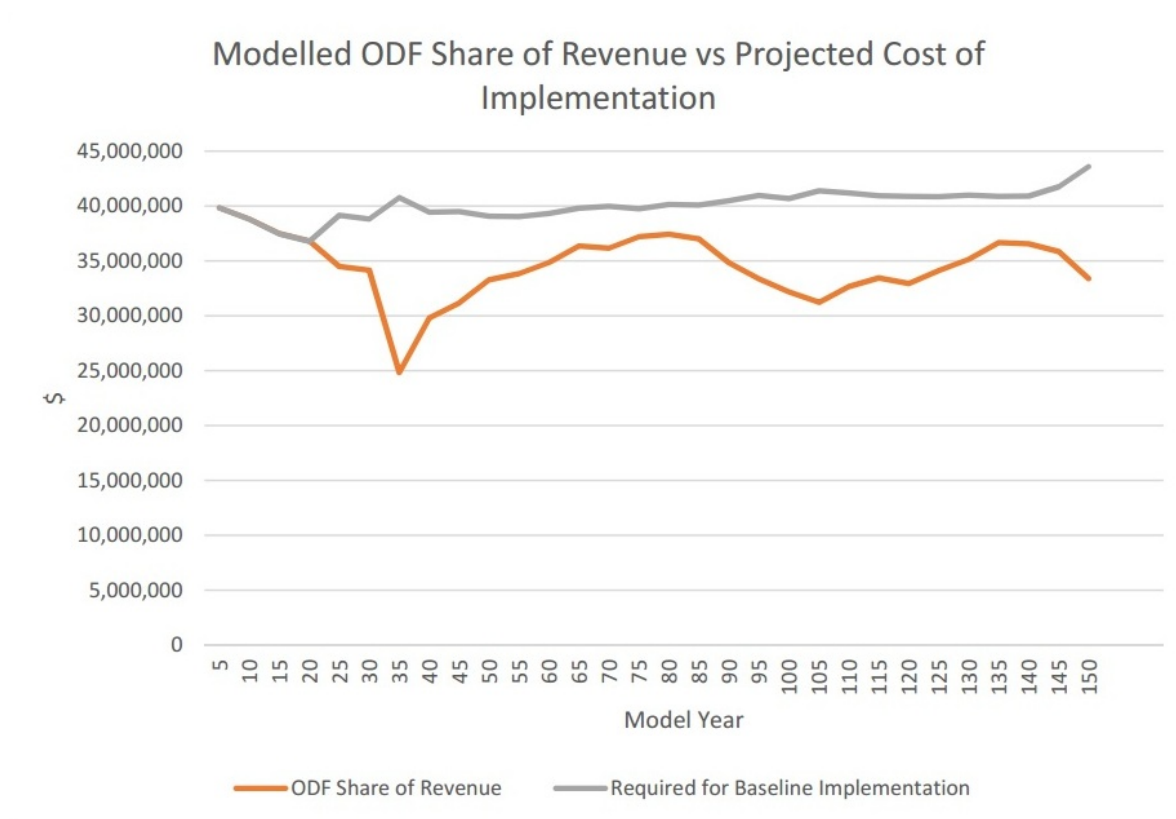
Industrial Timber Land (photo by Francis Eatherington)

The new model shows 69% of the forest open to *private industrial style clearcutting*, and 27% of the forest protected. This alone is a drastic reduction in conservation acres. On top of that, the private industrial model would have [very negative impacts on habitat compared to the current plan](#), which leaves more standing live trees, standing dead trees, and downed wood. The industrial model also involves more [aerial](#)

[pesticide application.](#)

See what the model looks like [on the Tillamook district](#) and [on the Clatsop forest \(Astoria district\).](#)

Financial Viability: It turns out that when you liquidate your asset by intensive clearcutting, the returns don't last long. The model showed that the plan would pay for itself for about 25 years, after which [costs far outpace revenue](#), leaving the Department worse off than it is now.



There are additional concerns. Based on district level groundtruthing, Department staff hinted that implementing this plan would result in less harvest than predicted. Moreover, there is a likelihood that counties and forest district would face drastic boom/bust cycles rather than steady, predictable income.

What's next? Some timber industry [modeling experts](#) hope that there is more inventory than is currently assumed and that the forest will grow faster in the future with better stocks of wood. However, there is also reason to be pessimistic as the recent modeling didn't account for likely forest disturbances such as wind storms or floods.

The Department is moving forward to refine their model, but so far it seems that a 70/30 fails to improve financial viability and drastically reduces conservation on our state forests.



#salmon, #orforest, #steelhead, #Tillamook, #Clatsop, #logging, #clearcut