

Private Forests Profile

Oregon's logging laws are the weakest in the Northwest



Oregon's forests have complicated legal protections, which are different depending on who owns the land where a forest grows. But these days, many of the clearcuts you will see in Oregon are on privately owned land. Private timber-producing forestlands in Oregon are managed according to the [Oregon Forest Practices Act](#) (OFPA) first adopted in 1971. Despite propaganda from the [Oregon Forest Resources Institute \(OFRI\)](#) - a tax-funded public relations arm of the timber industry -telling Oregonians otherwise, the OFPA's conservation measures are the weakest in the Pacific

Northwest.

Shortcomings of the law have led to environmental damage and human health concerns.

- Abundant clear-cutting and short logging rotations have turned diverse forests into tree farms.
- Excessive use of herbicides and other chemicals has poisoned land, air, and water, and destroyed forest understories.
- Careless road construction has led to unnatural peak streamflows, landslides, erosion/sedimentation, and blocked passage for fish and wildlife.
- Failure to avoid landslide-prone areas and adequately protect riparian areas has damaged waterways.
- Irresponsible logging has left inadequate habitat for wildlife, while replanting has created dense plantations that pose high fire risks.

Clean Water At Risk

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have both ruled that Oregon's state logging rules don't do enough to protect fish habitat and drinking water in Oregon's streams and rivers to comply with the Clean Water Act. Rules under the OFPA fail to adequately address runoff from roads, potential damage from landslides, buffers for streams, and herbicide pollution. In 2016, the Federal government denied [\\$1.2 million in funding](#) because the State failed to address these issues.

Inadequate Protections - Spraying Poison From Helicopters

Oregon's industrial logging laws encourage the aerial application of toxic herbicides to suppress vine maple, alder, and other native plants – everything

other than the Douglas-fir tree “crop”. Each year, helicopters spray weed killers on hundreds of square miles of Oregon timberland, often near, or over, communities, their drinking water, and wildlife habitat. This spraying occurs under the [most industry-friendly standards in the Pacific Northwest](#).

The timber industry’s practice of using helicopters to deliver toxic chemicals is generating growing concern and opposition from rural residents over chemical exposure. Aerial spraying can allow chemicals with known adverse health effects, such as glyphosate, 2,4-D (a chemical component of agent orange), and atrazine, to drift long distances. It can also result in chemical run-off that puts drinking water, salmon and wildlife at risk.

Major problems with Oregon’s herbicide spraying laws include:

- No required no-spray buffers around homes, schools, streams, or wetlands.
- No required advance notification before spraying near homes and communities.
- The public—including Oregonians who have been exposed to potentially toxic chemicals through aerial spraying—are forbidden from accessing details on what chemicals were used.

[More info and resources on chemical spraying here.](#)

Campaign to reform forestry practices



Oregon Wild, in addition to our work on public lands, is now actively organizing with our supporters, and communities all over the state, to achieve comprehensive reform of the Oregon Forest Practices Act.

Since 2015, Oregon Wild has increased our involvement in the years long efforts to reform the OFPA, and we are now working with community organizations and other environmental groups around the state. The movement to reform Oregon's weak logging and aerial spray laws is a truly grassroots effort, and we have organizers in the field (and in the forest!) who are connecting with the residents of rural Oregon who are most directly impacted by clearcuts and spray. Our goal is to make sure those voices are heard. For too long, the pleas of these communities have gone unheard in the halls of the Capitol Building as they seek the same water and air protections enjoyed by residents of Eugene and Portland.

Find out more about some of these community efforts and hear from a diversity of voices rising up against these practices at [Oregon Forest Voices](#), where rural Oregonians share their stories of what it's like to live near industrial forest lands. You can also follow our community organizing, and updates on this campaign by [checking out Jason's Blog](#).

Legislative and Initiative History - What We've Tried Already

In 2015 a strong coalition of Oregon legislators, working on behalf of rural residents and public environmental health interests, pursued legislation to increase public transparency and accountability around uses of aerial pesticide and herbicide spraying. Unfortunately SB 613 was shunted to a closed-door working group where it languished, while another committee produced a watered-down bill backed by the timber industry. [[Learn more.](#)]

After the legislature [failed to act to limit aerial spraying](#) in 2015, Oregon Wild and our partners decided to do just that, by filing three initiative proposals for potential inclusion on the 2016 ballot. All three initiatives would stop aerial pesticide sprays in any watershed that is a source of drinking water, and near any home or school. The clearcutting industry managed to hold us off on this one for a little while, but it might be back. [Find more on those Ballot Initiatives here.](#)

In 2017, Oregon Wild, and many of our partners, worked with legislators and community groups to introduce several ideas to the legislature that could dramatically improve forest and drinking water protections, and help people protect themselves from Aerial Spray. Again, the legislature failed to move even the most common-sense of reforms out of committee. Read more about those efforts [here!](#)