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**Scientists Question Wyden O&C Logging Plan**

*Two preeminent scientific societies believe plan increases extinction risks for salmon, other threatened wildlife*

Washington, DC—Two international scientific organizations, the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) and the American Fisheries Society (AFS), are questioning the assumptions behind Senator Ron Wyden’s plan to double logging levels on publicly owned Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands in Western Oregon. In testimony before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee ([link here](http://www.conbio.org/images/content_policy/02.05.2014-SCBAFStestimonyOChearing.pdf)), the organizations raised serious concerns that the Oregon and California Lands Act of 2013 (S. 1784) abandons science-based management of public lands.

“Doubling logging on BLM lands will elevate extinction risks to threatened wildlife, pollute streams with sediment run off, and increase global warming pollution,” said Dominick DellaSala, President of the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) North America Section. “At a time when President Barack Obama is calling on federal agencies to do more to stem runaway climate change, this bill moves Oregon forests from being part of the solution to part of the problem.”

S.1784 is intended to double logging on O&C lands. It roughly divides 2.1 million acres of BLM lands into “Forestry Emphasis Areas” where logging will be the primary use and “Conservation Emphasis Areas” where a portion of older forests are removed from intensive logging.[[1]](#footnote-1) However, the bill’s ecological impacts have been greatly underestimated as reflected in the reviews by scientists.

The societies found six major scientific flaws in the legislation, including it:

1. Eliminates or weakens protective provisions of the scientifically based Northwest Forest Plan;
2. Re-writes and weakens science-based recovery actions for threatened species, reducing protections under the Endangered Species Act;
3. Increases habitat fragmentation and cumulative impacts to fish and wildlife by requiring the functional equivalent of clearcuts over vast acreages;
4. Relies on risky, untested “ecological forestry” provisions in the habitat of threatened species to generate funding for county budgets;
5. Provides insufficient funds for rigorous effectiveness monitoring; and
6. Elevates carbon dioxide emissions by promoting extensive logging.

Robert Hughes, President of the American Fisheries Society, also questioned provisions of the Wyden plan designed to shrink buffers around streams currently protected from logging under the Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan.

“Water quality and stream-side areas may be recovering from decades of logging because of the science-based Aquatic Conservation Strategy that this legislation abandons," Hughes said. "With a changing climate and even greater logging on private lands, the science supports increased Northwest Forest Plan stream protections, not narrower buffers.”

The Northwest Forest Plan was established in 1994 by President Bill Clinton to implement science-based management on 25 million acres of America’s public lands. The plan has been widely endorsed by scientists[[2]](#footnote-2) and reaffirmed as the best available science for recovering fish and wildlife dependent on older forests.

It is estimated that approximately 200,000 acres of older forests currently protected by the Northwest Forest Plan would be shifted into logging, including clearcutting, under S.1784. The Societies concluded that such risky changes to the Northwest Forest Plan will intensify conflicts over threatened species on both federal and nonfederal lands, because private landowners, for instance, rely on protections afforded to threatened species on federal lands so they can log in the habitat of threatened species.

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1. <http://www.wyden.senate.gov/news/press-releases/wyden-announces-hearing-on-oandc-lands-bill> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.abcbirds.org/PDFs/OandC_scientist_letter.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)