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Formerly Oregon Natural Resources Council (ONRC)

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Benefits of Stewardship Contracting

Oregon Wild, January 2010

The unsustainable logging of the past century led to the boom and bust of many rural communities in Oregon, and destroyed up to 90% of the ancient forests that once covered our region - wreaking havoc on fish and wildlife populations and limiting opportunities for recreation and other activities. The dense tree plantations and degraded streams that now cover hundreds of thousands of acres of public land lack the diversity found in unlogged forests, and fail to provide good habitat for many kinds of fish and wildlife.

Oregon Wild sees the need for comprehensive restoration of degraded landscapes, addressing the overbuilt and crumbling road system, streams and fish habitat, overly-dense plantations, and unnatural fuel buildups. This approach will promote healthier forests and watersheds, and help sustain rural economies - without destroying Oregon's precious few remaining stands of old-growth forest or opening up intact wildlands.

Stewardship contracting is one way of doing restoration. "Stewardship" refers to a specific set of authorities granted to public land management agencies. It allows for innovative harvest prescriptions, trading goods for services, multi-year "best value" contracting, and retention of receipts from a timber sale within the local area. The authority places conditions on the types of projects that can be implemented as stewardship: focusing on the restoration of forests and watersheds, benefit to local communities, and collaborative development of management options.

Since 2003, *Oregon Wild* has been involved in numerous stewardship planning efforts by the Forest Service and BLM, and we have come to support stewardship contracting as part of a win-win solution to balance the needs of rural economies with the need to protect and restore our forests for future generations.

One of the most successful stewardship programs is in the Siuslaw National Forest. There, common ground and trust have been built between a diverse group of stakeholders that historically butted heads – including Forest Service staff, conservation groups, timber contractors, local landowners, and watershed councils. The group has worked collaboratively to develop a common vision for restoration that will improve fish and wildlife habitat and the rural economy. With buy-in and agreement from the public on restoration principles, management agencies can successfully plan and implement projects that supply contractors with work, mills with logs, and wildlife with improved habitat

without the controversy of the past.

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Stewardship makes up only a small fraction of public land management. Even so, in the Siuslaw stewardship contracts have, to date, resulted in thinning more than 2,500 acres, and yielding more than 30 million board feet of plantation trees to local mills. In addition, the funds retained from the timber harvest have led to \$2 million spent on additional restoration projects on both public and private lands – projects that restore endangered fish and wildlife habitat, improve water quality, build relationships between rural landowners and the managers of neighboring public land, and employ local workers. Such projects would likely not get done without this funding source.

Resources:

<http://www.cascadepacificstewardship.org/>

Multi-party monitoring reports for stewardship contracting within the Siuslaw watershed are available at this site. Some key data from these reports include:

FY06 Economic impacts

- Generated 5.3 million board feet of timber
- Over \$500,000 of retained receipts were reinvested in restoration projects. With matching dollars, the total investment in restoration, outside of stewardship contracts was \$3.9 million.
- 28 full time equivalent jobs for FY04-06

FY07 Economic impacts

- Generated 7.3 million board feet of timber
- Over \$335,000 of retained receipts were reinvested in restoration projects on public land, and \$290,000 on private land, with a total of \$1.75 million invested in
- 28 full time equivalent jobs (both direct and indirect) jobs for FY07

http://www.ecotrust.org/publications/redefining_stewardship.html

Redefining Stewardship: Public Lands and Rural Communities in the Pacific Northwest
“A Whole-Watershed Perspective: Siuslaw Stewardship Group” excerpt:

Siuslaw Stewardship Fund

One stewardship authority that has attracted a lot of attention is the local retention of timber receipts, rather than sending them on to the federal treasury. An additional authority, the 1998 Wyden Amendment (Public Law 105-277, Section 323 as amended by Public Law 109-54, Section 434), helps to facilitate a whole-watershed approach to restoration. It allows federal funds to be spent on private lands when the work is expected to benefit public resources.

With the trust forged through the stewardship project, the Forest Service and the Siuslaw Stewardship Group set up the Siuslaw Stewardship Fund in 2004. In this agreement, 60 percent of the revenue from stewardship contract thinning is

reinvested in public-lands restoration, while the other 40 percent is placed in the Fund to finance work on private and other nonfederal lands. Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation and Development Council acts as the fiscal agent of the Fund, which operates like a grant program. Projects are solicited, reviewed and evaluated before contracts are awarded. Monitoring follows all work. To date, five rounds have been completed and more than 30 retained receipts and Wyden Amendment projects awarded for a total of \$1.7 million reinvested in the watershed.

Landowner Dana Rodet saw the funding source as an opportunity to restore a stream that had been pushed up against the hillside and disconnected from its original floodplain. "This is our heaven, and we can do something with it," Rodet maintains. "I can't do anything about China, but I can take responsibility for my own place. Even in the first three years, we've seen salmon numbers increasing."

Pressing Needs

With 10 stewardship projects, almost 50 million board feet of timber sold and approximately 2,000 acres treated, the Siuslaw has earned a lot of recognition for its restoration work. In 2004, the Environmental Protection Agency selected the Siuslaw for funding as a Targeted Watershed Initiative, led by Ecotrust. Siuslaw restoration partners were awarded the International Thiess Riverprize that year as well. Yet the business of restoration remains underdeveloped. With no local mill or secondary manufacturing company, few of the dollars from the sale of the watershed's resources remain in the community. Processing the timber, which could provide local jobs, is handled by facilities in Coos Bay and Noti.

Siuslaw National Forest

Forest Service Stewardship Contracts

- Accomplishments of four ongoing and completed stewardship contracts as of September 2007:
 - Thinning treatments on 668 acres of late successional reserve lands
 - Creation of 13 mature and 629 young tree snags
 - Noxious weed control over 13 acres
 - Brushing and maintenance work along three miles of trail
 - Closure, storm-proofing and maintenance along 26.5 miles of road
 - Sidecast pullback on 1,175 miles of road
 - Non-commercial thinning on 140 upland and 41 riparian acres
 - Upland planting on 75 acres
 - Riparian conifer planting and maintenance (release) on 25 acres
 - Structure placement by helicopter on three miles of stream
- Awarded to Georgia Pacific and Swanson Superior
- Value of commercial timber: \$967,118
- Total receipts retained: \$726,339

Retained Receipts Projects (on Forest Service lands)

- A total of 10 restoration projects implemented with eight completed and two ongoing in FY 2007:
 - Planting and maintenance (release) of trees and native grasses on 33 acres
 - Noxious weed control over approximately 100 acres

- Placement of large woody debris along one mile of stream
- Reconstruction or decommissioning of approximately nine miles of roads
- Stewardship credits contribution: \$435,803.46

Wyden Amendment Projects (on private and other nonfederal lands)

- Accomplishments of 12 Wyden Amendment projects as of September 2006:
 - Planting and maintenance (release) of 17,000 conifers, 5,500 deciduous trees and 10,000 other native plants on private lands
 - Placement of large woody debris along more than three miles of stream
 - Construction of more than 3,000 feet of fence to exclude cattle from riparian areas
- Stewardship Fund contribution: \$290,535.64

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