

Understanding the Private Forest Accord

Small Forestland Owners (SFOs)

Importance: Approximately one-third of Oregon's private forestlands are in ownerships of 5000 acres or less, and these lands contain as much as half of the best salmon and steelhead habitat. SFOs also face different pressures than industrial forests. Many SFO parcels also have residences, and SFOs are sometimes converted to other, less desirable uses, from an aquatic perspective. Lastly, many SFOs don't have the resources and support to manage their properties to modern standards, especially with regards to major investments, bridges and culverts over streams.

Current Law/System: Current Oregon law does little to differentiate SFOs from Private Industrial lands.

Proposed Change: The Private Forest Accord provides a tremendous focus on improving the support and focus on SFOs.

- A new SFO office will be formed and staffed at the Department of Forestry to provide outreach, education, and support to SFOs.
- Landowners will have options to harvest following the new rules or to follow "alternative minimum" rules, which are stronger than the current rules but weaker than the new rules.
- Landowners who forgo harvest in riparian areas will be eligible for renewable tax credits as compensation, but they will also be obligated not to harvest in the riparian areas for 50 years.
- Harvests to alternative minimum standards will be tracked and limited to no more than 1% of the riparian area.
- Landowners will have to provide information on their road condition and fish passage before harvest is allowed, but grant support will be available for them to address problems.

Discussion: A well-supported and knowledgeable community of SFOs is critical to the long-term health of our forest ecosystems. Current programs give them inadequate support. The new program here provides a balance of retaining options for harvest, incentivizing stronger standards, and providing increased support from ODF to guide SFOs in managing their lands to benefit fish and other aquatic life.