

For Immediate Release: July 31, 2009

Contacts: Bob Van Dyk, Wild Salmon Center – (503) 504-8471
Donald Fontenot, Sierra Club – (503) 704-3116

Fishing and Conservation Groups Petition to Ensure Recovery of Fish and Wildlife on the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests

Portland, Oregon — Today, the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club, Northwest Guides and Anglers Association, Pacific Rivers Council, Wild Salmon Center, the Association of Northwest Steelheaders, Coast Range Association, Native Fish Society and the Center for Biological Diversity filed a formal Petition with the Oregon Board of Forestry requesting that the Board reverse its decision to increase clear cutting on the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests and engage in an open, transparent and scientific process to pursue a management approach consistent with applicable law.

On June 3rd, the Oregon Board of Forestry voted to increase the areas open to clear cutting from 50% to 70% of the Tillamook and Clatsop state forests. The Board's decision authorizes increased clear cutting of thousands of acres of diverse, native forests, which are rare in the North Coast range, including up to 70% of some key salmon "anchor" watersheds. Current state law requires high standards of protection for the streams in the Tillamook and Clatsop forests, which are still recovering from the unsustainable timber harvests and related road building of the past.

While the law requires that the Board's decision result in a high probability of maintaining and restoring aquatic habitat, state scientists found that the proposal had a low probability of keeping many key salmon basins on a positive trajectory. According to Bob Van Dyk of the Wild Salmon Center, "The Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan sets achievable goals to restore aquatic habitat. However, much like the failed Western Oregon Plan Revisions proposed by the Bush Administration, the Board of Forestry chose politics over science and ignored the legal requirements for ensuring the recovery of native fish and wildlife."

The group's petition also recounts how the Board violated its own rules regarding transparency and openness at its recent meeting to discuss the decision. Senator Jackie Dingfelder and numerous other Oregonians had written the Board to try to dissuade it from making this move. Chair Blackwell failed to share these letters with the rest of the Board and allotted a mere thirty minutes to a crowded room of citizens who came to testify. Donald Fontenot, a volunteer with the Sierra Club, was dismayed, saying "The Board of Forestry showed its allegiance to the timber industry by steamrolling over the public, ignoring the best available science, and making a political decision to prioritize timber production rather than looking out for best interests of our state forests and the public who owns them."

The Tillamook and Clatsop state forests that are affected by this decision are the largest publicly-owned coastal rainforest south of the Olympics and home to some of the healthiest remaining runs of wild fish in the lower 48 states. These forests and the health of their watersheds face an uncertain future if the Board's recommendations are allowed to proceed unchallenged.

View the petition at: www.crag.org (Crag Law Center)

View the Board's decision at http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/BOARD/BOF_060309_Meeting.shtml