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## A Message from DSL Director Vicki Walker

November 14, 2023

Dear Elliott State Research Forest Community,

Yesterday, Oregon State University President Jayathi Y. Murthy informed the State Land Board and the Department of State Lands that OSU is no longer in a position to participate in management of the Elliott State Research Forest.

While deeply disappointed, I appreciate OSU's transparency in acknowledging they believe they are unable to manage the forest according to their research design, even as they still desire to see the Elliott State Research Forest become a reality.

The Elliott remains a public forest under DSL's oversight, and the State Land Board has provided clear desire and direction for the creation of the Elliott State Research Forest. Oregonians across the state came together in support of a research forest and collaboratively created the foundations we are continuing to work from: the Elliott as a publicly owned forest that has completed its obligation to funding schools, but will continue to contribute to conservation, recreation, education, indigenous culture, and local economies as a research forest.

Those commitments will continue to guide DSL in completing the work we started nearly five years ago, together with partners who have engaged and advised this effort along the

way and are now part of the Elliott State Research Forest Authority prospective board. Keith Tymchuk and Dr. Jack Williams, executive leadership members of the prospective board, asked me to include the below statement from them:

“We are disappointed in OSU’s decision, but steadfast in the vision for the Elliott State Research Forest and dedicated to continuing to work collaboratively within longstanding, foundational commitments for achieving multiple benefits through a research forest.”

I also want to reaffirm basic expectations for the Elliott State Research Forest. The research forest must be supported by a Habitat Conservation Plan that complies with the Endangered Species Act, and DSL will continue to advance a plan through the federal review process.

**The forest also must be financially self-sustaining.** DSL is continuing with an independent analysis of financial information submitted by OSU. This will help inform our path forward and ensure the research forest is managed within the means available. The state will also continue to explore a potential carbon project on the research forest, as such a project could contribute to the financial health of the forest, research, and Oregon’s climate resilience goals without impacting research functions.

Let me be abundantly clear: the state remains deeply committed to the vision of an Elliott State Research Forest. The Department will continue to work collaboratively with the prospective board, Tribes, stakeholders, and partners to map out options and actions needed for the research forest to become a reality. I look forward to sharing additional information about our path forward very soon.

Sincerely,  
Vicki L. Walker  
Director, Oregon Department of State Lands



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