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The Effects of Forestry Regulations on Rural Communities and the Urban-Rural Divide in Oregon

Jennifer Sitton
Claremont McKenna College

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CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE

**The Effects of Forestry Regulations on Rural Communities
and the Urban-Rural Divide in Oregon**

SUBMITTED TO

PROFESSOR JOHN J. PITNEY, JR.

AND

PROFESSOR LILY GEISMER

AND

DEAN NICHOLAS WARNER

BY

JENNIFER SITTON

FOR

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ABSTRACT

This senior thesis is a study of federal forestry policy in Oregon and its effects on rural communities and the urban-rural division in the state. Looking specifically at the “Timber Wars” of the early 1990s, it delves deeper into the controversy over the protection of the northern spotted owl, the Northwest Forest Plan, and President Clinton’s efforts to solve the conflict between grassroots environmental activists and those with a vested interest in the timber industry. It also analyzes the federal timber payment system created by Congress to solve the problems for rural communities caused by forestry regulations. Lastly, it looks at the divisions between urban Oregonians and rural Oregonians on all issues, including environmental policy, in order to understand why Oregon is so divided and how this issue and conflict can be used as an example of a greater national conflict and recent trends of urban rural division across the country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This senior thesis is dedicated above all else to my home state of Oregon and the beauty of the natural spaces and natural resources it has to offer. I want to thank the staff of Quinn Thomas Public Affairs for allowing me to work with them this past summer and pique my interest in the topic of forest management policy and urban-rural divisions in Oregon.

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I must offer a great many thanks to the numerous friends who listened to me vent about thesis stress, who sat with me many a night and afternoon in my special thesis chair in the reading room, who helped me through personal losses early in the semester, and who didn't tell me my topic was boring when I told them I was writing on forestry in Oregon.

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INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, the nation turned to Oregon to address an increasingly violent and controversial conflict that would come to be known as the Timber Wars. As environmentalists faced off against the logging and wood products industry, Oregonians divided over the issue of protecting the northern spotted owl and old growth forests, as did the country. In November 2014, 24 years after the federal government listed the spotted owl as a threatened species, the conflict continues to affect rural communities in Oregon, leading the *The New York Times* to publish an article entitled, “Town That Thrived on Logging is Looking for Second Growth,” highlighting the dire financial situation of citizens of Sweet Home, Oregon following the decline in recent decades of the timber industry. It told the story of Dan Rice, who has struggled to keep his family’s third generation log-trucking business afloat amid decreased timber production and his wife, Cindy, who watched as the once thriving town fell into poverty when timber jobs disappeared. The desperation many rural Oregon logging towns face comes from decreased timber harvest on public land following a shift in federal regulations and increased environmental protection laws. The article noted how “the northern spotted owl – threatened and needing old-growth stands of trees to survive, scientists said – became the symbol of an era that swept away old patterns of work and life.”¹ While the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the northern spotted owl as a threatened species in 1990, the controversy over that listing continues to be an important issue both in Oregon and nationally.

¹ Kirk Johnson, “Town That Thrived on Logging is Looking for a Second Growth,” *The New York Times*, November 15, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/16/us/town-that-thrived-on-logging-is-looking-for-a-second-growth.html?_r=0

Every Oregonian has witnessed the effects of the timber industry's decline on the state. Oregonians, however, view those effects through different lenses. Some drive from Portland to the beach and see acres of clearcuts where logging has destroyed pristine forestland. Some drive past Prineville and view what used to be a thriving community based on timber and is now little more than a ghost town. Some see acres of diminished habitat for threatened species such as the northern spotted owl and others see unmaintained roads, schools that lack funding for their students, and communities that are struggling to fund basic public services.

Oregon's economy has long depended on natural resources, specifically timber. Oregon Territory was home to one of the first sawmills in the region and the state consistently produces one of the highest outputs of timber and wood products of any state.² Oregon is the second most forested state behind Alaska and the federal government owns approximately 53% of the land in the state, most of which is federal forestland in the Cascade Range and the southern and eastern regions of the state.³ Because of the large presence of the timber industry in Oregon, the state became a battleground for the "Timber Wars" that took place in the early 1990s between environmentalists and rural Oregonians and communities that depend on the industry for employment and to fund basic public services.

This analysis of Oregon serves as a microcosm for the national conflict that began in the 1970s between modern environmentalists and those affiliated with natural resource dependent industries. By addressing the rural-urban divide in Oregon, it also highlights a

² Jason P. Brandt et al., "Oregon's Forest Products Industry and Timber Harvest, 2003," *United States Department of Agriculture* (August 2006): 2.

³ Ross W. Gorte et al., "Federal Land Ownership: Overview and Data," *Congressional Research Service* (February 8, 2012), <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42346.pdf>

division facing much of the nation—that of differences in priorities and values between urban and rural Americans.

The timber industry has long provided jobs and other economic benefits to many rural Oregon communities. These jobs, however, began to disappear and mills began to close beginning in the 1970s with the birth of the modern environmental movement. The increase of federal forestry regulations, specifically in the early 1990s, threatened those rural, logging-dependent communities and the people who live in them.

When the federal government listed the northern spotted owl as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1990, the amount of timber harvested from federal forests greatly diminished. The grassroots environmentalists who fought for the listing sought to protect old growth forest habitat for the owl and protect many hundreds of acres of forestland previously used for logging. Litigation from environmental groups seeking to protect habitat for the owl held up many timber sales in the early 1990s, leading to conflict between those in the timber industry, and environmental protection advocates such as Earth First!. As environmentalists clashed with those who drew their livelihoods from the logging industry, President Clinton aimed to neutralize the conflict with the passage of the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan.

The Northwest Forest Plan did not find much support with either environmentalists or the timber industry. Environmentalists believed it did not do enough to protect old growth forests and threatened and endangered species, while timber industry workers continued to feel the financial effects of the extreme loss in timber harvest. Many rural Oregon counties felt the economic effects of the regulations the strongest. Because so many of these counties have a great deal of un-taxable federal

forestland, they have received a percentage of the revenue from all federal timber sales that came from within their counties since the early 1900s to supplement public revenue and fund public services. When these timber sales effectively ended due to the regulations enacted in the early 1990s, counties stopped receiving this revenue. The federal government aimed to mitigate this problem by implementing federal timber payments to be awarded to counties that had lost revenue from the decline in federal timber production to be used to fund public services.

As these payments declined over the years, the conflict between many urban environmentalists in Oregon and rural Oregonians who are more dependent upon the timber industry for their economy and financial security exacerbated the urban-rural divide that has existed for some time in Oregon. This division over environmental policy and the use of natural resources has widened the political divide within the state as the urban part of Oregon became more Democratic and the rural region became more consistently Republican.

Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State, published in 2011, analyzes Oregon's rural-urban division through a collection of essays by different authors, many of whom are professors at distinguished Oregon universities. *Toward One Oregon* looks at the evolution of what it calls "two Oregons" and determines that "differences in such things as economic base, geography and landscape, settlement patterns, and population density within a state, within *our* state, almost always seem to feed political, social, and cultural divisions."⁴ It goes on to argue that urbanization and

⁴ Ethan Seltzer, Michael Hibbard, and Bruce Weber, "Toward One Oregon: A Declaration of Interdependence," in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 11.

industrialization were the biggest reasons for the widening divide between urban and rural spaces within the state, specifically when it came to a diversifying economy. Oregon's post World War II economy diversified from its reliance on natural resources and added more industries, most recently the high tech industry. *Toward One Oregon* addresses the differences between the two regions in how they view the natural environment and environmental policies, stating, "The final trend that has helped to create the regional divide has been the emergence of a new paradigm for thinking about the natural environment, one that has found much stronger support among urban than rural residents."⁵ While *Toward One Oregon* successfully addresses most aspects of the division within Oregon, it does not thoroughly analyze and link the politics behind environmental policy and the Spotted Owl conflict to greater political divisions within the state.

Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives versus Conservative Populists, another multi-authored compilation of essays, published in 2005, looks more closely at the effects of environmental regulation and land use policies on politics and divisions in the state. Brent S. Steel and Denise Lach write in the "Environmental Policy" chapter, "At the heart of this debate are differing values and interests concerning the natural environment and the proper relationship of humans to their ecological surroundings. These views in turn are connected to differing conceptions about environmental policy

⁵ Richard A. Clucas, Mark Henkels, and Brent S. Steel, "The Politics of One Oregon: Causes and Consequences of the Rural-Urban Divide and Prospects for Overcoming it," in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 122.

and the management of Oregon's natural resources.”⁶ This chapter goes on to analyze the differing views on how best to utilize and protect Oregon's natural resources, including the conservation ideology, which prevailed early, and the preservation ideology, which came about with the modern environmental movement. It looks at the differences in priorities and values between urban and rural Oregon and how that affected political alignment and divisions. In the book's final chapter, “Oregon in Perspective,” Mark Henkels and Richard A. Clucas assert:

One of the interesting and significant aspects of Oregon is that its political landscape parallels its physical geography. Geography matters in Oregon politics...Looking at the conflict between progressives and conservative populists, there is clearly a strong geographical element to this debate. The split divides the state between urban and rural areas, between east and west, and between much of the Willamette Valley and everywhere else in Oregon.⁷

While *Oregon Politics and Government* successfully addresses the environmental policies that divided the state, it does not elaborate as thoroughly on the regional geography of Oregon, which could have helped explain why industrialization and urbanization played such a large role in the widening of the divisions between the two parts of the state.

This thesis will build upon these two pieces of scholarship to argue that the economic stress put on rural, logging-dependent communities in Oregon exacerbated the longstanding division between urban and rural Oregon and strengthened the political division between Democratic leaning urban places and Republican leaning rural regions.

⁶ Brent S. Steel and Denise Lach, “Environmental Policy,” in *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populists* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 225.

⁷ Mark Henkels and Richard A. Clucas, “Oregon in Perspective,” in *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populists* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 292.

Chapter one will provide historical context on the timber and wood products industry in Oregon, emphasizing why this industry is so important to the state and why it is a useful example through which to analyze the effects of more recent environmental regulations. It will then provide background on the geographic division within Oregon and the predominant natural resource based industries within each region as well as stress the important role federally owned land plays in the state. It will finish by looking at early state and federal environmental regulations that have affected the timber industry.

Chapter two will look more closely at the modern environmental movement of the 1970s and the role grassroots environmental groups played in the threatened listing of the northern spotted owl under the Endangered Species Act. It will discuss the controversy that surrounded the listing and the ensuing “timber wars” that took place between environmentalists and those invested in the timber industry, including the efforts undertaken by President Clinton to ameliorate the conflict. It will later analyze the Northwest Forest Plan and economic effects these regulations had on rural Oregon logging communities by looking at economic and employment data as well as personal accounts from individuals who lived through the changes in the industry. It will look at the role federal timber payments have played in alleviating some of the dire financial impacts felt by rural Oregon towns following the environmental restrictions that decreased timber production.

Chapter three will look at the divisions between urban and rural Oregon, specifically on environmental policy and opinions on the use of natural resources. It will take into account the different views urban and rural Oregonians have of the timber industry and how these different views have affected their politics, in addition to the

regions' differing social and cultural values. Ultimately, the final chapter will analyze the electoral landscape in Oregon and the tendency of rural Oregonians to vote Republican and urban Oregonians to vote Democratic, while questioning whether this is a result of a realignment of priorities on environmental policy or if it is the result of cultural values that find Republicans representing timber-dependent communities.

CHAPTER 1

Forestry in Oregon: History and Geography

“Oregon is built upon lumber. All Oregonians, no matter what their trades, are ultimately dependent upon our forests—if not for a livelihood, then certainly for lifestyle. The trees growing in our hills and rolling down to our sawmills keep the economy going, sustain our cities and towns.”¹

- Oregon Forest Products Transportation Association, *Bringing out the Big Ones: Log Trucking in Oregon 1912-1983*

The importance of the timber industry to Oregon’s history and economy is undeniable. As environmental regulations have increased, however, timber production has decreased, leading to a decline in employment in the timber and wood products industries and dire consequences for many rural regions of the state. Oregon’s urban areas, most notably Portland, simultaneously grew rapidly and have prospered in the last half-century. Urban residents have not directly felt the effects of these changes within the industry, which has further deepened the existing urban-rural divide within the state.

History of the Timber Industry in Oregon

Forestry, timber, and the wood products industries have a long history in Oregon. Before European settlement, native Oregonians seasonally used forestland for burning while hunting deer and elk. After Lewis and Clark traveled to the state in 1805 and some of Oregon’s first settlers built the first sawmill in the Pacific Northwest in 1827, Oregon sent its first shipment of timber to China in 1833. By the 1850s, Oregon traded lumber with China, Hawaii, and Australia and was home to four water-powered mills and a steam-powered mill. By 1870, Oregon had 173 sawmills.² By 1929, Oregon had 608 lumber mills, five paper mills, 64 planing mills, and 47 furniture factories, and surpassed

¹ Walt Wentz, *Bringing Out the Big Ones: Log Trucking in Oregon 1912-1983* (Salem, OR: Oregon Forest Products Association, 1983), Introduction.

² “Logging Timeline,” Oregon Public Broadcasting.

Washington as the leading timber producer in the country in 1938. Over 50% of the state is still covered in forestland. Today, Oregon remains the largest lumber producer in the U.S. and forestry services and wood products manufacturing together account for about 11% of the state's economic output.³

The first known sawmill west of the Mississippi River was built near Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River in 1827, across the river from the city of Portland, signifying the beginning of the forest products industry in Oregon territory.⁴ Originally, settlers in Oregon viewed the state's many acres of forestland as a hindrance to agriculture, but by the mid-1800s, wealthy farmers began using sawn lumber for their homes instead of building log cabins, which kick-started the timber industry.⁵ While the industry itself was thriving, millions of acres of forests throughout the state suffered massive fires on the unregulated land throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In response, the state established the Oregon Department of Forestry in 1911, which created positions for a State Forester and a State Board of Forestry. According to the Oregon Department of Forestry website, both were to "act on all matters pertaining for forestry, including collecting and sharing information about the conditions of Oregon's forests, protecting forestlands and conserving forest resources."⁶

³ "Forestry & Wood Products," Business Oregon.

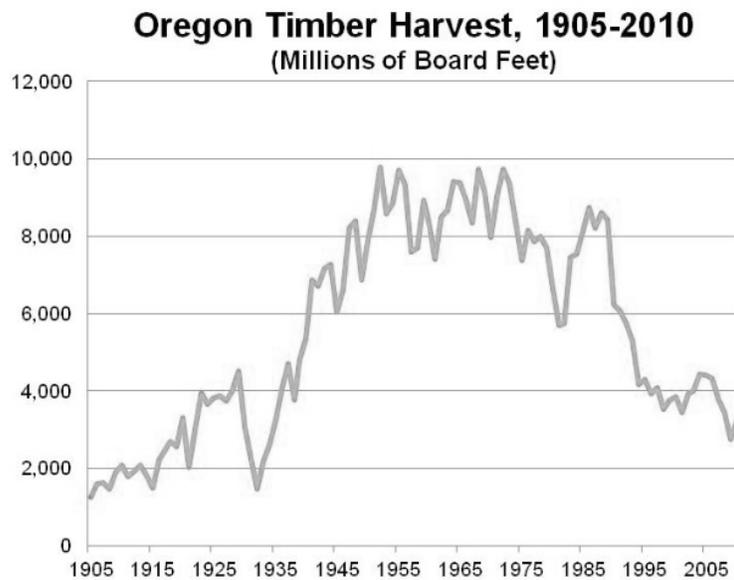
⁴ Jason P. Brandt et al., "Oregon's Forest Products Industry and Timber Harvest, 2003," *United States Department of Agriculture* (August 2006): 2.

⁵ Alicia Andrews and Kristin Kutara, "Oregon's Timber Harvests: 1849-2004," *Oregon Department of Forestry* (2005): 1.

⁶ "About Us," Oregon Department of Forestry.

The industry grew fairly steadily throughout the early 20th century but faced a decline in harvest levels during the Great Depression.⁷ By 1936, Oregon landowners owed over \$40 million in taxes, with many walking away from their land as it defaulted into the hands of local counties.⁸ As large fires consumed the unmanaged forestland throughout the state, much of which was in Tillamook County, the Oregon Department of Forestry offered to rehabilitate the burn in exchange for the deed to the land from the afflicted counties, with the promise that future income from logging the land would be returned to the counties. This agreement created Tillamook State Forest land, which set a precedent for the new role the state of Oregon would play in owning and managing timberlands.⁹

Throughout much of the twentieth century, economic booms led to boosts in the timber industry, giving it the reputation of a cyclical industry. World War II increased the demand for wood products and started the trend of harvesting second growth timber.¹⁰ Mike Miller, author of



⁷ Josh Lehner, “Historical Look at Oregon’s Wood Product Industry,” Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, January 23, 2012

⁸ Gail Wells, “The Great Depression,” Oregon History Project, 2006.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Andrews and Kutara, “Oregon’s Timber Harvests: 1849-2004,” 1.

“Forest, People and Oregon: A History of Forestry in Oregon,” wrote that by 1961, more than “one-fifth of the nation’s sawtimber supply was in Oregon forests, (supplying) about one-fourth of the softwood lumber, half of the plywood and more than one-fourth of the hardboard produced in the United States.”¹¹ Timber harvest levels stayed consistently high in the economically prosperous years between 1945 and 1975, with levels between 8,000 and 10,000 millions of board feet.¹² The early 1980s recession hit hard the industry and Oregon’s economy, however, causing a sharp decline in the amount of Oregon



timber harvested from public lands, which had accounted for over half the state’s total timber harvest.¹³ While harvest levels surged in the late 1980s, employment in the wood products industry plunged, with only an uptick in the late 1980s. Oregon wood products

employment still has not returned to its pre-1980 levels and has continued to decrease since the late 1980s.¹⁴

Many of the changes in the wood products industry came from external forces.

The inflation and interest rates of the early 1980s decreased home construction and the

¹¹ Mike H. Miller, *Forest, People and Oregon: A History of Forestry in Oregon* (Salem, OR: Oregon State Forestry Department, 1982), 52.

¹² Lehner, “Historical Look at Oregon’s Wood Product Industry.”

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

need for timber throughout the country. Increased technology and the mechanization of timber mills also decreased the need for individual workers. In an article entitled, “Historical Look at Oregon’s Wood Product Industry,” the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis wrote, “the industry underwent a restructuring in the early 1980s, which resulted in less workers needed to produce the same output and productivity enhancements, along with automation and standardization also contributing.”¹⁵ While the decline in wood products industry jobs in the 1980s was partially due to the recession and mechanization, many jobs disappeared because of the decline in production and total harvest in the early 1980s and again in the early 1990s.¹⁶ This decline in timber employment led to steep economic decline in the towns and counties that housed the industry and its workers. Due to the nature of the industry, these communities tended to be located in rural regions of the state, while urban areas were not as directly affected by the changes, leading to a widening of the geographic divide within the state.

Oregon’s Geographic Divide

Like many states, Oregon has geographic divisions. Samuel and Emily Dicken of the Oregon Historical Society define Oregon as having six distinct regions.¹⁷

Richard A. Clucas and Mark Henkels wrote in the 2005 book, *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives versus Conservative Populists*, “Oregon, like the nation, is sharply divided geographically. Conflicts between Portland’s interests and values and

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Samuel N. Dicken and Emily F. Dicken, *Oregon Divided: A Regional Geography* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society, 1982).

those of the rest of the states have long haunted Oregon's politics.”¹⁸ Historically, Oregon's economy has been based in agriculture, logging, mining, and fishing. They are largely based in rural regions of the state, while the urban Portland region has increasingly since the 1970s become the home to high-tech industry corporations.¹⁹

The first of these regions, the Northwest Coast, includes the northern coast range and has served as the basis for Oregon's extensive timber industry for over a century due to its favorable environment for tree growth and transportation of logs and wood products.²⁰

Dicken and Dicken describe the Willamette Basin region as another haven for the wood products industry, as it brought, in 1982, more income to its residents than agriculture and accounted for nearly half its employment.²¹ They describe the many pieces of logging equipment along the hills of the Coast Range and the Cascades, the “clear-cut patches stand out against the dark green of the adjacent forest,” while log trucks haul the timber – “the life blood of Oregon, in a matter of speaking” – away from the forests to far away states and countries.²² While logging was a very important industry in the Willamette Basin in 1982, the authors noted that the number of sawmills had declined and large purpose mills had begun producing most paper products.

¹⁸ Richard A. Clucas and Mark Henkels, “A State Divided,” in *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populists* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 9.

¹⁹ Richard A. Clucas, Mark Henkels, and Brent S. Steel, “The Politics of One Oregon: Causes and Consequences of the Rural-Urban Divide and Prospects for Overcoming it,” in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 113.

²⁰ Dicken and Dicken, *Oregon Divided: A Regional Geography*, 31.

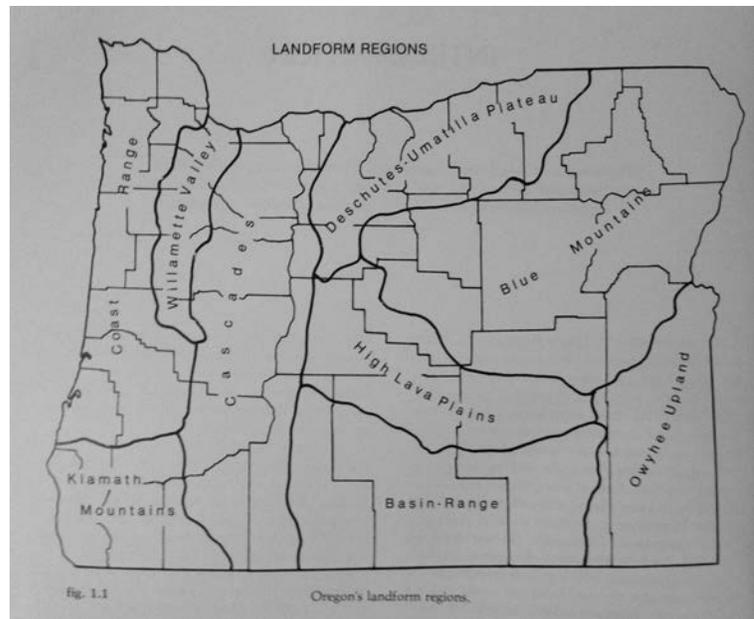
²¹ Dicken and Dicken, *Oregon Divided: A Regional Geography*, 72.

²² Dicken and Dicken, *Oregon Divided: A Regional Geography*, 58.

Southwestern Oregon similarly has an economy based mostly upon wood products, in addition to irrigation farming and recreational activities. In 1982, wood products industries accounted for 40% of all employed individuals and 90% of those engaged in manufacturing in the Coos Bay area of Southwestern Oregon.

Southeastern Oregon is also home to sizable timber industries. In 1972, of the five counties encompassed in Southeastern Oregon, “Deschutes County had 50 lumber and wood processing

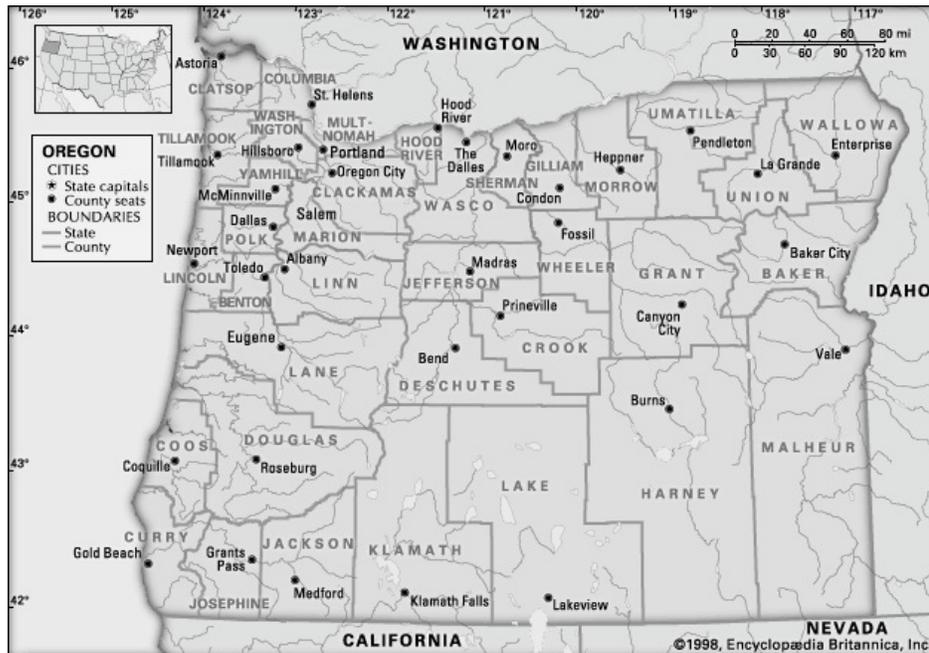
establishments with 3,100 employees; Klamath County had 78 establishments and 4,500 employees, and Lake County had 18 and 500 respectively.”²³ Neither the Deschutes-Umatilla Plateau nor the Blue Mountains regions produce much timber.



While Dickens and Dickens’ evaluation is helpful in dividing the state into geographic regions, it fails to evaluate the differences between or to define urban and rural regions. Sheila Martin and Bruce Weber explain, however, in *Toward one Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State*, “While we often characterize the different parts of our state as either rural or urban, there is neither a typically urban

²³ Dicken and Dicken, *Oregon Divided: A Regional Geography*, 138.

nor a typically rural Oregon.”²⁴ For this reason, it is easier to use the United States Census’ definition of urban as an urbanized area of 50,000 or more people.²⁵ Using this definition, the Portland Metro Area is an urbanized area, as is the Corvallis-Albany area,



the Springfield-Eugene area, the city of Salem, the city of Medford and the city of Bend.²⁶ Counties encompassing

urban areas include Washington, Multnomah, Clackamas, Marion, Linn, Benton, Lane, Jackson, and Deschutes. Nevertheless, most Oregonians would not consider Jackson or Deschutes counties “urban,” and likely would not consider Linn, Benton, or Lane counties “urban” either, even though they are home to urban metro areas.

In addition to the economic, social, political, cultural and population differences between urban and rural communities, the issue of public land ownership is a central

²⁴ Sheila Martin and Bruce Weber, “A Tale of Two Oregons: Common Aspirations, Different Contexts, and Critical Interdependencies in Urban and Rural Oregon,” in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 17.

²⁵ “Urban and Rural Classification,” United States Census Bureau.

²⁶ “Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2012,” The United States Census Bureau.

factor in many rural communities, but does not have an impact in most urban communities. The federal government owns 53% of Oregon's land, mostly in the Cascade Range and the southern and eastern parts of the state.²⁷ Sixty four percent of Oregon's forests are publically owned, with the federal government being the primary landowner.²⁸ The federal government owns very little land near the Portland Metro area or the populated stretch of the Willamette Basin through which Interstate 5 runs. For these reasons, the Oregonians whose lives tend to be directly affected by federal land ownership and management are those who live in rural regions of the state, not including those in the urbanized area of Bend.

While a disconnect between the urban and rural regions of Oregon has long been evident, it has widened in recent years. Many Oregonians who live in urbanized areas do not feel the same effects of federal land ownership on their individual lives as those in rural areas. Furthermore, the increase in environmental regulations, specifically those that regulated forestry on public lands, had a great effect on rural communities in Oregon.

Early Environmental Forestry Regulations

The conservation movement that took hold in the United States from 1890-1920 was the first movement in the country to preserve and protect the nation's wildlife, lands, and natural resources.²⁹ This movement was rooted in a number of social changes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries including Progressive era reforms, an increase in

²⁷ Ross W. Gorte et al., "Federal Land Ownership: Overview and Data," *Congressional Research Service* (February 8, 2012), <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42346.pdf>

²⁸ "Who Owns the Forests?" Oregon Forest Resources Institute, <http://oregonforests.org/content/forest-ownership-interactive-map>

²⁹ "Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850-1920," Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/conservation/history.html>

crowded urban areas and a desire to escape to peaceful places in nature, and westward expansion that opened the eyes of many Americans to the great natural beauty the country had to offer.³⁰ One product of the early Conservation Movement was the 1891 passage of the Forest Reserve Act, which marked the beginning of forestry legislation and regulation in the United States. The Forest Reserve Act authorized the setting aside of public lands as forest reserves, including the Bull Run Reserve, which was set aside in 1892 as Oregon's first reserve.³¹ A few years later, in 1897, the federal government created the U.S. Forest Service to manage National Forests under the Forest Management Act and passed the Organic Act, which, according to the Oregon Forest Resources Institute, "recognizes broad federal power and allows for fire protection and limited timber sales."³² The 1911 Weeks Act authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to purchase forested, cut-over, and denuded lands for the regulation of navigable streams and, later, the 1924 Clark-McNary Act established programming to help private forest owners manage their lands.³³

The conservation movement's successors in the modern environmental movement gained momentum forty years later. One of their earliest efforts involved pressuring Congress to pass the Multiple Use – Sustained Yield Act in 1960, which required management priorities on National Forests include all resources, and the 1964 Wilderness Act, which created wilderness reserves and management regulations for the reserves.³⁴

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "History," Oregon Forest Resource Institute, <http://oregonforests.org/content/history>.

³² Ibid.

³³ "Acts & Legislation," National Forest Foundation, <http://www.nationalforests.org/explore/legislation>.

³⁴ Ibid.

This environmental movement of the early 1960s grew throughout the decade and into the 1970s due to “growing, widespread public concern that new laws and regulations were needed to preserve and protect the environment,” according to the USDA Forest Service.³⁵ Rachel Carson’s 1962 *Silent Spring* was a catalyst for the early movement, documenting the overuse of pesticides and herbicides, which led to new regime of environmental laws and policies at the national and state level. Years of demonstrations, lawsuits, and occasional violence by those in favor of and opposed to the use of chemicals in forest management, led the Forest Service to reconsider many of its land management practices in the 1970s.³⁶

Congress passed the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act in January 1970 which, according to the United States Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service website, “was the first major environmental law in the United States and established this country’s environmental policies.”³⁷ NEPA, which required extensive analysis of all proposed federal projects and their environmental impacts, would lead to a change of thinking in the forest industry.³⁸ Congress created the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) under NEPA, which required Federal agencies to adjust procedures as necessary to implement NEPA and to consult with CEQ during the process of developing procedures.³⁹ When the Forest Service decided in 1979 to blend its procedures with those required by NEPA, it burdened the Forest Service and CEQ with extra administrative

³⁵ “The Environmentalism and Public Participation Era, 1970-1993,” The USDA Forest Service.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ “The Forest Service and NEPA,” The USDA Forest Service, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/klamath/landmanagement/projects/?cid=stelprdb5109505>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

steps required by CEQ. NEPA “became the foundation for much of the environmental litigation against federal agencies,” according to Douglas Bevington’s *The Rebirth of Environmentalism*.⁴⁰

In 1971, the Oregon legislature passed the groundbreaking Oregon Forest Practices Act, making it the first state to create a comprehensive set of laws governing forest practices.⁴¹ The Oregon Forest Practices Act requires replanting within two years of a harvest, protecting land and trees near water sources, protecting wildlife habitat, and limiting clearcuts to less than 120 acres and specifies that “clearcuts within 300 feet of each other cannot total more than 120 acres on the same ownership.”⁴² The Oregon Forest Practices Act has acted as a dynamic set of regulations since its implementation in 1971, with new and improved forest practice regulations implemented over the last 40 years, the most recent coming in 2013.⁴³

The forestry industry in Oregon experienced more changes in 1973, with the approval of a statewide land use planning law. Republican Governor Tom McCall, who grew up in rural central Oregon, was a strong supporter of Senate Bill 100. In a famous speech to the legislature, he bemoaned “sagebrush subdivisions, coastal condomania, and the ravenous rampages of suburbia.”⁴⁴ A strong supporter of environmental protection, McCall believed the state had a right and a duty to protect its natural resources and

⁴⁰ Douglas Bevington, “Appendix: Origins of Four Biodiversity Protection Laws,” in *The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2009), 241.

⁴¹ “History,” Oregon Forest Resources Institute.

⁴² “Forest Laws,” Oregon Forest Resources Institute.

⁴³ “Oregon Forest Practices Act Timeline,” Oregon Forest Resources Institute.

⁴⁴ “History of Oregon’s Land Use Planning,” Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development.

beauty from urban and suburban sprawl. The tone with which McCall described subdivisions, condomania, and suburbia showed his disdain for increased urban spaces throughout the state. The Legislature's passage of SB 100 on May 29, 1973 created the Land Conservation and Development Commission and the Department of Land Conservation and Development and required each city and county in the state to prepare a comprehensive plan for how the land within its borders would be used, in accordance with the goals of the state as a whole.⁴⁵ While the legislation aimed to give the state greater authority to protect the environment and natural land, it also sought to preserve local responsibility for land use planning.⁴⁶

While the early 1970s saw the enactment of a number of state environmental laws, even more legislation to protect the environment passed at the federal level. In 1973, Congress passed the Endangered Species Act, seeking to protect plants and animals by listing them either as endangered or threatened.⁴⁷ Then, in 1976, Congress passed the National Forest Management Act, which, according to the Oregon Forest Resources Institute, provides "for harvest practices that preserve biological diversity and meet multiple-use objectives. The act restricts clearcutting, but does not prohibit it."⁴⁸ In 1989, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the northern spotted owl as a threatened species in Washington, Oregon and northern California, leading to giant restrictions on the amount of land available for timber harvesting. This listing, and the effect it had on the forestry and timber industries, spurred the drafting and passage by Congress of the

⁴⁵ "Senate Bill 100," The Oregon Encyclopedia (Portland State University).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "Endangered Species Act – Overview," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

⁴⁸ "History," Oregon Forest Resources Institute.

Northwest Forest Plan in 1994, which created land use guidelines and policies for federal lands in the Pacific Northwest.

Each of these measures had a direct effect on the wood products industry in Oregon. Although the regulations affected the state's economy as a whole, the rural regions of the state, where most of the wood products industry is located, experienced the largest and most direct economic and employment hit. Thus, some of the economic stress placed on these rural counties of the state led to even greater divisions between the urban and rural regions of Oregon. The stresses felt by many rural communities in Oregon that were previously dependent on the timber industry for their livelihood shifted some perceptions of environmental laws in Oregon, specifically those of spotted owl protection and the Northwest Forest Plan in the early 1990s.

CHAPTER 2

Changing Environmental Regulations in the 1990s

“Back at Rough & Ready, 19-year-old Larry Mason is hoping for a solution. Josephine County’s unemployment rate tops 11 percent. At last count, a quarter of its residents were on food stamps. Mason figures his chances of getting a local job are close to zero. It could make you cry every night, Mason said. ‘In this valley, there’s no jobs. The kids my daughter went to school with, none of them have jobs. It’s tough, man.’”¹

- “Rough & Ready Lumber, Josephine County’s last sawmill, a casualty of southwest Oregon’s enduring timber wars,” *The Oregonian*, May 20, 2013

The statement of Larry Mason, a nineteen-year-old lumber worker at the Rough & Ready mill, about the economic situation in Josephine County, reflects the reality of many rural counties in Oregon since the early 1990s. Between the 1989 and 2012 census, poverty levels in Josephine County jumped from 18.3% to 22.2%.² While this increase in poverty in Josephine County cannot be attributed to a single cause, one significant factor was the decline in jobs available in logging and mills. As mills like Rough & Ready closed because they no longer had logs to work with, one of the biggest industries in Josephine County went away. Mason is only one of many former millwrights who watched their jobs and incomes disappear with the closure of a Josephine County sawmill.

¹ Scott Learn, “Rough & Ready Lumber, Josephine County’s last sawmill, a casualty of southwest Oregon’s enduring timber wars,” *Oregonian*, May 20, 2013, http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2013/05/rough_ready_lumber_josephine_c.html.

² “1990 and 2000 Census Poverty Data,” USDA Economic Research Service, last modified July 20, 2002, http://webarchives.cdlib.org/sw1wp9v27r/http://ers.usda.gov/Data/Povertyrates/1989_1999/PovListpct.asp?st=OR&view=Percent and “Percent of Total Population in Poverty, 2012,” United States Department of Agriculture, last modified August 27, 2014, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/county-level-data-sets/poverty.aspx#.VEmMK77rNUR.sets/poverty.aspx#.VEmMK77rNUR>.

Mason's experience is not unique. In fact, it is commonplace in counties such as Lane, Douglas, Linn, Jackson, Coos, and Klamath where men and women who had worked their entire lives in the timber industry saw their livelihoods disappear with the sawmills and logging jobs in the late 20th century. The sharp decline in timber production on public lands in the early 1990s contributed to this job loss. Many Oregonians attribute this change in timber output to the northern spotted owl and the protections the Endangered Species Act awarded it in 1990.

Grassroots environmental activists of the early 1990s played a large role in affecting change in federal forestry policy. These regulations, in addition to those enforced by the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan, had many negative consequences for rural logging communities in Oregon including a decline in employment and funding for public services.

The 1990 Spotted Owl Controversy

While the modern environmental movement reached its apex in the 1970s, a proliferation of grassroots biodiversity activism groups emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s.³ One of these grassroots groups, Earth First!, used radical tactics to achieve its goals. Because Earth First! had no official organizing body and did not affiliate with any national organization, it could execute many of its radical tactics without facing repercussions from either a national organizing body or litigation. If there was no one person or place to assign blame, no one could take legal action against Earth First!. According to *The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted*

³ Douglas Bevington, *The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2009), 2.

Owl to the Polar Bear, Earth First! used two tactics, the first being civil disobedience, “in which Earth First!ers used their own bodies to actively obstruct logging and other activities that harmed wildlife – for example standing between a logger’s chainsaw and the tree, chaining themselves to a bulldozer, or sitting high up in trees that were scheduled to be cut down.”⁴ Nevertheless, the visibility of these actions was initially overshadowed by the second tactic used by the group known as “monkeywrenching,” in which the group damaged or destroyed equipment used to hurt the environment.⁵ The aggression between the Earth First!ers and those involved in the timber industry quickly escalated in the early 1990s. Judi Bari, Earth First!’s principal organizer against logging in the early 1990s, wrote in her essay, *Timber Wars*, “The environmental battle in the Pacific Northwest has reached such a level of intensity that even the press now refers to it as the Timber Wars.”⁶

As the battle over the protection of old growth forests progressed, grassroots groups such as Earth First! discovered they could achieve their goals most effectively by tying up timber sales on federal lands in legal battles. These groups saw that environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act “included citizen enforcement provisions specifically to enable the public to file lawsuits that would ensure that these laws were implemented,” according to *The Rebirth of Environmentalism*.⁷ If any citizen could show there was “a reasonable likelihood” that the habitat of an endangered or protected species was likely to be modified, he or she could stop any logging practices,

⁴ Ibid., 29.

⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶ Judi Bari, *Timber Wars* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1994), 11.

⁷ Bevington, *The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear*, 10.

public or private, by obtaining a preliminary injunction, according to the American Bar Association's *Law Trends & News Journal*.⁸ Even if landowners or developers followed state and federal laws and the necessary regulatory bodies approved their actions, any practices that had the potential to harm habitat were subject to a challenge and injunction.⁹ Thus, Earth First! believed this "citizen enforcement provision" of the Endangered Species Act would be their best option through which to advocate the protection of old growth forests, specifically through the case of the northern spotted owl.

According to *The Rebirth of Environmentalism*, scientists sent evidence of the impact continued logging of old growth forests would have on the survival of the northern spotted owl to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management long before 1990.¹⁰ Environmentalists lamented the increased logging production in the 1970s and 1980s, arguing, "Amid all of this logging, the northern spotted owl population dropped precipitously. The fate of the owl was tied to the fate of old-growth forests."¹¹ While environmental activists saw the protection of old growth forests and the habitat for the spotted owl as a top priority, the Forest Service was hesitant to develop a plan that would decrease available land for logging. Douglas Bevington wrote in *The Rebirth of Environmentalism*, "The survival of the spotted owl thus became both a biodiversity protection issue in its own right and also a proxy for the

⁸ Jessica K. Ferrell, "Logging on Private Land and the Endangered Species Act," *Law Trends and News* 3, no. 2 (late Fall 2007): http://www.americanbar.org/newsletter/publications/law_trends_news_practice_area_environmental_law/newsletter_home/realestate_ferrell.html.

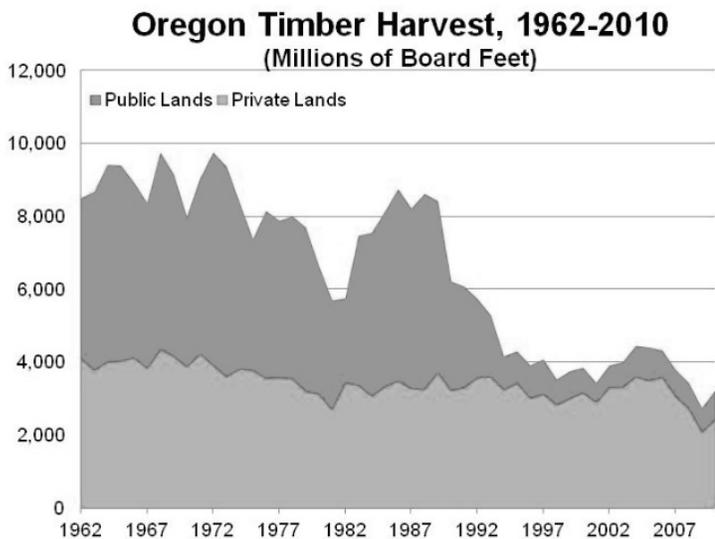
⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Bevington, *The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear*, 117

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

overall condition of the forests.”¹² The spotted owl controversy was a national rallying cry for grassroots environmentalists advocating forest protection.

When the federal government finally listed the northern spotted owl as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1990, it significantly decreased the amount of public land available for logging and placed stricter restrictions on private landowners, including restricting the harvesting of timber within seventy acres of where owls nest or



are active.¹³ According to the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, Oregon timber harvest from public lands dropped from approximately 9,000 millions of board feet in 1990 to approximately 5,000

millions of board feet by 1993.¹⁴ As logging-dependent communities in Oregon began feeling the effects of this decline in production, frustration increased. Richard A. Clucas, Mark Henkels, and Brent S. Steel wrote in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State*, “Prior to the listing, there had been simmering disagreements between rural and urban areas over land-use and environmental

¹² Bevington, *The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear*, 118

¹³ Richard A. Clucas and Melody Rose, “Oregon in the Nation and the World,” in *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populists* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 42.

¹⁴ Lehner, “Historical Look at Oregon’s Wood Product Industry,” Oregon Office of Economic Analysis.

regulations, but the listing galvanized rural residents over what they saw as a threat to their communities and livelihood.”¹⁵

In 1992, presidential candidate Bill Clinton made a solution to the conflict over the forests in the Northwest a major part of his campaign platform. As a Democratic politician, he had a strong support base in environmentalists, but was also dedicated to finding an equitable solution that would help timber workers negatively affected by the recently implemented federal regulations.¹⁶ These constituencies were both important to Clinton’s campaign to win Oregon and the presidency in 1992. He knew that in order to capture many of the votes in the Portland and Willamette Valley areas, he would have to continue to support the environmental initiatives that found strong support in urban areas, but he also knew that in order to sway any rural voters who had felt the effects of the industry’s decline in recent years, he would have to show he was making an effort to solve the economic problems it had caused. While George Bush claimed most of the rural, eastern counties in the 1992 Presidential election, Clinton picked up a majority in Wasco, Lane, Coos, Lincoln, Tillamook, and Clatsop counties, all dependent upon the timber industry in 1992.¹⁷

In April 1993, once elected, Clinton convened a Presidential summit in Portland, Oregon with the intent of creating a solution to the conflict. In his opening remarks at

¹⁵ Richard A. Clucas, Mark Henkels, and Brent S. Steel, “The Politics of One Oregon: Causes and Consequences of the Rural-Urban Divide and Prospects for Overcoming it,” in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 129.

¹⁶ Bevington, *The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear*, 121

¹⁷ “1992 Presidential General Election Results – Oregon,” U.S. Election Atlas, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/state.php?year=1992&fips=41&f=0&off=0&elect=0&minper=0>.

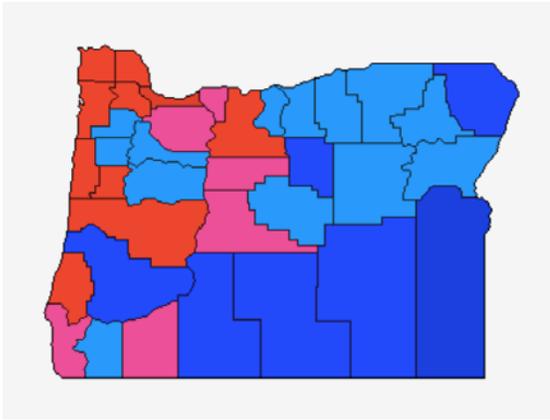
summit, Clinton said, “We're here to discuss issues about which people feel strongly, believe deeply, and often disagree vehemently. That's because the issues are important and are related and intrinsic to the very existence of the people who live here in the Pacific Northwest,” showing his understanding and support for both sides of the conflict.¹⁸ The summit led to a mandate from President Clinton for federal land management and regulatory agencies to work together to develop a plan to protect the spotted owl and other species that were dependent on old growth forests, while allowing logging to resume.¹⁹ The Clinton administration eventually adopted the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) in 1994 with the intent of protecting old growth habitat for the northern spotted owl. According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s website on the northern spotted owl, the NWFP “established a system of late-successional reserves across the range of the spotted owl to provide suitable nesting habitat over the long term.”²⁰ While the Northwest Forest Plan intended to create a solution to the conflict between environmental groups seeking to protect old growth forests and the timber industry, it largely failed to do so. If anything, it exacerbated the frustrations and economic repercussions felt by timber workers living in rural, logging-dependent communities. Rural Oregon lumber workers’ frustrations led to marginal political implications, including a lack of support for Clinton from many rural counties in the 1996 election.

¹⁸ William J. Clinton, “Remarks on Opening the Forest Conference in Portland, Oregon,” (Oregon Convention Center, Portland, Oregon, April 2, 1993), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46396>.

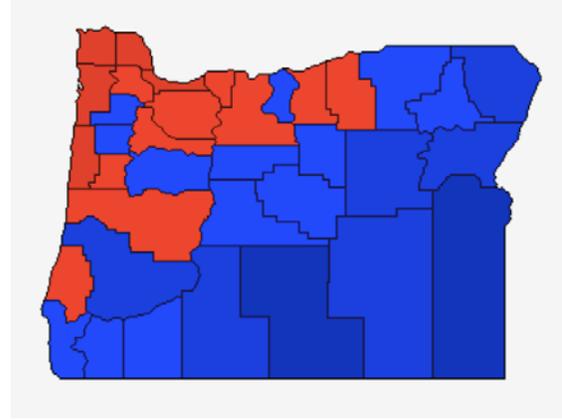
¹⁹ Susan Charnley et al., *Northwest Forest Plan—the First 10 Years (1994-2003): Socioeconomic Monitoring of the Klamath National Forest and Three Local Communities* (Pacific Northwest Research Station: United States Department of Agriculture, August 2008), ii, http://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/pnw_gtr764.pdf.

²⁰ “Northern Spotted Owl,” U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, last modified May 27, 2014, <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/species/data/northernspottedowl/>.

Rural counties that had supported Clinton in 1992 and did not in 1996 included Jefferson County, Deschutes County, Jackson County, and Curry County, while support for Bob Dole was stronger in rural counties in 1996 than it was for George Bush in 1992.²¹ While timber industry regulations in the early 1990s played a role in electoral politics, the decline in timber production and ensuing financial repercussions in rural counties led to the strongest political frustrations in rural Oregon.



1992 U.S. Presidential Election Results by county with red counties representing Clinton majorities and blue counties representing Bush majorities



1996 U.S. Presidential Election Results by county with red counties representing Clinton majorities and blue counties representing Dole majorities

Effects of Early 1990s Forestry Regulations

The forestry and wood products industry includes forest owners, harvesters, sawmills, secondary wood-product manufacturers, and intermediates such as trucking

²¹ “1996 Presidential Election Results – Oregon,” U.S. Election Atlas, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/state.php?year=1996&fips=41&f=0&off=0&elect=0&minper=0>.

companies, according to Sheila Martin in *Toward One Oregon*.²² While employment in the wood products sector spans rural and urban Oregon, most of these jobs belong to individuals who live in rural communities, due to the location of the forests used for logging. Therefore, the drastic decline in timber harvest from public lands in 1990 had the greatest effect on jobs directly involved in harvesting and processing that timber, most of which were located in rural Oregon.

The Oregon Office of Economic Analysis found that Oregon wood products employment dropped from around 70,000 to around 55,000 between January and February 1990, its lowest rate since it was first measured in 1950, not including the recession of the early 1980s.²³ That employment level has continued to decline since January 1990.²⁴ In 2010, there were 25,300 Oregon timber jobs.²⁵ Nationally, private forestry and logging jobs have steadily decreased from approximately 13,800 in 2001 to less than 9,000 in 2013.²⁶ The five Oregon counties with the highest wood products employment (Lane, Douglas, Linn, Coos, and Jackson) decreased their employment levels from over 8,000 or between 5,000 and 8,000 in 1978 to between 4,000 and 1,000 in 2008.²⁷ The Oregon Office of Economic Analysis cited “increased efficiencies

²² Sheila Martin, “Critical Linkages: Strengthening Clusters in Urban and Rural Oregon,” in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 148.

²³ Lehner, “Historical Look at Oregon's Wood Product Industry,” Oregon Office of Economic Analysis.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Learn, “Rough & Ready.”

²⁶ “Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages,” *U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics*, <http://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet/>.

²⁷ Ibid.

(standardization of logs, mills, equipment, etc.), in addition to the federal land restrictions” as contributing to declining employment in the industry.²⁸

While employment in the wood products industry declined for a number of reasons, the average real wages of those working in the industry also decreased. The average real wage in Oregon for workers in this



industry in 1976 was around \$52,000, compared to \$41,000 for the average of all other industries.²⁹ The wood products industry continued to have higher average real wages than all other industries until 2006, when the two converged. “The Wood Products Industry in Oregon used to have 70,000+ jobs that paid 30% more than the state average.” The Oregon Office of Economic Analysis explained, “However, due to economic cycles, increased competition, increased productivity and decreased timber harvests on federal lands, the industry has now approximately 25,000 jobs that pay the state average.”³⁰

Sawmills are one part of the wood products industry that was hit the hardest by the production decline in 1990. The number of sawmills in Oregon decreased from 165 in

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

1988 to 116 in 2008 to 69 in 2012.³¹ Larry Giustina, owner of Giustina Land and Timber, is the third generation of his family to work in the wood products industry.³² His Italian immigrant family members opened a rail tie mill in Eugene, Oregon when they discovered they could make more money crafting rail ties than working as carpenters in Portland. During the post-WWII boom, the family changed the mill from a sawmill to a mill that produces plywood and veneer. The Giustina mill originally received approximately 50% of its timber from government lands, but according to Giustina, “When the spotted owl started coming in, we couldn’t keep the mills going.”³³ When the spotted owl regulations started affecting the amount of timber harvested from public lands and sent to mills throughout the state, many mills, like those of the Giustina family, found they couldn’t sustain their output levels without federal timber. Giustina’s family, like many families who ran mills in Oregon, was forced to shut down their mill in the 1990s.

Jennifer Phillippi, co-owner of the Rough & Ready sawmill, the final mill to close in Josephine County in 2013, faced the same problem—a lack of available timber. Phillippi told the *Oregonian* in May 2013, “We have customers who are dying for it. The only thing we don’t have is the logs.”³⁴ The Phillippi family attempted to find a niche when it switched in 2002 from a traditional sawmill to a large-log mill that specialized in “appearance grade lumber for exposed beams and high quality windows and doors,” for which they needed clear, knot-free pine and fir that runs along the outside of 80- to 100-

³¹ Learn, “Rough & Ready.”

³² Larry Giustina, interviewed by author, Eugene, OR, October 10, 2014.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Learn, “Rough & Ready.”

year-old second growth logs—not old growth—but these, too, were difficult to come by.³⁵ When the Rough & Ready Lumber mill finally shut down in 2013, the last of 22 sawmills in Josephine and Jackson counties to do so, *The Oregonian* wrote that it was “a grim milestone in the persistent stalemate over logging that’s peculiar to this unique corner of Oregon.”³⁶

Bob Luotto, whose family company, Luotto Logging, has been operating since 1976 in the northwest region of Oregon, said the biggest change he has seen in the wood products industry is the decrease in family-run mills.³⁷ The mills that had land of their own were able to survive, but those that were promised timber by the federal government in the 1980s or 1990s and failed to receive that timber when holds were placed on federal forestlands were forced to close.

While mills were hit hard by the decline in production, loggers such as Luotto faced similar struggles beginning in the early 1990s. Luotto Logging is involved in the logging of timber, which includes cutting the logs from landowners and hauling them to mills that have previously purchased the timber. Luotto said that while there were still many federal sales in the 1980s and early 1990s, they now log timber almost exclusively from private land because “anyone can hold up timber sales indefinitely” on public lands, per environmental regulations such as spotted owl protection.³⁸

Of the three main sub-industries within the wood products industry—land owning, logging, and mills—logging and mills faced the most negative consequences as a

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Bob Luotto, interviewed by author, McMinnville, OR, October 11, 2014.

³⁸ Ibid.

result of decreased timber production on federal lands. Landowners, however, may have seen the lack of available timber as a good thing for business. When Giustina's family realized that its mill was no longer profitable, they continued to manage the nearly 50,000 acres of forestland they have owned since the 1940s. By using what Giustina calls "long-term sustainable yield practices," Giustina Land and Timber has continued to sustainably harvest nearly 28 million board feet year-round.³⁹ Because landowners are on the supply side of the wood products industry as opposed to the production side where both mills and loggers lie, they may have benefited from the decrease in public timber following the early 1990s logging restrictions. The decline in timber supply caused an increase in prices for the same logs that were originally available, while the demand stayed the same. Thus, the value of Giustina's family owned timber escalated following the 1990s regulations.

While a decline in employment in the wood products industry, specifically in mills and logging, hurt workers in rural communities, the greatest problem rural logging communities faced following the early 1990s production change was a lack of public funding.

Federal Timber Payments and Rural Oregon Communities

Federal land makes up over half of Oregon's total land base, in some cases covering over half of a single county's total area.⁴⁰ Counties cannot tax this area, causing a deficiency in tax revenue for some rural counties. To compensate, Oregon counties have received 25% of sales of commodities produced on federal lands within their

³⁹ Larry Giustina, interviewed by author, Eugene, OR, October 10, 2014.

⁴⁰ Charles Goldner and Daniel O'Neil, "An Analysis of Federal Forest Payments On Oregon Counties' Budgetary Decisions" (thesis, University of Oregon, 2011), 2, http://economics.uoregon.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/07/Goldner_ONeil_Timber.pdf.

counties since 1908.⁴¹ Much of the revenue from this agreement came from federal forest timber sales, but when these sales drastically decreased in the early 1990s, so did this source of funding for many rural Oregon counties.⁴²

When rural counties' timber harvest revenue disappeared, "the federal government instituted timber county payments to help support these local and county governments," according to the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis. In 1993, as one part of the 10-year program Clinton proposed to address the economic problems rural timber-dependent towns faced following the listing of the northern spotted owl, Congress passed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, which replaced timber payments with safety net payments to 72 rural counties that were to last through 2003.⁴³

In October 2000, Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, which authorized safety net payments that would, again, supplement revenue was lost when federal forests stopped producing timber to protect the spotted owl.⁴⁴ Congress allocated these payments, which were to be used to fund public education and transportation, through 2006 and went to 33 of Oregon's 36 counties.⁴⁵ In May 2007, Congress voted to extend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act for fiscal year 2007, and again in 2008 reauthorized and amended the

⁴¹ Lehner, "Historical Look at Oregon's Wood Product Industry," Oregon Office of Economic Analysis.

⁴² Lehner, "Timber Counties," Oregon Office of Economic Analysis.

⁴³ "Secure Rural Schools - More Information," United States Department of Agriculture, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/pts/moreinfo/?cid=stelprdb5262406&width=full>.

⁴⁴ Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, H. Res. 2389, 106th Cong., 2d sess. (October 30, 2000): H1.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Act for fiscal years 2008 through 2011.⁴⁶ Congress intended for the payments reauthorized through fiscal year 2011 to decline throughout the four year extension and to follow a modified allocation formula.⁴⁷ When Congress extended the program through fiscal year 2012, it was altered again to diminish the payments.⁴⁸ They dropped from over \$230 million in 2008 to approximately \$100 million in 2011, according to a study by Charles Goldner and Daniel O’Neil of the University of Oregon, causing a strain on “rural counties whose road and operating budgets rely heavily on the payments.”⁴⁹ The payments were intentionally set to diminish as rural counties developed non-timber-based economies.⁵⁰ As new industries failed to develop, however, each extension forced the federal government to find a new revenue source for the payments, especially after the economic crash in 2008, with the most recent 2014 payments coming from the Responsible Helium Administration and Stewardship Act which intends to decline U.S. interest and involvement in the helium business.⁵¹ While these payments were a necessary safety net for the counties that lost an immense portion of their revenue following the 1990s timber sales decline, it has become evident that they are only a

⁴⁶ “Secure Rural Schools - More Information,” United States Department of Agriculture, accessed October 22, 2014,

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/pts/moreinfo/?cid=stelprdb5262406&width=full>.

⁴⁷ Katie Hoover, “Reauthorizing the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000,” *Congressional Research Service* (November 14, 2013), <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=747102>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Goldner and O’Neil, “An Analysis of Federal Forest Payments On Oregon Counties’ Budgetary Decisions.”

⁵⁰ Andrew Clevenger, “U.S. Department of Agriculture announces timber payments,” *The Bend Bulletin* (April 5, 2014), <http://www.bendbulletin.com/home/1956823-151/us-department-of-agriculture-announces-timber-payments>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

temporary fix. The instability of the payments and the drain they put on the federal government are not optimal for either those giving or those receiving the payments.

Another aspect of federal timber revenues, according to the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, was they allowed the affected counties to keep their low property taxes.⁵² The low property tax rates, the percentage of public land, and the tough economic conditions in these rural Oregon counties has made it difficult for many of them to fund public services.⁵³ When the Act expired in 2011, counties were left with a surplus of funds from timber sale reserves and federal forest payments earmarked for county roads that could not be used for sheriff's patrols, health clinics, jails, tax assessors, prosecutors, planners, or other county services.⁵⁴ Many rural Oregon counties, as a result, struggled to fund basic public services such as sheriff patrols.⁵⁵ Melissa Block explained the dire situation in her May 2013 NPR report, "Loss of Timber Payments Cuts Deep In Oregon": "Imagine dialing 911 and the voice on the other hand says: Sorry. Due to budget cuts, no one can help you. Well, that's the reality for tens of thousands of people in rural Oregon. Many counties in the state have cut public safety budgets due to the loss of vital timber payments."⁵⁶

⁵² Lehner, "Timber Counties," Oregon Office of Economic Analysis.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Eric Mortenson, "Loss of Federal Forest Payments Has Oregon Counties Looking for Revenue While Having Millions That Can't Be Tapped," *Oregonian*, January 21, 2012, http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2012/01/loss_of_federal_forest_paym ent.html.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Amelia Templeton, "Loss of Timber Payments Cuts Deep," *National Public Radio*, May 21, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/2013/05/21/185839248/loss-of-timber-payments-cuts-deep-in-oregon>.

As the lack of public funding devastated rural Oregon communities, many of the state's representatives in Congress advocated renewing the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act and in October 2013, Congress passed a one year reauthorization.⁵⁷ Congress announced the most recent payments in April 2014—24 years after U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the northern spotted owl as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The effects of the forestry regulations of the early 1990s were apparent in the statement released by Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley in April 2014 after Congress announced the most recent timber payments:

We must ensure that Oregon's rural communities have the resources they need to provide for their schools, roads, and public safety, and it is unacceptable that it took the federal government this long to get them to Oregon... Today's payments will make a big difference in communities across our state, but they are no substitute for a long-term plan to grow our rural economy. I am working with Senator Wyden and other members of our delegation to increase and improve national forest management to support rural Oregon and create more jobs in the woods.⁵⁸

While Merkley emphasizes the dire role these payments play in funding basic public services for rural Oregonians, his statement reiterates the need to find a more long-term solution. The timber payments cannot and should not continue forever, but if they are to stop, the affected counties must be given an opportunity to return to work on federal forestland. The all or nothing approach that resulted from the spotted owl listing is not feasible for rural Oregon counties. Oregon's economy has long depended on timber. Any changes that affect that industry will have a large effect on the counties that depend it.

⁵⁷ "Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act," United States Department of Agriculture, last modified April 4, 2014, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/pts>.

⁵⁸ "Oregon Delegation Applauds Release of Timber Payments to Oregon Counties," *Ron Wyden Senator for Oregon*, April 4, 2014, <http://www.wyden.senate.gov/news/press-releases/oregon-delegation-applauds-release-of-timber-payments-to-oregon-counties>.

Throughout the last few decades, Oregon's economy has become less dependent on the wood products industry, but such a large aspect of any state's economy cannot soon be forgotten or eliminated without having huge effects on vast numbers of people and communities.

Many Oregonians did not witness these effects in person, nor did they see how much rural logging communities came to resent the environmental regulations forced on the industry. In a focus group conducted to analyze urban Oregonians' views of the timber industry, one participant said, "I'm not sure of the history of timber in Oregon, what subsidies the industry has from county/state/federal, or if there are opportunities to create a sustainable timber industry in Oregon? Uninformed."⁵⁹ Much of rural Oregon has strong opinions on environmental regulations and many of them do not align with those that weakened and wounded their communities. Most rural Oregonians are champions of the natural beauty the state has to offer, but many were not pleased with the environmental regulations of the early 1990s, while many urban Oregonians were content with the protections they awarded the environment, as was evident in the overarching results of the aforementioned focus group. One Portland participant noted, "I have lived in Oregon long enough to see what the timber industry has done to our forests. I do not like to see so much clear cutting," while another said, "You see so many trees being cut down that if we continue to go down this path, we won't have trees/forests like we've had 50-100 years from now." This difference in opinion is one of the major causes of the exacerbation of the urban-rural divide in Oregon.

⁵⁹ *Focus Groups* (Portland, OR: DHM Research, Quinn Thomas Public Affairs, August 2014).

CHAPTER 3

Urban-Rural Divisions and the Electoral Landscape in Oregon

“Logging, agriculture, grazing, mining and fishing have all been important to Oregon’s economic and social fabric, as symbolized by their presence on the official state seal. However, increasing public interest – especially in urban areas – in protecting wildlife habitat, fish species, wilderness, recreational access, and other nonextractive uses coupled with questions about traditional resource management practices have become the subject of increasing controversy and litigation, particularly with regard to public forests, rangelands, and rivers. At the heart of this debate are differing values and interests concerning the natural environment and the proper relationship of humans to their ecological surroundings. These views in turn are connected to differing conceptions about environmental policy and the management of Oregon’s natural resources.”¹

- Brent S. Steel and Denise Lach, “Environmental Policy,” in *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populists*

Oregon is a state divided among geographic regions, and environmental policy is a point of contention among them. While divisions between urban and rural Oregon on the spotted owl policy and the Northwest Forest Plan were deep, so are divisions on other cultural and economic issues. Oregon is politically divided, with the eastern, rural region consistently voting Republican and the urban Willamette Valley and Portland-metro area voting Democratic. These divisions reflect a fundamental difference in social and environmental values between urban and rural communities, Oregon’s “Timber Wars,” being one example of a controversy that further divided a state between urban and rural lines.

Urban-Rural Divisions on Environmental Policy

Oregon’s divisions go far deeper than differences in positions on environmental policy. The spotted owl controversy, however, exacerbated these longstanding divisions.

¹ Brent S. Steel and Denise Lach, “Environmental Policy,” in *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populists* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 225.

Richard Clucas and Melody Rose argue in *Oregon Politics and Government* that while many of the regulations the federal government implemented in the 1960s and 1970s affected Oregon politics, the Endangered Species Act of 1973 may have played the largest role. According to Clucas and Rose, “The act has frequently been a target of harsh criticism among many Oregonians, who see the law as a threat to local economies. Yet others praise it for protecting the environment.”² Clucas and Rose said, “Many rural residents certainly blame the act for causing a decline in the state’s timber industry and for the economic problems confronting many local communities throughout the 1990s. Environmentalists, on the other hand, have been supportive of the act for protecting threatened species.”³

According to Giustina, opinions of the logging industry are very different when “you get into counties where the industry is dependent on it” because logging is simply a way of life when you grow up watching log trucks driving by your home every day.⁴ Giustina fears that many Oregonians who are sheltered, for instance, in downtown Portland’s Pearl District do not have the same understanding of the industry as those who grew up around it. The industry has made an effort to re-teach the merits of responsible forestry practices across the state every few years, as new residents move into Oregon, particularly into the urban Portland-metro area. The metropolitan population growth in Oregon has rapidly increased compared to nonmetropolitan population growth and most of this large population of urban Oregonians has little understanding of the timber

² Richard A. Clucas and Melody Rose, “Oregon in the Nation and the World,” in *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populists* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 34.

³ Ibid, 42.

⁴ Larry Giustina, interviewed by author, Eugene, OR, October 10, 2014.

industry.⁵ In the focus group of Portland residents on urban Oregonians' views of the timber industry, one participant said, "I don't know much about the timber industry. What I know is just what I see through management. The somewhat positive rating (of the industry) is for the replanting of trees, but the negative is clear cuts."⁶ This general lack of knowledge of the industry was consistent throughout the four focus groups of men and women of various ages.

Urban Oregon has developed different values than the rest of the state on other issues as well. The 2013 Oregon Values & Beliefs Survey found Portlanders are much more liberal than the rest of Oregonians.⁷ When the Portland Tribune asked Davis Hibbitts & Midghall (DHM) Research to conduct another survey on differing views between Portland and the rest of the state, the results again showed Portland much more liberal on both social and economic issues. Seventy four percent of Portlanders described themselves as liberal on social issues, compared with 36 percent of the rest of the state.⁸ Fifty four percent of Portlanders said they are liberal on economic issues, compared with 15 percent in the rest of the state.⁹ DHM found similar results on issues including increased government services, responses to climate change, and equal rights for

⁵ Sheila Martin and Bruce Weber, "A Tale of Two Oregons: Common Aspirations, Different Contexts, and Critical Interdependencies in Urban and Rural Oregon," in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 21.

⁶ *Focus Groups* (Portland, OR: DHM Research, Quinn Thomas Public Affairs, August 2014).

⁷ Jim Redden, "How liberal is Portland?" *Portland Tribune*, March 4, 2014, <http://www.pamplinmedia.com/pt/9-news/212726-70134-how-liberal-is-portland>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

minorities.¹⁰ As different as Portlanders' political views are from the rest of the state, the density of the region has made it a powerful player in Oregon's politics, even if some decisions do not align with other regions of the state. According to *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State*, "With the increased urbanization of the state and the growing concentration of power in urban areas, the state has become willing to adopt environmental-protection rules that are unpopular in rural communities, which has helped to exacerbate the regional divide."¹¹

While many rural Oregonians were upset about the effect the Spotted Owl listing had on their communities and livelihoods, rural Oregonians do not view all environmental regulation as a bad thing. Timothy Egan covered the Timber Wars in the Northwest in the early 1990s and published an article for *The New York Times* in 1993 entitled, "The Things That Get Left Out In the Fight for the Wild Northwest." Egan pointed out that the argument between the timber industry and environmental groups tends to be boiled down to numbers and data, but the issue that truly matters to everyone involved is the natural landscape. He said, "In all the mountains of Federal reports, court depositions and position papers on old-growth forests, I have yet to see anything as interesting as a hawk swooping down from a 200-foot-high tree," meaning the issue should focus on the beauty of the nature everyone in the Northwest seeks to enjoy and

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Richard A. Clucas, Mark Henkels, and Brent S. Steel, "The Politics of One Oregon: Causes and Consequences of the Rural-Urban Divide and Prospects for Overcoming it," in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 124.

utilize.¹² Brent Steel and Denise Lach wrote in *Oregon Politics and Government*, “Oregon farmers and ranchers...often view themselves as stewards of the environment, arguing that unless they take care of the land they own, it will not provide them with a living.”¹³ Both Luotto and Giustina emphasized the important role forest management plays in the timber industry. The industry depends upon healthy and sustainable forest management, which has improved its practices in the past few decades by using a more science-based approach. According to Luotto, who serves on the Sustainable Forestry Initiative’s Board of Directors, the industry has come together to proactively develop a sustainable forestry certification to ensure that foresters and timber companies uphold sustainable practices.¹⁴ The Sustainable Forestry Initiative bases its certification standard on principles that promote sustainable forest management, according to its website, “including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk, and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value.”¹⁵

Those involved in the timber industry stress the need for sustainable forest management and the unfortunate consequences of the lack of forest management since the spotted owl listing. “If you want (the forest) healthy, you have to provide for it in some manner,” said Luotto.¹⁶ According to Luotto, forest management is necessary to protect the trees from bugs, decay, and, most importantly, wildfires, which have ravaged

¹² Timothy Egan, “The Things That Get Left Out In the Fight for the Wild Northwest,” *The New York Times*, May 30, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/05/30/weekinreview/the-things-that-get-left-out-in-the-fight-for-the-wild-northwest.html>.

¹³ Steel and Denise Lach, “Environmental Policy,” *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populist*, 225.

¹⁴ Bob Luotto, interviewed by author, McMinnville, OR, October 11, 2014.

¹⁵ “About Us,” Sustainable Forestry Initiative, <http://www.sfiprogram.org/about-us/>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

many old-growth forests in the face of decreased management. The increase in wildfires has put a great financial burden on state and federal governments as well as endangered communities and towns throughout Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.¹⁷

But while rural Oregonians argue the need for sustainable and responsible forest management, advocates of environmental protection emphasize the need to protect the state's natural beauty and the habitat it provides threatened species, with little to no forest management. When the spotted owl became the topic of heated debate in 1991, Oregon State University named its annual Starker Lectures Series, which focuses on topics in forestry, "Changing Values—Changing Institutions." Jeff Sirmon, Deputy Chief for International Forestry for the USDA Forest Service, spoke on changing values at the conference, and how the debate in Oregon reflected and stood as a microcosm for the greater national debate on environmental issues. He said, "One could say that a value change is taking place because of a threat to the forests of the world and hence, to life itself."¹⁸ Those stressing the need to protect the forests in Oregon found themselves in the midst of a value change where they believed that in order to protect and ensure continued human life, we must protect the natural environment in which we live, whereas those emphasizing the need for sustainable forest management practices value nature as a space that exists to provide for human life in more practical ways.

The difference in fundamental values between these two schools of thought reflects Oregon as a divided state, as explained in *Oregon Divided: A Regional Geography*. Oregon is divided by its differences in geography, land use, land ownership,

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jeff M. Sirmon, "Changing Values—Changing Institutions: The Forest Service" (lecture, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR, 1991), 13.

income, occupation and politics.¹⁹ Dicken and Dicken wrote that Oregon is “undecided on the best way to resolve the many problems confronting the state. In large measure, progress will depend on greater awareness of the problems of the electorate.”²⁰ They believe Oregon is so strongly broken into different regions that Oregonians are unable to understand the important issues and problems in other areas of the state. These region-specific issues will only be solved when the different areas of the state understand the needs of others, for instance, “A rancher or a sugar beet farmer in Malheur County needs to be concerned with the problem of log export in Coos County, and so on.”²¹

While Dicken and Dicken stressed the importance of better understanding other Oregonians’ problems and needs throughout the state in 1982, changes in the state since then have increased this lack of understanding of the priorities and values of others.

Values in Urban vs. Rural Oregon

Agriculture and natural resources will always play a large role in Oregon’s economy.²² Over the last century, however, it has evolved into a much more industrial and urbanized economy.²³ Clucas, Mark Henkels, and Steel wrote in *Toward One Oregon*, “The emergence of the postindustrial society has affected rural and urban areas quite differently, and this, we believe, is at the root of our political divide.”²⁴ While

¹⁹ Samuel N. Dicken and Emily F. Dicken, *Oregon Divided: A Regional Geography* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society, 1982), 162.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Josh Lehner, “Timber Counties,” Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, May 28, 2013, <http://oregoneconomicanalysis.com/2013/05/28/timber-counties/>.

²³ Clucas, Henkels, and Steel, “The Politics of One Oregon: Causes and Consequences of the Rural-Urban Divide and Prospects for Overcoming it,” in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State*, 113.

²⁴ Ibid., 117

industrialization played a key role in changing values and priorities throughout the earlier part of the 20th century, the influx of high tech industry jobs that flooded into Oregon in the late 20th and early 21st centuries played an even larger role in exacerbating the urban-rural divide, especially as ways of thinking about the natural environment changed within the state.

Since the 1970s, the diversification of Oregon's economy has caused competition between agriculture and natural resource industries and the modern and new-to-the-state high-tech industry.²⁵ Beginning with Tektronix in the 1960s, Mentor Graphics in the 1970s, and Intel in the 1980s, Oregon's "Silicon Forest" has become a destination for high-tech companies and in 2010, employed over 84,000 Oregonians.²⁶ The Silicon Forest's affect on traditional agricultural industries such as timber has been great.

The state's economic diversity has widened the divide between urban and rural Oregon. The Willamette Valley, located between the Portland-metro area and Salem, is the most economically diverse and densely populated region, with more than 70% of the state's residents.²⁷ During the 1990s, when rural regions saw economic decline from a decrease in timber production, the Valley saw the largest job growth rate of any part of the state.²⁸ The eastern and rural side of the state has a much narrower economic base, according to *Oregon Politics and Government*, with many communities depending

²⁵ Joe Bowersox, "Place, People," in *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populists* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 27.

²⁶ *Oregon Key Industries: High Technology* (Salem, OR: Business Oregon, 2010), <http://www.oregon4biz.com/assets/docs/High-Tech.pdf>.

²⁷ Richard A. Clucas and Mark Henkels, "A State Divided," in *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populists* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

largely on agriculture and wood-product industries.²⁹ This dependence on the industry suggests why Clucas, Henkels, and Steel of *Toward One Oregon* find “the emergence of a new paradigm for thinking about the natural environment, one that has found much stronger support among urban than rural residents,” to be one of the greatest reasons for the regional divide in Oregon.³⁰

In September 2014, Oregon State University presented its findings from a study entitled, “Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence,” on differences of opinions between urban and rural Oregonians. The study found that the transition from an agricultural society to a post-industrial society drove Oregon’s division.³¹ Opinions on the “New Ecological Paradigm” demonstrated some of the greatest differences between urban and rural Oregonians.³² When asked if the balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset by human activities, 71% of all urban Oregonians and 78% of Portland-metro participants agreed, while only 54% of rural Oregonians agreed.³³ When asked if plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist, 70% of Portland Metro agreed, 68% of all urban Oregonians agreed, and only 53% of rural Oregonians agreed.³⁴ The study also found the Multnomah, Portland Suburbs, and University regions to be more liberal on social issues such as gay marriage and abortion than the Eastern, Southern, Mid-

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Clucas, Henkels, and Steel, “The Politics of One Oregon: Causes and Consequences of the Rural-Urban Divide and Prospects for Overcoming it,” in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State*, 122.

³¹ Richard Clucas, Brent Steel, and Mark Henkels, “Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State” (lecture, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR, November 14, 2008), <https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/handle/1957/10534?show=full>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Willamette, and Northern Coast regions.³⁵ Differences in social and environmental issues showed the most rigid divide between urban and rural Oregon. Opinions on both social and environmental issues are based on an individual's standard for what he or she believes is fundamentally acceptable or unacceptable—a reflection of that individual's cultural values. The study not only showed a correlation between these cultural values in urban and in rural Oregon, it also showed differences in opinions on economic and political values. The political divide in Oregon has increased in recent years for a number of reasons, differences in opinions on environmental policy largely indicating the difference in values between urban and rural Oregon.

Electoral Landscape of Urban and Rural Oregon

Electoral politics in Oregon has followed many national trends. Throughout the 20th century as the traditional bases of the Democratic and Republican Parties shifted, so did the bases of the parties in Oregon. Until the 1930s, the Portland-metro area was strongly Republican, while rural areas traditionally voted Democratic.³⁶ Since then, this alignment has reversed. Between the 1930s and 1940s, Republican registration in Oregon declined from nearly three times the number of registered Democrats to near even levels.³⁷ While numbers have remained fairly close, Democrats have led in Party registration since the mid 1950s when many migrants moved to Portland to work in shipyards after World War II.³⁸ The peak Democratic registration advantage occurred in

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Clucas and Henkels, "A State Divided," in *Oregon Politics and Government: Progressives Versus Conservative Populists*, 9.

³⁷ Ibid., 50.

³⁸ Ibid.

the late 1970s, after which registration began to diverge by region.³⁹ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, counties in the eastern and southern regions of the state grew increasingly Republican, while the Portland-metro area remained heavily Democratic.⁴⁰ Oregon State University's *Toward One Oregon* presentation found that Democrats as a percentage of major party membership steadily decreased between 1976 and 2004 in the Eastern, Southern, Mid-Willamette, and Northern Coast regions, while it stayed fairly consistent in the Portland suburban, University, and Multnomah regions.⁴¹ Obama's 2008 election campaign drew some traditionally rural Republican voters to the Democratic side, but most southern and eastern Oregon counties still voted in support of McCain.⁴² According to CNN's exit polls, Oregon voters are 34% urban, 40% suburban, and 25% rural. In the 2008 election, Obama won the urban vote 68% to McCain's 29% and won the suburban vote 54% to McCain's 44%. CNN's definition of rural voters found that the vote split between the two at 48%.⁴³ Because the majority of the population density is

³⁹ Clucas, Henkels, and Steel, "The Politics of One Oregon: Causes and Consequences of the Rural-Urban Divide and Prospects for Overcoming it," in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State*, 127.

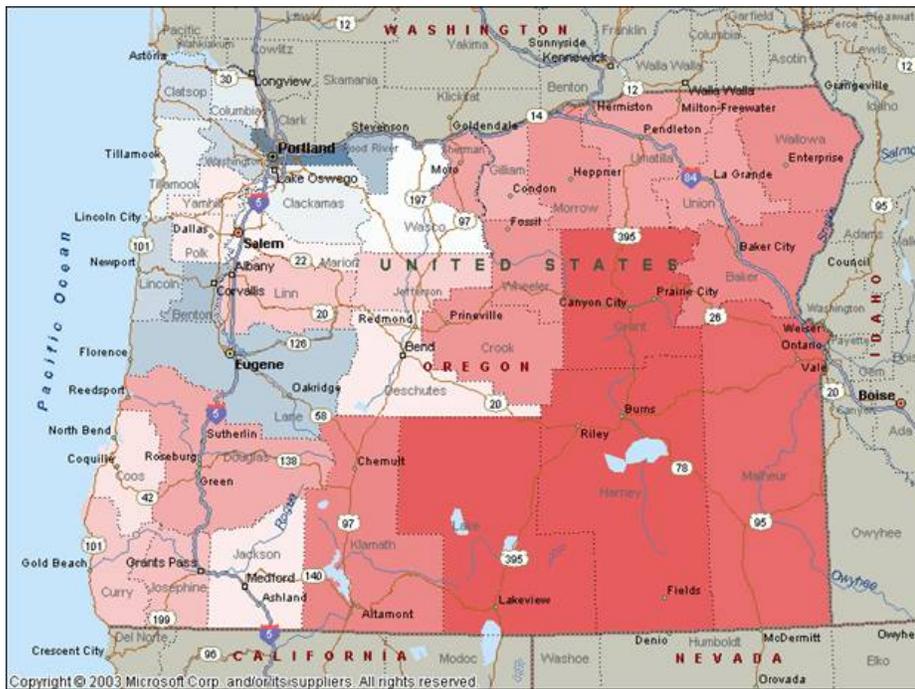
⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Clucas, Steel, and Henkels, "Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State."

⁴² William Yardley, "A Shift in Voters, but Oregon Still Embraces the Unconventional," *The New York Times*, May 19, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/19/us/politics/19oregon.html?_r=0 and "Oregon – Election Results 2008," *The New York Times*, December 9, 2008, <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/states/oregon.html>

⁴³ "Local Exit Polls," *CNN*, November 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#val=ORP00p3>

located in the Portland metro area and Willamette Valley, however, Obama won the state



in the 2008 and 2012 elections.⁴⁴

Like many states across the country, Oregon's urban areas continue to support

Oregon 2008 Presidential Election Results by County

Democratic

candidates, while rural regions remain strongly Republican. Clucas, Henkels, and Steel attribute this trend, and its effect on state politics, to the increased economic diversity in the state, arguing that the shift toward post-industrial society has pushed Oregon toward partisan realignment in which urban voters became more supportive of the Democratic Party and rural voters became more supportive of the Republican Party.⁴⁵ Many suburban communities, not necessarily identifying with either urban or rural voters, are split between the two parties. Clucas, Henkels, and Steel said that while not all Republicans may agree with rural values, “the strong support that the Republican Party

⁴⁴ “Oregon – Election 2012,” *The New York Times*, <http://elections.nytimes.com/2012/results/states/oregon>.

⁴⁵ Clucas, Henkels, and Steel, “The Politics of One Oregon: Causes and Consequences of the Rural-Urban Divide and Prospects for Overcoming it,” in *Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State*, 124.

receives from rural communities has made it a champion of rural concerns in state politics. Conversely, the Democratic Party's strong urban base has made it particularly attentive to urban concerns."⁴⁶ Rural Oregonians support Republicans and Republicans support rural Oregonians. Conversely, urban Oregonians support Democrats and Democrats support urban Oregonians. While, as mentioned above, rural Oregonians clearly have different views on environmental regulations and the use of natural resources than urban Oregonians, they also disagree on other issues.

The peak of Democratic registration in the 1970s coincided with the implementation of many new federal environmental policies. Furthermore, the decline in Democrats as a percentage of major party membership in rural regions between 1992 and 1996 (4% in Eastern, 4% in Southern, 3% in Mid-Willamette, 3% in Northern Coast) compared with the consistent percentage in Multnomah County membership could be used as evidence of rural backlash against Democratic environmental policies.⁴⁷ Forestry policy continues to be a political issue primarily for the Republican elected representatives in Oregon. This is because most of the regions primarily affected by forestry policy vote for Republican candidates. These tend to be rural areas and, as described above, rural regions generally support Republican candidates who reflect their conservative values. Many times, a candidate's positions on social and environmental issues align with a district and these candidates are elected to represent the district. Other times, voters may support a candidate based on their conservative social values and, once elected, that representative must advocate environmental policies that are important to

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Clucas, Steel, and Henkels, "Toward One Oregon: Rural-Urban Interdependence and the Evolution of a State."

their districts, such as forestry policy. Representative Greg Walden, the only Republican U.S. member of Congress from Oregon, represents roughly the eastern two thirds of the state, geographically, and considers himself a defender of the timber industry, because many of the affected communities lie within his district. As recently as October 2014, Walden called for reform of forest management in a speech at the Oregon Forest Industries Council's annual meeting. He said, "Too much is at stake for our rural communities and our forests for the Senate to just lie there and do nothing," in response to the Senate's lack of action on the bipartisan forest management bill he helped pass the House of Representatives.⁴⁸ Walden's positions on both social and environmental issues align with his district, but he advocates forest management so vehemently because it is an extremely important issue to the district.

Current Forestry Policy Politics

Federal forestry policy continues to primarily affect the timber industry and logging-dependent towns in Oregon. Thus, the current politics of the industry are in the hands of Oregon's two U.S. Senators and five U.S. Representatives. The majority of Oregon's federal forestland is located in Representative Walden's second district and Representative Peter DeFazio's fourth district. Because many counties in Walden's district are currently dependent upon federal timber payments, he has fought, along with DeFazio, for the federal government to release some of the land protected by the spotted owl legislation and the Northwest Forest Plan to put Oregonians back to work in federal

⁴⁸ Mitch Lies, "Walden calls for reform of forest management, ESA," *Capital Press*, October 13, 2014, <http://www.capitalpress.com/Oregon/20141013/walden-calls-for-reform-of-forest-management-esa>.

forests.⁴⁹ Most recently, Walden fought to pass the Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act, which passed the House for the second time September 2014.⁵⁰ Oregon Representatives DeFazio and Kurt Schrader also supported the bill.⁵¹ The priority of all three Congressmen appears to be allowing Oregonians to once again work in the Oregon's federal forestland.

While there is no one solution to the problems facing the rural, timber-dependent regions of Oregon, the primary solutions presented before Congress have bipartisan support from Oregon's representatives. Putting Oregonians back to work is not a partisan issue. The issue of partisanship arises, however, in deciding the best way in which to create those jobs while protecting the state's natural resources and endangered species. The values of rural Oregon, when it comes to these issues, are different than those of urban Oregon, mostly because rural Oregon is more directly affected by environmental regulations than urban Oregon. Because of this division of values, rural and urban Oregon are sharply divided on environmental issues and the partisan way in which they are addressed, leading to a very important, if not the most divisive, aspect of the urban-rural divide in the state.

⁴⁹ "Back to Work in the Woods," U.S. Representative Greg Walden, <http://walden.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=128§iontree=3,128>

⁵⁰ "U.S. House passes historic forestry bill for second time: Walden calls for immediate senate action," U.S. Representative Greg Walden, <http://walden.house.gov/s2014/us-house-passes-historic-forestry-bill-for-second-time-walden-calls-for-immediate-senate-action/>

⁵¹ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Oregon played host to the Timber Wars of the early 1990s because of its important role in national timber production as well as its ability to find support for both sides of the controversy in its residents. In the early 1990s, Oregon was very divided over the issue of federal forestry regulation and much of that division lay between urban and rural residents of the state. The spotted owl controversy, however, was not confined to Oregon. In 1992, conservative political commentator Rush Limbaugh famously said, “If the owl can’t adapt to the superiority of humans, screw it,” siding with loggers over environmentalists in what had quickly escalated into a national issue.¹ Clinton’s 1993 Forest Conference in Portland, Oregon again put a national spotlight on Oregon’s Timber Wars.

Twenty-four years later, Oregon continues to feel the effects of the federal forestry regulations of the 1990s. Not only is the spotted owl controversy an example of how a national issue can play out in a single state, it highlights another issue facing many states in the 21st century—the issue of urban rural divisions and what Bill Bishop calls “the clustering of like-minded America.”² In his 2008 book, *The Big Sort*, Bishop says that nationally, counties have increasingly segregated into Democratic or Republican heavy communities since 1980, according to presidential election results.³ He notes that many Americans have moved toward a more homogenous way of living, a reflection of

¹ Rush Limbaugh, *The Way Things Ought to Be* (New York City: Pocket Books, 1992), 160.

² Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why The Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart* (New York City: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008).

³ Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why The Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart*, 10-11.

the polarization of American political leaders.⁴ Bishop's "Big Sort" theory is that Americans are moving into communities where they find similar values, interests, and ways of life. Thus as politicians become more politically divided, so do the constituencies they represent. Oregon is a clear example of Bishop's description of the sorting of America. The divisions between urban and rural regions in Oregon exemplify like-minded people and their political representatives clustering together. While this thesis looks specifically at the divisive issue of environmental policy within a state, other states are similarly divided over issues such as race, social values, or immigration, to mention only a few.

Oregon's political divisions highlight national trends of rural regions becoming increasingly more Republican and urban regions becoming increasingly more Democratic. Nearly every major city in the United States has a different political majority than the less densely populated areas surrounding it.⁵ A 2004 nationwide study of urban rural divisions found a 20-point gap in presidential preference between voters in non-metro counties of less than 25,000 inhabitants and voters in counties with over a million people.⁶ This divide has continued to grow as politicians become more polarized on divisive issues. Laura Meckler and Dante Chinni of *The Wall Street Journal* said in March 2014, "In many ways, the split between red Republican regions and blue

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Josh Kron, "Red State, Blue City: How the Urban-Rural Divide is Splitting America," *The Atlantic*, November 30, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/11/red-state-blue-city-how-the-urban-rural-divide-is-splitting-america/265686/2/>.

⁶ James G. Gimpel and Kimberly A. Karnes, "The Rural Side of the Urban-Rural Gap," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, July 2006, 467-71, accessed November 21, 2014, <http://apsanet3b.inetu.net/imgtest/PSJuly06GimpelKarnes.pdf>.

Democratic ones—and their opposing views about the role of government—is an extension of the cultural divide between rural Americans and those living in cities and suburbs.”⁷ Rural voters are, on average, more white, religious, elderly, more likely to own guns, more likely to oppose abortion rights, less educated and less affluent than urban and suburban voters.⁸ They are nearly twice as likely to be self-employed and are much more likely to be homeowners, which may help explain the Republican-Democratic division between urban and rural voters beyond traditional social values.⁹

While there is a clear difference in values between many urban and rural voters, another significant aspect of the “Big Sort” and increased national polarization by county is industrialization and development. While large cities have increased in size, industrializing, and adding a number of different and new industries to their economies in recent decades, few rural regions have had these same profitable changes. Portland, for example, has incorporated the high-tech industry into its economy, bringing many new jobs and an influx of new workers into the area. Most rural regions have not industrialized or expanded their industries or economies beyond natural resources and agriculture. Doing so would decrease their dependence on these natural resources and the ever-changing federal regulations of them, protecting rural communities from the economic repercussions of a decline in production that comes from restrictive federal regulation.

⁷ Laura Meckler and Dante Chinni, “City vs. Country: How We Live Deepens the Nation’s Political Divide,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 21, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303636404579395532755485004>

⁸ Gimpel and Karnes, “The Rural Side of the Urban-Rural Gap,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Because the economies of rural regions tend to be more dependent on the land surrounding them, inhabitants of these areas have different values and priorities when it comes to the usage or protection of natural resources than urban inhabitants. Their economic dependence on nature gives them a different understanding of what it means to be responsible when it comes to environmental protection. Increased industrialization and an influx of new migrants into Oregon changed the way the state as a whole viewed the natural environment in the 1970s. The fear of destroying Oregon's natural beauty quickly competed with the more traditional understanding that Oregon's economy was strong because of the natural resources the state had to offer.

With the resources available to Americans in the 21st century, many city dwellers never need to venture into rural regions. They never see where the food they eat or the wood they use to build their homes comes from. They want to protect the environment for generations to come, as do rural Americans who are more dependent on the land for their livelihoods, but the two groups differ on how to go about doing this.

While it is unlikely that many solutions exist that will satisfy both groups, the existing federal policies, specifically on forestry regulation, are not practical. Rural communities cannot continue to survive on federal timber payments and must be given the opportunity to return to work in federal forestland. Urban voters and environmental advocates must be educated on the benefits and protective nature of scientific, sustainable logging practices, just as the timber industry needs to continue to seek more science-based information on how to improve best practices of logging and forestry. The public must be educated on both sides of the issue at hand in order to provide for the needs of both the individuals in rural, logging-dependent communities, and the national forests

and endangered and threatened species that need protection. Education and understanding of different priorities and values among urban and rural Americans is vital to the protection and responsible utilization of the natural resources the state of Oregon and the country have to offer. Only with education and mutual understanding can the urban rural divide in any state be navigated to create effective policy and resolve existing conflicts.

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