



# A Vision for Oregon Forests

## Community Engagement

The Board of Forestry (the Board) and the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) oversee Oregon forests. They worked with Oregon's Kitchen Table (OKT) to find out what people think and believe about forests in Oregon. What the Board and ODF heard will shape their new strategic plan for forests.

OKT used surveys and gatherings to hear from people all across Oregon. This report tells what OKT heard.

### ABOUT OREGON'S KITCHEN TABLE

OKT is part of Portland State University. OKT works to give all people a voice in public decisions. We talk with people who usually aren't included in these decisions. We help people discuss state, local, and regional issues. We use many ways and many languages to learn what people think and experience. And we value the wide range of ideas and experiences that people tell us about.

### HOW WE HEARD FROM PEOPLE

We used the following tools to find out what people think and feel about the forests:

- Paper surveys
- Online surveys in nine languages
- OKT community discussions

- Visits to festivals and cultural events
- A guide for people to host their own discussions

We used the following tools to tell people about the surveys and events:

- Social media
- Group messaging platforms
- Email and text messages
- Phone calls
- In-person outreach
- Flyers placed around the state

## **WHAT WE ASKED PEOPLE ABOUT**

First, we told people about how ODF and the Board care for Oregon forests. Next, we asked people about the following:

- How they are connected to Oregon forests
- How they would like to be more connected
- What they think about forest safety and how they stay safe
- How they think about and prepare for extreme events in or near forests
- What experiences they have had in forests

We also shared audio clips of other Oregonians saying what they think or feel about Oregon forests. We wanted people to hear other people's experiences.

The survey also asked people where they live, their age, their race, ethnicity or Tribe, and the language they prefer to use.

## **WHO WE HEARD FROM**

We heard from over 4,000 people. They were from every county in Oregon. They included the following:

- 3,870 people who answered surveys
- People who attended 7 meetings run by community organizers
- People at 5 community events in 4 regions of the state

- People from 40 organizations who told us what people are saying about forests
- After the survey and events, we held 4 community meetings where people talked about what we heard so far and what to focus on.

## WHAT WE HEARD

We learned a lot about what people value and believe about Oregon forests.

### What people agreed about

- Nearly everyone wants to make sure future Oregonians can feel connected to forests. However, people disagreed about how others should connect to forests.
- Many people wanted to help others understand and protect forests.
- Many people value what others need from the forests. They want to see a balance of uses.
- Many people want forests equipped in ways that help all people enjoy them. They want people to feel they belong in forests. They want more person-to-person contact. And they want people of many languages to enjoy the forests.
- Many people want to ensure that all people—particularly people of color, LGBTQ+ people, and people who identify as women—feel welcome and safe in the forests.
- Many people are concerned about the following wildfire issues:
  - How people feel about wildfire
  - How people prepare for wildfire
  - How Oregon should manage forests to address wildfire
  - What individuals can do to prevent wildfire
- Many people are concerned about the health of the forests. They differ on what a "healthy forest" means and how to keep forests healthy.
- Many people said that other people are mistaken about the science around forests. Yet many said more education about forests should be available, including the following:

- How to behave in the forest
- Information about forest ecosystems
- How other people experience the forests
- How the forests impact communities

### **What people disagreed about**

- People disagreed about who should use the forests based on who owns the land.
- They also disagreed about who should make decisions about forests.
- People disagreed about which users and activities should be allowed in forests.
- People disagreed about who knows the most about how to manage forests. Some felt that people who live closest to the forest know the most.

### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

People's comments give ODF and the Board ideas about what to include in their strategic plan. ODF and the Board also heard new ideas about how to get input in the future. People are eager to talk more with decision-makers about Oregon forests.

ODF and the Board could do the following:

- Update the strategic plan as the forests--and how Oregonians use the forests--change.
- Use shared learning between community members, ODF, and the Board.
- Discuss a particular issue in the place where people are most concerned about the issue.
- Get more Oregonians to share their stories about forests.
- Have in-depth discussions focused on one issue at a time.
- Focus on person-to-person discussions.
- Find partners who can discuss forest issues with the people in their community.

## CONCLUSION

Many people feel strongly about what they need from Oregon forests. Yet, they also care about what others need. They know that balancing these needs will be a challenge because people have deep ties to the forests.

Many people - including ODF and the Board - want to help people understand each other's needs and connections with the forests. They hope people will see that they are alike in many ways. Nearly everyone agreed strongly about one thing: they want to make sure future Oregonians can connect with the forests in the ways that matter most to them. We hope that this shared desire will keep people talking about what is best for Oregon forests.