

FOREST LANDS AND FARM/TIMBER LANDS

INTRODUCTION

The forest lands described in the existing land use chapter of the Background and Inventory Report cover the eastern 43 percent of the total county area and are significant to the economic, recreational and environmental character of Marion County. The eastern region of the County is suited to forest use due to the large amount of precipitation, rugged terrain, remoteness from urban areas and large ownerships.

These forest lands provide the direct resource base for the forest industry and an indirect base for related industries. A majority of the water resources of the County originate in the forested areas of the County. These forests also provide abundant wildlife habitat and areas that are widely used for outdoor recreation.

The forest cover consists predominantly of the coniferous species of Douglas Fir, Western and Mountain Hemlock, Western Red Cedar and True Firs. Deciduous species occur to a lesser extent at lower elevations and have only limited commercial value.

An area located east and south of the city of Silverton and commonly referred to as the Silverton Hills consist of a mixed pattern of farm and forest land uses. The topography of this area consists of relatively level ridge tops with intervening stream canyons. The level areas are largely devoted to farm and woodlot uses while the stream canyons and steeper ridges are devoted to forest uses. This area is a transition between the Western Cascades and the Willamette Valley floor.

FOREST LAND USE DEMAND

Forest lands serve a multitude of functions. The unique scenic and environmental qualities of forest lands make them attractive for recreational activities such as camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, water sports, etc. These activities, in addition to providing an important social benefit, also contribute significantly to the economy of Marion County.

Most water resources in the County originate in the many watershed areas high in the tree covered Cascade mountains. The trees and associated vegetation provide runoff control and therefore conserve the water and land resource. The conservation and protection of the watersheds is a key to maintaining the high quality and quantity of water supply. Forest land also provides an abundance of fish and wildlife habitat. A large number of animals require the cover, food supply, and protection provided by the timber and other vegetation for their continued existence.

The purpose of the forest land protection program in Marion County is to limit the uses of identified forest lands to timber production, farming, watershed, wildlife habitat, recreation and other compatible uses. Statewide Land Use Goal 4: Forest Lands indicates that on forest lands forest operations, practices and auxiliary uses shall be allowed subject only to such regulation of uses as are found in the Forest Practices Act (ORS 527.722). Uses which may be

allowed subject to standards set forth in OAR 660 Division 6 are: (1) uses related to and in support of forest operations; (2) uses to conserve soil, water and air quality, and to provide for fish and wildlife resources, agriculture and recreational opportunities appropriate in forest environment; (3) locationally dependent uses; and (4) dwellings authorized by law. Uses allowed conditionally in designated forest lands must meet criteria that ensure development will be consistent with criteria in the LCDC rules.

Agriculture and timber production are similar and compatible land uses. The long-term growth aspect of timber production makes it different from other agricultural production. However, both programs need similar protection from non-compatible activities through zoning. It is the intent of Marion County to protect and maintain our forest resource by designating appropriate areas for continued forest activities. Many non-forestry activities are detrimental to the long term conservation of timber and related natural resources. Of particular concern are the conflicts homesites create when adjacent to forest lands. To provide sufficient control over incompatible uses, it is necessary to develop a timber conservation zone and apply it to those areas best suited to forest uses. On lands that contain a mixture of agricultural and forest uses a Farm/Timber zone is applied to protect these resources uses from incompatible uses consistent with the requirements in OAR 660-06-0050. This designation and zone is intended to comply with both Goals 3 and 4. In addition to land use controls, all forest management and harvesting activities on non-federally owned lands in Marion County must be conducted according to the rules of Oregon's Forest Practices Act, administered by the State Forestry Department.

FOREST LAND DESIGNATION

The lands intended and designated for forest land uses are shown on the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Map. The boundary between the agricultural areas and the forest land areas was drawn based upon soil type and suitability and existing timber growth. There is a transition area between lands used exclusively for farming and those lands dominated by forest use. There are forest lands that extend beyond the designated forest area as there are farm lands that are present within the forest designated lands. The separation between the lands designated as farmland and forest land is based on the transition in soil types and existing dominant land uses. In this transition area the Farm/Timber designation and zone are applied.

As seen in the Background and Inventory Report, National Forest lands, large public and private timber company holdings and small woodlot ownership including farm woodlots dominate forest production in Marion County. Approximately 206,000 acres of National Forest lands are owned and managed by the U.S. Forest Service subject to a multiple use plan. This area provides the majority of the public recreational, wildlife habitat and watershed opportunities within Marion County.

Additionally, a large area of public lands and private timber company properties is located between the National Forest and approximately the north-south township line which extends through Silver Creek Falls State Park. It is made up of large ownerships of from about 80 to several thousand acres and used almost exclusively for timber production, wildlife habitat and watershed protection.

The Forest Lands designation is applied to these areas consisting primarily of large commercial timber tracts with a minimum of agricultural mix. The area of the County designation for forest land is intended primarily for the management of timber resources. However, the other values noted above are protected as well. The management of timber resources requires large parcels and minimal amounts of non-timber related development and conflicting uses. These requirements are compatible with the protection of the other forest land values.

A minimum parcel size of 80 acres is applied to the forest land in Marion County. This minimum was chosen because it is consistent with the existing parcel sizes in this area being managed for timber production on a commercial basis. Also, this parcel size is consistent with OAR 660-06-026 and exceeds the recommendations of the State Department of Fish and Wildlife for the protection of significant deer and elk habitat. With development limited to such low densities, the watershed, open space and other resource values found on forest lands will be protected.

FARM/TIMBER DESIGNATION

Under the provisions of OAR 660-006-0050, a governing body may establish agricultural/forest zones in accordance with both Goals 3 and 4 and consistent with OAR Chapter 660, Divisions 6 and 33. The mixed nature of the farm and forest uses in this area justifies the application of an agricultural/forest zone and both Goals 3 and 4. The Farm/Timber designation is discussed in the Forest Lands section of the Marion County Comprehensive Plan and policies pertaining to this designation are also included in the forest land goal and policies section.

The Farm and Timber designation has been applied to lands in Marion County that support a mixture of both agricultural and forestry activities. Designated areas were characterized by wide varieties in terrain, soil types and land use conditions. These areas are located in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains and are characterized by steep canyons, broad ridge tops and narrow alluvial river terraces. Soil types vary considerably in agricultural productivity from Class II to VI agricultural capability. The area is predominantly Class 2 and 3 timber soils which makes a majority of the area highly productive forest land. Whenever the terrain is not too steep and the soils have agricultural capability, the land is typically in farm use. Otherwise, the land is managed as woodland. As a result of the mixed terrain and soils, this area consists of a very mixed pattern of farm and forest uses frequently including both uses on a single tract. Therefore, both the agricultural lands and forest lands goals are applied, as authorized by OAR 660-006-0050.

The variable terrain and crop capabilities have contributed to the existing land use pattern that is a transition area between the predominately large scale farms on the low land to the west and the large scale commercial timber operations on the higher elevations to the east. The most common management units in the FT areas range from 20 to 40 acres. Ownership fragmentation and the alternating farm and timber character make it unlikely that these smaller farm and timber tracts will be consolidated to achieve larger management units.

A minimum parcel size of 80 acres is applied to the Farm/Timber land in Marion County. This minimum was chosen because it is consistent with the existing parcel sizes in this area being

managed for timber and agriculture production on a commercial basis. Also, this parcel size is consistent with both OAR 660-06-0026 and OAR 660-33-100, and it exceeds the recommendations of the State Department of Fish and Wildlife for the protection of significant deer and elk habitats. This area is primarily located within the peripheral deer and elk habitat as identified by the State Department of Fish and Wildlife. With development limited to such low densities, the watershed, open space and other resource values found on forest lands will be protected.

FOREST LAND AND FARM/TIMBER LAND GOAL

To conserve forest lands and mixed farm/timber lands by maintaining the forest land base and the mixed forest and agricultural base and to protect the county's forest and farm economies by making possible economically efficient forest and agricultural practices that assure the continuous growing and harvesting of forest tree species and agricultural products as the leading use on forest land and mixed farm/timber land consistent with sound management of soil, air, water and fish and wildlife resources and to provide for recreational opportunities.

FOREST LAND AND FARM/TIMBER LAND POLICIES

1. Protect the resource values of those areas designated as Forest Lands by applying a Timber Conservation zone consistent with OAR 660 Division 6.
2. Protect the forest resource value of those areas designated as Farm/Timber Lands by applying a Farm/Timber zone consistent with OAR 660 Division 6.
3. Protect the agricultural resource value of those areas designated as Farm/Timber Lands by applying a Farm/Timber zone consistent with OAR 660 Division 33.
4. Non-forest and non-farm uses included in OAR 660-06-0025 and OAR 660-33-120 may be allowed when the activity meets criteria that ensure there will be no significant adverse impacts on farm or forest practices occurring on nearby lands or increase risks associated with fire.
5. Subdivision development is prohibited and other land divisions creating new dwelling sites are not compatible with the protection and efficient management of Forest Lands and Farm/Timber Lands and are discouraged.
6. Division of forest lands and agricultural lands into parcels smaller than 80 acres may be permitted only for those non-forest uses specified in OAR 660-06-0026 (2) and those non-farm uses specified in OAR 660-33-120.
7. Lot line adjustments may be appropriate provided tracts over 80 acres are not reduced below 80 acres. Tracts capable of significant timber or agricultural production but already below 80 acres should not be reconfigured in a manner that makes them less suitable for timber or farm management.

8. Strict criteria should be applied to ensure that any dwellings and accessory structures permitted on existing parcels will not interfere with accepted forest or farm management practices on adjacent lands, have adequate road access, fire protection and domestic water supply, and do not increase fire hazards.
9. If special siting and fire hazard protection requirements are imposed dwellings may be appropriate on existing parcels with low cubic foot per acre per year productivity, on parcels with timber management limitations due to the proximity of dwellings and a highly parcelized ownership pattern, or on existing parcels of 160 acres or more created prior to January 1, 1994. Dwellings allowed under OAR 660-06-0027 (1) (a), (e) and (f), as limited in the TC zone, are consistent with this policy.
10. The siting of dwellings in the Farm/Timber zone must meet the applicable criteria in either OAR 660, Division 6 or 33 based on the predominant use of the tract on January 1, 1993.