

Oregon's Family Forestlands have a New Champion

January 6, 2005 -

For Immediate Release

Family Forests of Oregon, a new nonprofit group devoted to raising public awareness of Oregon's family forest lands, has received its federal charitable tax-exempt status.

Mike Gaudern, the group's executive director, said, "We look forward to implementing a wide range of publishing, research, education and agency partnership projects." The tax-exempt status means donors may deduct contributions to the extent provided by federal and state law.

Oregon's family-owned forest lands, which make up 16 percent of Oregon's 28 million acres of forest, are "a rare jewel in our crown that many people aren't aware of," said Gaudern.

"Family-owned forest lands play a unique role in Oregon's economy and culture," he said. "They're not national forests, they're not state forests, they're not industry forests. They're in a class by themselves."

Family-owned forests contribute much to Oregon's social, economic and environmental well-being, especially of rural communities, Gaudern said. "They provide many benefits to all Oregonians- fresh water, a wide variety of wildlife habitat and scenic beauty, a range of jobs and local forest products and tax revenues for schools,."

These forests are at risk of being converted to other land uses, he said. "About 26,000 acres of family forest land a year are passing out of forest use and into something else," a trend that is likely to increase as their owners, whose average age is 65, retire or die.

"Today these lands and families have a new champion," Gaudern said. Family Forests of Oregon has close ties with Oregon Small Woodlands Association, an advocacy group for non-industrial woodland owners with over 2,500 members.

Family Forests of Oregon will promote family forestland owners' continued contribution to Oregon's quality of life. "We envision a future where family forest land maintains a strong role in the state's economy, is recognized for the environmental value it provides and continues to foster traditional Oregon cultural values such as land stewardship and commitment to the future," Gaudern said.

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