

Time for Jackson Demonstration Forest to Stop Selling Doug Firs

Given the climate crisis and the value of keeping carbon dioxide (CO₂) out of the air, Jackson Demonstration State Forest should immediately halt sales and harvesting of Douglas Firs. They are being sold at a substantial loss to the state, while annually putting into the atmosphere an amount of CO₂ equivalent to 120 million miles of auto travel.

Jackson Demonstration State Forest is a 50,000-acre redwood forest in Mendocino County managed by the California Department of Forestry. It is presently selling and harvesting annually about 6 million board feet of Douglas Fir.¹

Here's the rub: The local mills that formerly milled Doug Fir have gone out of business. As a consequence, fir trees have almost no sale value. Therefore, when advertising a timber sale, the Department of Forestry sets the price for firs at 4 cents per board foot, \$40 per 1000 board feet, practically giving it away.

The expense of operating Jackson Forest is largely related to preparing timber harvest plans. This expense averages about \$285 per thousand board feet of timber harvested. So, the Department of Forestry is selling Doug Fir at a loss of about \$245 per thousand board feet – \$40 dollars of revenue minus \$285 of expenses.

Jackson Forest annually logs 5+ million board feet (net) of Doug Fir, directly losing taxpayers \$1.3 million. But, this is not the worst. When the trees are logged, they emit into the air 54 thousand tons of CO₂, equivalent to 120 million miles of driving in average cars.

That's right: The state is losing taxpayers \$1.3 million to emit CO₂ equal to 120 million miles of driving.

The state recently sold allowances to cap and trade participants to emit one ton of carbon dioxide in the future for \$31. This is the

¹ Gross board feet, the appropriate measure for estimating carbon emissions. Sales and revenues are for net board feet, approximately 85% of gross board feet.

price major emitters must pay for their CO2 emissions. If big companies must pay to pollute, shouldn't the state pay for CO2 emissions from Jackson logging operations at the same rate?

At the market price for CO2 pollution, the price tag is \$1.7 million for the CO2 from the Department of Forestry's Doug Fir harvest in Jackson Forest. Adding the direct losses to the CO2 costs, the Doug Fir harvest in Jackson is costing taxpayers \$2.9 million a year.

The solution to the problem is childishly simple: stop selling Doug Fir logs. That's all the state has to do to eliminate annual \$1.3 million of operating losses and 54 thousand tons of CO2 emissions. It's worth noting that stopping the logging also will reduce stream sedimentation, improve habitat for endangered salmon, lessen destruction of Native American sacred sites, and improve recreation opportunities.

Managers of the forest may protest that they need to harvest Doug Firs at the same time they sell redwoods in order to maintain the present proportion of both. Over the long run, this may be true, but the next 10 years is critical to preventing climate catastrophe. Halting Doug Fir sales for 10 years while continuing present redwood sales will only change the ratio of redwoods to Doug Firs from 1.25 to 1.12, a small change not important to forest health or future productivity.

Department of Forestry, it's time to serve the public interest. Halt all sales of Doug Fir.

[Documentation at www.jacksonforest.com/dougfir.htm]