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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 11-17-15

REPORT: INDUSTRIAL FOREST PRACTICES COULD BE OREGON'S SECOND LARGEST SOURCE OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Despite this, the Oregon Global Warming Commission has failed to track and evaluate the timber industry's emissions and effects on carbon sequestration capacity

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PORTLAND – Clearcutting and use of forest chemicals and fertilizers on industrial forestlands could represent Oregon's second largest source of global warming pollution and are subverting the State's climate agenda by making landscapes more susceptible to wildfires, landslides, floods and warm waters that kill salmon. And despite legal requirements to do so, the Oregon Global Warming Commission has failed to track and evaluate the greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from forest practices or follow through on commitments to develop and promote alternative management techniques that can transform these lands from a net source to a net sink for atmospheric carbon. The key culprit: [a flawed international greenhouse gas accounting protocol](#) that lumps all forest owners into one aggregate "forest sector" and allows the timber industry to take credit for carbon sequestered on forests protected by non-profits, small landowners, and public agencies.

These are the key conclusions of a new report released today by Center for Sustainable Economy and Geos Institute. The report – *Clearcutting our Carbon Accounts* – is an analysis of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions estimated from State and private lands in western Oregon between 2000 and 2014. The report considered emissions associated with timber harvest, which removes carbon stored in forests for decades, clearcutting beyond the rate of forest regrowth and forest chemicals like Atrazine, 2,4 D, and Glyphosate. Oregon has 1.08 million acres less forest cover than it did in 2000 due to controversial clearcut forestry practices that not only degrade water quality, fish and wildlife habitat but also impede attainment of Oregon's ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets.

After taking into account carbon stored in longer lived wood products and carbon absorbed by residual forest cover, these emissions were estimated to be 9.75 to 19.35 million metric tons carbon dioxide equivalent (MMT CO₂-e) per year. This represents between 16%

and 32% of the 60.8 million MMT CO₂-e “in-boundary” emissions estimated for the State by the [latest \(2012\) GHG inventory](#). The timber industry’s operations on its lands in western Oregon are likely one of the State’s largest sources of GHG emissions - second only to transportation. According to Dr. John Talberth, President and Senior Economist at Center for Sustainable Economy, “Oregon’s climate agenda is taking a big hit from industrial forest practices. Yet decision makers continue to look the other way and buy the industry’s rhetoric that since they grow trees, the State should ignore their greenhouse gas emissions and look elsewhere to meet pollution goals for 2020 and beyond. The reality is that reducing the overall rate of timber harvest and promoting alternatives to clearcutting and chemicals are some of the most effective strategies for meeting Oregon’s emissions targets and will help rebuild our forests’ resiliency to fire, floods, and disease.”

In 2007, the Legislature adopted targets for reducing Oregon’s greenhouse gas emissions and charged the Oregon Global Warming Commission with developing strategies to achieve them. Yet the Commission, to date, only tracks emissions associated transportation, electricity use, natural gas use, agriculture, businesses and homes and ignores what happens on timber industry lands altogether. This is despite [clear legislative requirements](#) to track and evaluate emissions from all important sectors as well as “carbon sequestration potential of Oregon’s forests” and “alternative methods of forest management that can increase carbon sequestration and reduce the loss of carbon sequestration to wildfire.” Moreover, the Commission’s [Roadmap to 2020](#) merely assumes that “Oregon’s forests are a carbon sink, capturing more carbon than they release. As such, Oregon’s forests and its forest sector have and will continue to contribute to the goal of achieving reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by remaining a robust and sustainable sector in Oregon.”

The CSE-Geos report tells a dramatically different story. According to Dr. Dominick DellaSala of Geos Institute, "Oregon’s clearcut forestry practices are polluting the climate with the equivalent emissions of over 2 million vehicles or 7 coal-fired power plants making forestry one of the biggest polluters in the State at a time when Oregon is seeking to drastically cut its global warming emissions. It’s time for forestry to be proactive like numerous other businesses in the State in being responsible for a safe climate and ecologically healthy future."

The report was submitted to the Oregon Global Warming Commission, Governor Kate Brown, the Board of Forestry and key legislators. In a letter transmitting the report to the Commission, CSE and Geos have requested a meeting to review the report’s findings and begin the process of enrolling the timber industry in Oregon’s climate agenda.

For a copy of the CSE-Geos report “Clearcutting our Carbon Accounts,” and transmittal letter to the Oregon Global Warming Commission please visit CSE’s Oregon Forest Practices Reform page at:

<http://sustainable-economy.org/oregon-forest-practices-reform/>.

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