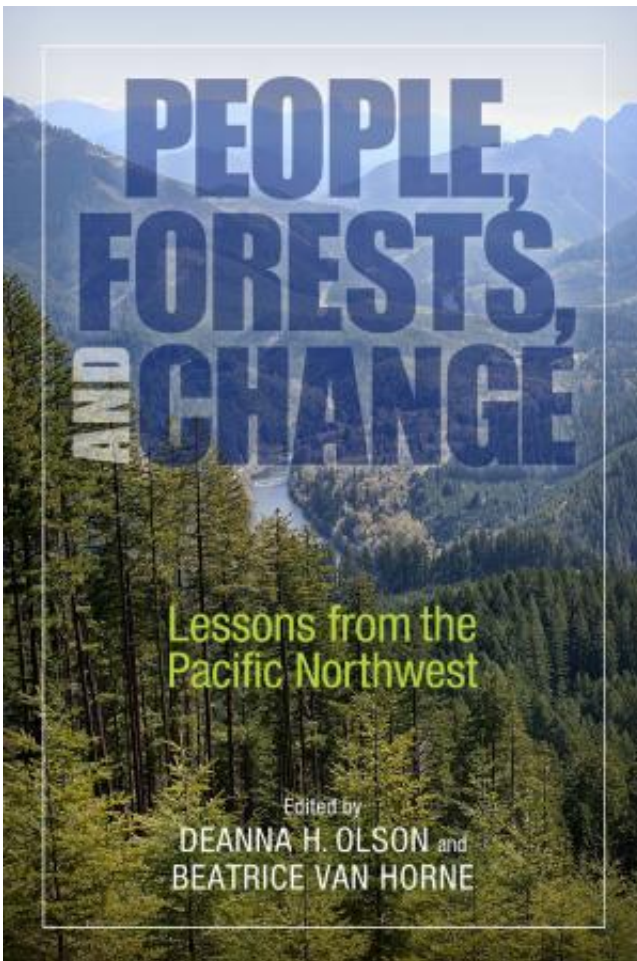


Pacific Northwest forests are at a crossroads, scientists argue in new book

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The Pacific Northwest faces two stark choices for managing its forests, scientists suggest in a new book. One choice leads to stagnant or

declining rural communities and risks to some native species, and the other leads to environmental benefits and increases in employment.

In "People, Forests, and Change: Lessons from the Pacific Northwest," forestry scientists at Oregon State University, the USDA Forest Service and other universities and research organizations offer a detailed look at the region's [forest management](#) as well as its history, new science discoveries and projections for the future. The book has been published by Island Press.

"We wanted to provide a synopsis of Northwest moist coniferous forests – where we are now, how we arrived at this point and directions into the future," said Deanna "Dede" Olson, co-editor with Beatrice Van Horne. Both are [forest](#) scientists with the U.S. Forest Service.

Northwest forests will face an important potential pivot point in the next few years, said Olson. The Northwest Forest Plan is due to be evaluated, and the results will lead to renewed plans in each of the region's national forests and lands supervised by the Bureau of Land Management. Also, collaborative groups are gaining recognition for contributing to forest governance on lands managed by a variety of public and private entities.

Other factors driving forest [management](#) include habitat requirements for sensitive species and strategies that produce a greater variety of forest conditions including both young and mature stands (more than 80 years old). Forest managers need to address the need for forest resilience in the face of climate change and fire and new forest products that can come from younger trees.

The Northwest Forest Plan mandates a one-size-fits-all management approach, said Thomas Maness, dean of the College of Forestry and co-author.

"Yet we know that northwest forests are exceedingly diverse and fragmented. We have an opportunity to actively manage for the desired characteristics of the landscape, while at the same time producing revenue to support communities and pay for management," he added. "Collaboration and building trust are the keys to achieving this goal."

A shift in relationships among forest landowners, communities and other organizations may herald such an approach, Olson noted. "There is increased recognition that fragmented federal lands have limitations for maintaining ecosystem integrity. A new definition of sustainability seems to be developing, and what that will be is being crafted by the decisions that will come around these various issues."

"We hope to inspire new conversations about how these topics are emerging as priorities in several places and contexts, and both bottom-up inspiration and top-down motivation can address them."

Provided by Oregon State University

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