



# The Death & Rebirth of the Elliott State Forest



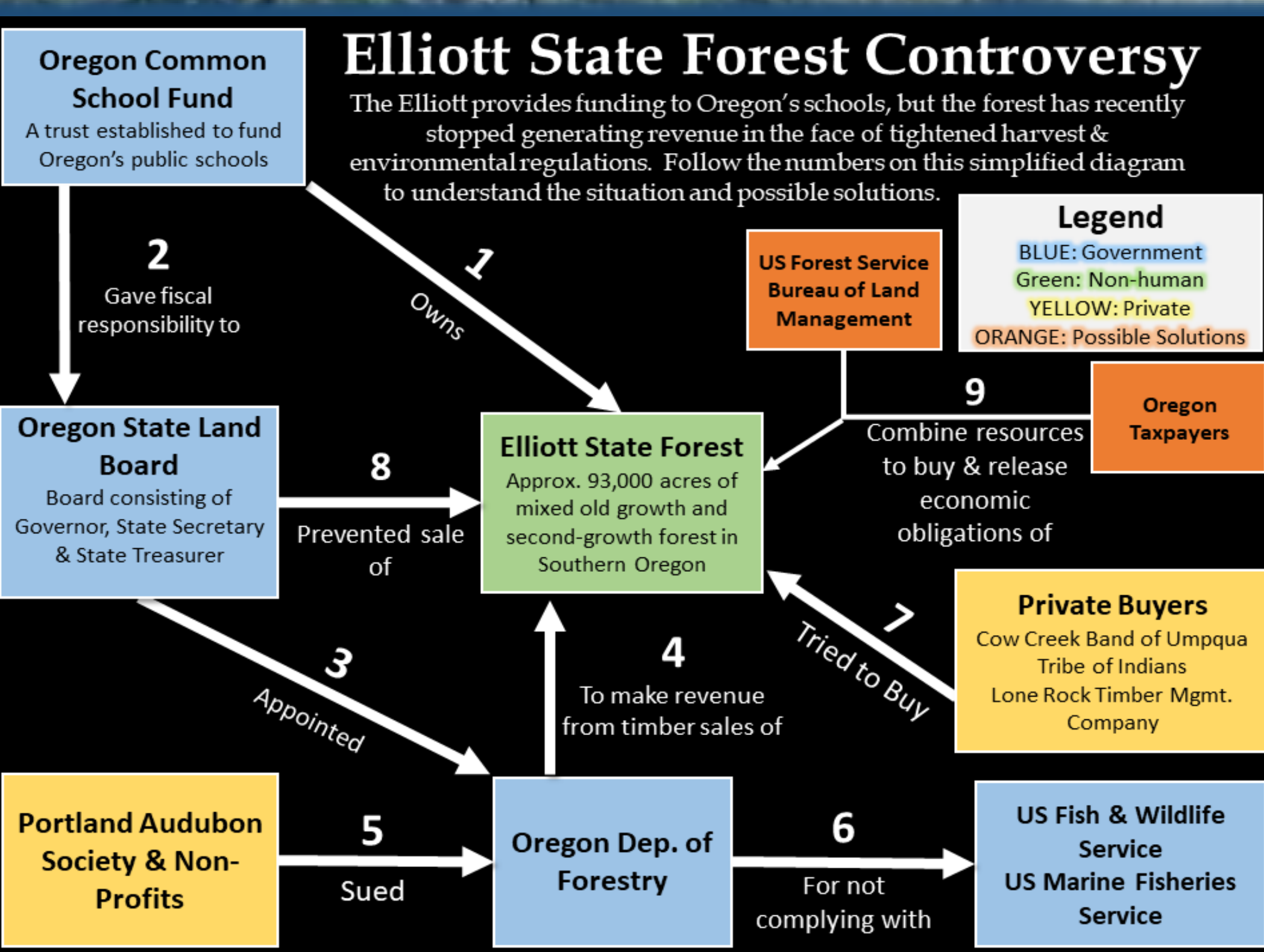
Jay Horita-Chu

## Background

## Results

ENVS 400, Fall 2017

Public land grabs are occurring all over the world. How can public lands remain in public hands? The Elliott State Forest controversy in Oregon recently posed this question and a collection of solutions, but *which path will best balance the public and private interests vested in this public forest?*



The Elliott State Forest covers ~288 sq. mi. of mixed age mountainous forest near coastal central Oregon. Originally part of the nearby Siuslaw National Forest, the forest generates timber revenue for Oregon public schools; to date, the forest has generated ~\$900 million for the Oregon Common School Fund. <sup>1</sup>

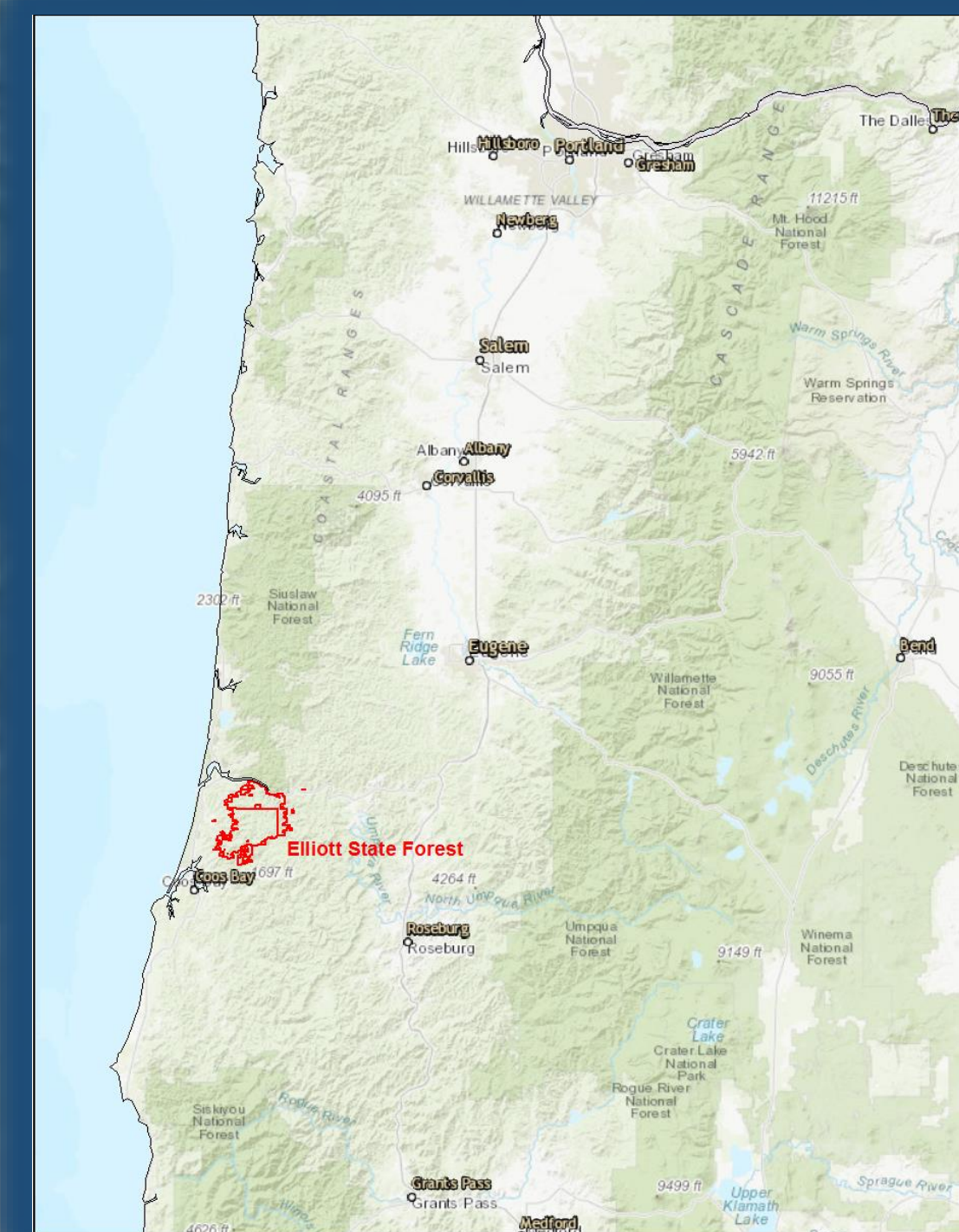


Fig. 2: Geographical Context

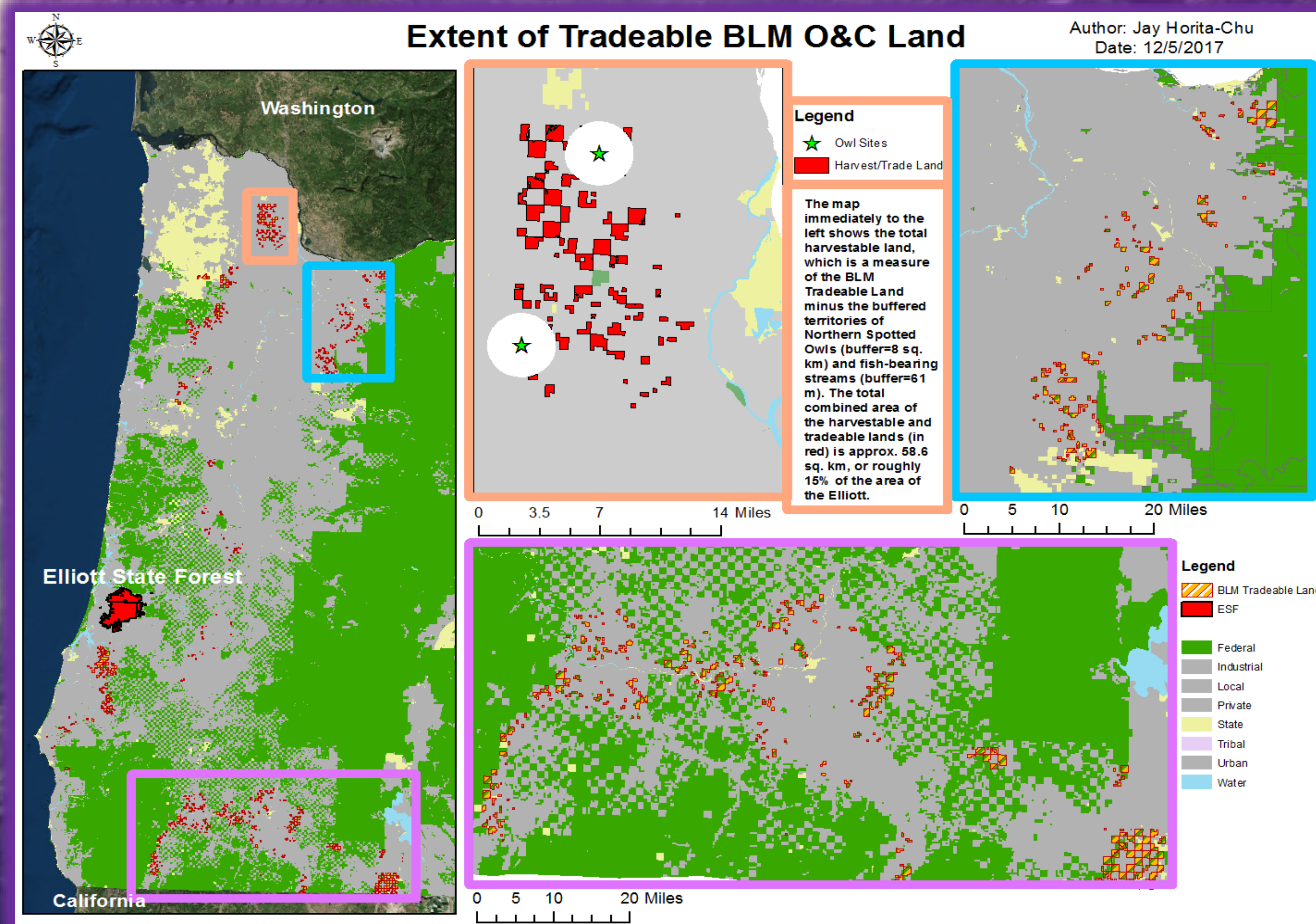


Fig. 3: A collection of maps highlighting potential federally-owned lands for trade in a federal land exchange

Fig. 1: Actor-Network Story Map of the Elliott Controversy

Recent lawsuits against the state by environmental advocacy groups have halted timber harvest on the Elliott. The state attempted to sell the forest, but the public rallied against this. Now the governor and two other government officials trusted with the forest's future must decide which direction to take the Elliott. *Of the many options proposed, only the sale or exchange of the Elliott to federal entities seems to best balance public and private interests.*

## Methodology

Using spatial data<sup>2</sup> from government agencies (left), I isolated plots of federal public land that could be realistically traded to the state in exchange for the Elliott. This spatial analysis involved critical examination of federal land exchange processes<sup>3</sup>, economic valuations of land<sup>4</sup>, and sensitive/endangered species.



- Proper Land Evaluation
- Less-Restricted Land
- Public Support
- \$\$\$ in Sale
- Release from Regs.
- Public Land Benefits

Fig. 4: The primary benefits to selling or trading the Elliott to federal land management agencies.

## Discussion

Several key land managers revealed that the Forest Service is unable to purchase the Elliott due to budget constraints.<sup>5</sup> However, the BLM owns more than enough land that is suitable for trade with the Elliott. If a federal land exchange were to happen, the benefits (Fig. 4) to the state are substantial in the short but mostly long-term. The state would also address the controversy surrounding the BLM's O&C checkerboard-patterned lands (Fig. 3). These actions would require an act of Congress, and the current political climate is unfavorable towards the conservation of public lands. If the Elliott were to remain in public hands though, this would set a precedent for future public lands at risk of privatization.

### References:

- ODF and ODSL. 2011. Elliott State Forest Management Plan. Oregon Dept. of Forestry and Oregon Dept. of State Lands. <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/Documents/AboutODF/2011EMPElliott.pdf>
- All spatial data was drawn from publicly available datasets on the ODF, USFS, and BLM websites. Primary datasets include land ownership/management, Northern Spotted Owl territories, and fish habitat. [www.oregon.gov/odf](http://www.oregon.gov/odf) [www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us) [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)
- The Appraisal Foundation. 2016. Uniform appraisal standards for federal land acquisitions. United States Dept. of Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/file/408306/download>
- Sim, Ken, Jordan Lofthouse, Ryan Yonk, Randy Simmons, Stewart, Adam, Grant Patty, Seth Muhlestein, and Tanner Robison. 2014. Options for the Monetization of the Elliott State Forest. <https://www.strata.org/elliott-state-forest/>
- Personal communication with Siuslaw NF Forest Supervisor Jerry Ingersoll and FSEEE Executive Director Andy Stahl 12/2017.

