



## Troy Hall

### New FES Department Head and accomplished conservation social scientist is ready to lead

by Bryan Bernart

It should be no surprise that the new head of Forest Ecosystems and Society (FES)—a department with a mission that includes developing natural resources policy “reflective of our understanding of the world and the people within it”—is an interdisciplinarian. Troy Hall, who joined the College of Forestry in June, previously served as the head of the Department of Conservation Social Sciences at the University of Idaho. Her diverse background includes anthropology, as well as forestry and botany.

Hall was drawn to the new position for a number of reasons, key among them being the reputation of both the college and the department. “The OSU College of Forestry is top in the nation. There’s a real opportunity to support research, teaching, and outreach on critically important issues related to the complex interactions between social and natural systems,” she says. “The FES department has a very strong tradition of research, and I’m excited to work with top level scientists.”

Hall also notes that she looks forward to supporting the college’s desire to bring together local communities, the forest industry, non-governmental organizations, and scientists. Hall

is a natural collaborator. Her research, which spans the study of the impacts of recreation on vegetation to best processes for science communication, has necessitated working with land management agencies, such as the USDA Forest Service, BLM, NASA, and many other entities. “My research combines basic science, ‘science transfer’—working with resource managers to apply science to land management decisions—and stakeholder involvement,” says Hall. “This background makes me sensitive to the varying needs and expectations of the diverse members of the FES Department.”

Hall considers forest management that provides jobs, while still sustaining the resource base, as one of Oregon’s largest current natural resources policy challenges. “We have to be adaptive and resilient in the face of accelerating social and biophysical changes,” she explains. “We have to find ways to appropriately bring science to bear on decision making, despite the fact that the science of socio-ecological systems is rapidly becoming more complex.”

Other key issues facing the state include engaging more broadly with non-traditional stakeholder groups, climate change (especially changes in hydrologic regimes in the Pacific Northwest), fire, and invasive species, she says. Future forestry graduates, too, will face the same challenges. How will Hall enhance the FES curriculum to best prepare them for careers in natural resources?

“FES has already begun an ambitious and potentially ground-breaking effort to develop a new undergrad Bachelor of Science program,” she explains. “The new program will prepare students to think broadly and critically, anticipate the unexpected, and be able to bring multiple perspectives to bear on any given issue.” Hall also notes that the FES graduate programs are currently being revised to enhance the interdisciplinary rigor that all graduate students receive.

Hall’s other goals include creating high-impact, “in-the-field” learning experiences for students by utilizing resources available near campus, and working to better integrate the FES Department into the overall OSU mission—which, as a land grant institution, includes advancing the science of sustainable earth ecosystems. “By helping expose all OSU students to environmental issues and natural resource sciences, we serve OSU students more broadly,” says Hall. “With strong and focused leadership, we’re poised to really make a difference.”