

Guidance Document

## **OREGON'S VISION FOR FEDERAL FORESTLANDS**

Graphic  
Signatures

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Executive Summary**

(Written after general agreement has been reached on the content and text of the main body of the report.)

## Introduction

Federal forestlands are a resource intended to benefit the nation as a whole. In Oregon, the health and sound stewardship of these lands are critical to state's current and future well-being. Our economy relies on these lands for family-wage jobs – particularly in our rural communities where jobs are becoming increasingly scarce. Oregon has traditional funded roads and schools from revenue that has been generated from our federal forests. Our citizens and out-of-state visitors rely on these forests for a vast array of recreational opportunities. These lands provide important ecosystem services like clean water and carbon storage, biodiversity, and habitat for a multitude of animal and plant species. Oregon is well-known for its forests and the many environmental, economic, and social benefits we derive from these lands.

The *Forestry Program for Oregon* articulates the Oregon Board of Forestry's (Board) goals, vision, and strategic plan for implementing policies and programs that promote sustainable management of Oregon's public and private forestland. The Board believes that to be truly sustainable, forest management must be economically viable, environmentally robust, and socially acceptable.

Oregon's forests are diverse, and so are the objectives of forest landowners. To achieve sustainable forest management Oregon must take advantage of different management strategies for different forest types, ownerships, and locations. Forest management strategies can be grouped into four broad categories: Wood Production, Multiple-Resource, Reserve, and Residential Value Emphasis. Sustaining Oregon's forests should be viewed from a statewide, landscape perspective, with different landowners making different contributions in each of the broad categories. Today, management of federal forestlands in Oregon is focused on the Multiple-Resource and Reserve emphases.

The Forest Service's goals are articulated, among other places, in the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 which provides: "the national forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes." The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) forests in Oregon are managed under the Oregon and California Railroad Act of 1937 which says the land will be managed for the "purpose of providing a permanent source of timber supply, protecting watersheds, regulating stream flow, and contributing to the economic stability of local communities and industries, and providing recreational facilities." In managing these lands, these two agencies must also comply with other federal laws like the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act. The Forest Service must comply with the National Forest Management Act and the Bureau of Land Management must comply with the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act. Together the federal forestlands that are managed by the Forest Service and BLM provide the bulk of the Reserve lands and much of the Multiple-Resource lands in Oregon.

Oregonians want to have greater influence on how federal forests are managed – forests that contribute significantly to the well-being of our state and particularly to our rural communities. Forests are dynamic ecosystems that do not recognize ownership boundaries – forest management on one ownership may impact other nearby ownerships. The diversity of Oregon’s forested mosaic is important to ensure a legacy of healthy, productive forests for future generations. Oregonians aspire to chart a sustainable, productive future for all our forests regardless of ownership.

In 2005 the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 1072 into law with bipartisan support. That bill encourages the Oregon Board of Forestry (Board), in consultation with the Governor, to create a forum for interagency cooperation and collaborative public involvement regarding federal forest management issues. With input and ideas from a broad range of interests, Oregon will be better positioned to develop collaborative solutions that represent the views of the majority of Oregonians.

In October 2004, the Governor directed the Board to “create a unified vision of how federal lands should contribute” to sustainability, and to “make that vision action-oriented and comprehensive – following through to the last step, including implementation.” For this process the Governor has told the Board to “be bold, be open, and keep your eye on the big picture.”

In order to have this discussion and develop a vision for Oregon’s federal forestlands, the Board created the Federal Forestlands Advisory Committee (FFAC). Comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders, the FFAC was directed to craft a document that articulates the state’s vision for how federal forestlands should be managed to contribute to the sustainability of Oregon’s overall forest land base. The FFAC has actively sought scientific and public input to identify the strengths and weaknesses of today’s federal forest management approaches and to forge a vision for the future.

This document sets forth our vision and set of key goals that should be pursued on federal forestlands to create forests that are ecologically sustainable, economically viable, and appreciated by all stakeholders. It presents recommendations to implement our vision and includes specific policy steps necessary to achieve the vision we have crafted. This document articulates Oregon’s interests at the national policy level and is intended to guide the State’s participation in the planning the future of Oregon’s federal forestlands.

## Vision and Goals

Across Oregon's forested landscape, and in the context of other ownerships, federal forestlands should help deliver a set of environmental, economic and social benefits sufficient to ensure that the State's forest resource in total is sustainable. Sustainable means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. These needs include clean air, clean water, attractive scenery, sustainable and consistent supplies of wood fiber, sufficient recreational opportunities, robust biological diversity, resilient ecosystems, and socio-economically healthy rural communities. In order for federal lands to appropriately contribute to this sustainable forest landscape, federal planning and management implementation should be carried out under a fully coordinated, statewide, all-ownerships-based system.

### **Our Vision for Oregon's Federal Forests is:**

*Federal forestlands in Oregon are a legacy, a refuge and a resource, loved and celebrated by our citizens, inhabited by healthy populations of fish and wildlife, managed with humility, wisdom and innovation to sustain the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of our rural and urban communities.*

### **Our Goals To Achieve The Vision Include:**

#### **Environment**

1. Forest and rangeland ecosystems are protected, restored, and managed for a full range of sustainable ecosystem benefits within the context of climate change. These benefits include aesthetic values; biodiversity; clean air; grazing; human health; native fish, wildlife and plants; recreation; resiliency; soil productivity; timber; water quality and quantity; and wilderness.

#### **Social**

2. Federal forestlands respond to site specific variations and community based management principles taking into consideration tribal, local, state, and national needs and priorities. Management provides opportunities for people to realize their material, spiritual and recreational values and relationships with the forest. Federal forestland management rebuilds and maintains trust within affected communities using collaboration, adaptive management, and other innovative strategies.

#### **Economic**

Federal forestlands provide a predictable, sustainable supply of the full suite of goods and services now and into the future. Federal forest policy contributes to the creation of stable jobs and economic well-being for local communities across the State.

3. Federal forestland managers take action to address State and local needs. The Governor, the Oregon Legislature, Oregon Congressional Delegation, and others actively support federal forestland management to accomplish these goals and take action on the most pressing problems identified in this report to enable federal managers to carry out the necessary work.
4. Federal forestlands are managed with a clearly defined vision and strategic goals developed and implemented through a collaborative partnership with state, local and tribal governments, and public involvement. The vision and goals are understood and supported by the public. These processes and relationships address management challenges and provide a new paradigm for problem-solving and conflict resolution resulting in a synergy of benefits endorsed by public stakeholders.
5. The federal government is committed to providing adequate and stable funding from multiple sources and mechanisms so that federal agencies can meet their stewardship, restoration, and sustainability obligations.
6. Federal policy guidance provides stability and balances the need for accountability while preserving local flexibility in the management of federal forestlands to ensure sustainability while meeting state, tribal, local, and national needs.

## **A Sense of Urgency**

Forests are extremely important to Oregon. Of Oregon's 62 million acres, 30 million acres are forested. Of those acres, 60 percent are federal forestlands – approximately one-quarter of Oregon's total land base. East of the Cascades, 72 percent of Oregon's forestlands are federally-owned. Yet despite their importance, large segments of Oregon's federal forests are becoming progressively unhealthy and there is particular concern about the increasing risk uncharacteristic wildfire; a situation exacerbated by climate change. Moreover, the infrastructure to address these problems is rapidly disappearing, particularly in Eastern Oregon. What happens on these lands is of vital importance to Oregonians and the Nation. It is also clear that time is not on our side. Unless decisive steps are taken soon, we risk accelerated loss of important habitat for animal and plant species, further degradation of air and water quality, and continued decline in community well-being among other things.

### **Oregon Not Alone – Local and National Issues**

Many of the challenges we face are not unique to Oregon and some in fact are national problems that have implications for Oregon. Some examples include:

- The United States grows more wood than it harvests each year, yet to meet our consumption needs the nation is a net importer of wood.<sup>1</sup> In this country we have some of the most advanced forest management and protection rules in the world, yet the U.S. obtains significant amounts of wood from developing countries regardless of the environmental and social consequences our consumptive practices have on those countries.
- In the U.S. today coarse-scale data and surveys suggest that more than half of all forestlands are densely stocked with trees and at risk from uncharacteristic wildfire.<sup>2</sup> In Oregon, logging, grazing, and exclusion of fire have altered the characteristics of much of Oregon's frequent fire forests. The 2006 LANDFIRE Rapid Assessment identified 13 million acres of federal frequent fire forest as being altered and predisposed to moderate or severe risk of losing key ecosystem components. Use of prescribed fire and wildland fire and mechanical treatments to restore ecological conditions to these lands is proceeding at a rate that only treats 1 to 2 percent of this area annually.<sup>3</sup>
- Wildfires emit significant amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Overstocked forest conditions and climate change have combined to increase the recent extent and frequency of fires in the western U.S., further contributing to climate change.
- For millennia disease and insect caused tree mortality has been a natural occurrence in forests. However, in the U.S. today there are millions of acres of infested trees, many of them dead, often the result human activities and past management practices. In Oregon alone, coarse scale analysis has identified tree mortality caused by bark beetles on approximately 700,000 acres of federal forestland. These infestations and the increasingly variable climate underscore how important it is to restore natural processes and resiliency to our federal forests.<sup>4</sup>
- Many areas of federal forestlands need efforts to improve watershed conditions and restore landscape resiliency. Scientific assessments of current conditions for forested systems consistently yield the same broad conclusions: a century or more of road building, logging, grazing, mining, fire suppression, and water withdrawals, in conjunction with the loss of key species and the introduction of invasive species, have degraded watersheds, modified streamflows and water quality, altered ecosystem processes, and decreased biological diversity.

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<sup>1</sup> USDA Forest Service. National Report on Sustainable Forests - 2003

<sup>2</sup> Schmidt. 2002. Development of Coarse-Scale Spatial Data for Wildland Fire and Fuel Management. Gen. Tech. Rept. RMRS-87

<sup>3</sup> MacDonald. 2006. The Condition of Oregon's Forests and Woodlands: Implications for the Effective Conservation of Biodiversity. The Nature Conservancy

<sup>4</sup> USDA Forest Service. Forest Health Highlights in Oregon - 2004

- Federal budgets show a long term trend of disinvestment in federally and privately owned forestlands across the full range of values – recreation, wilderness, access, wildlife, water, and timber. The proportion of fire suppression funds in the Forest Service budget was 13% in 1991; it was 45% in 2007, while the total management budget has decreased. From 1999 to 2008 National Forest System budgets (in constant dollars) have declined 54% in Region 6.<sup>5</sup> From 1995 to 2008 BLM budgets (in constant dollars) for managing forestlands (excluding fire suppression) in western Oregon have declined 29%.<sup>6</sup> To maintain the dense network of roads on federal forestlands, there are billions of dollars in deferred maintenance that have created serious water quality and fish passage issues.
- What was once strong, forest-based rural economies in all corners of the country – Georgia, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, New Mexico – now have similar concerns about long term community health and viability due to the loss of forest industry. Annual federal timber harvests in Oregon were 4 to 5 billion board feet for much of the period 1962 to 1989. However, we now know these levels of timber harvest were not sustainable. Since 2000 federal harvests have averaged only 310 million board feet<sup>7</sup> reflecting an equally extreme swing in the opposite direction. Since 1992 the number of sawmills in Oregon has gone from 263 to 125<sup>8</sup> and employment in the forest industry has gone from 57,500 to 42,500<sup>9</sup>. In 1999 there were four Oregon Counties with greater than 15 percent of their population below the poverty level...by 2004 there were nine<sup>10</sup>.

Many of these issues are interconnected. Yet there are no policies to understand and address the linkages between them. For example, a reduction in harvests on federal lands coupled with the forest practice standards in faraway places like Brazil have an impact on the continued viability of a sawmill in northeast Oregon....that the existence of that mill can determine whether a small family forestland owner keeps his or her land in forest or sells it to a developer....that whether or not the land stays in forest impacts the amount of mule deer winter range....that if the mill goes away and the land is parceled to developers, family wage jobs in manufacturing, forestry, transportation and service are all lost to the community....and that when these incomes exit the community then schools, roads, public safety, and all other forms of essential societal needs begin to degrade. What happens on federal forestlands has a significant impact on the lives of many Oregonians.

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<sup>5</sup> USFS Region 6. Personal communication

<sup>6</sup> Oregon State BLM. Personal communication

<sup>7</sup> Oregon Department of Forestry. Annual Reports

<sup>8</sup> Ehinger & Associates. 2008. Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho & Montana: Forest Industry Mill and Company Data.

<sup>9</sup> Oregon Employment Department. Oregon Covered Employment and Payroll Statistics

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey

## Moving Beyond Conflict – The Need to Work Together

In 2004 Governor Kulongoski described the problem we face in an address to the Oregon Board of Forestry. “Ensuring sustainable forests in Oregon requires that we understand that the social, environmental and economic benefits of forests are not only important – but also interconnected. For example, if we don’t protect soil and water, the land’s economic value will be eroded. Enhancing fish and wildlife habitat provides recreational, scenic and other social benefits. Being able to generate revenue from forests lets us afford environmental protection and social amenities. And if we don’t have strong social acceptance of our forest policies, the public will demand new policies – and new ways of managing our forests.”

“Over the last three decades, these passionate – and sometimes competing – views of our forests have led to an “us versus them” mentality in many parts of our state. And for that we have *all* paid a price. That price includes catastrophic fires and high unemployment – especially in some of our rural communities. The fires have destroyed endangered species habitat, degraded watersheds, affected air quality and turned magnificent backcountry recreation areas into black char. High unemployment has hurt local schools, allowed community infrastructure to deteriorate and pushed the cost of higher education beyond the reach of many citizens. We have to get past this costly conflict over our forests and craft the public policy model that is described in *The Forestry Program for Oregon*.” (October 22, 2004)

## Problems

There are many interrelated problems reducing the ability of federal forestlands in Oregon to contribute a full range of sustainable forest values to Oregonians and the Nation. These problems are interrelated and difficult to solve in isolation. In this report we have identified the most pressing problems of place and those overarching problems that if solved would help to address problems of place and other concerns.

### Problems of Place

Problems of place are the most important and immediate issues facing Oregonians, particularly those living in rural communities. Moreover, these problems are major impediments to the sustainability of forests and associated economic, environmental, and social values in Oregon. There are three interrelated **Problems of Place** with the biophysical conditions of forests and the infrastructure needed to manage them. These are:

1. **Forest health** and resiliency have declined in Oregon’s federal forests. Specific problems vary depending on the type and location of forests. The manifestations of degraded forest health are most extreme in the dry forest types (eastern and southwestern Oregon) where overstocked forest stands have resulted in unprecedented landscape scale problems like uncharacteristic wildfire and insect

epidemics that may result in the loss of key ecological components. In western Oregon, hydrologic regimes have been altered by roads and other factors and conditions may not protect beneficial uses like water quantity and quality. Climate change is and will continue to tax the resiliency of federal forestlands across the state.

2. **Reduced timber harvest** from federal forestlands has led to a decline in forest industry infrastructure with unintended economic and social losses to rural communities including receipts from timber used to support roads and schools.
3. **The desired amount of older forests** on federal forestlands needs to be established and protected as a component of sustainable forest management. A well-balanced program of forest management activities is necessary to maintain the mix of successional stages and vegetation conditions that provides for the full diversity of habitats and species.

## Overarching Problems

Overarching problems affect our collective abilities to adequately address the problems of place. Overarching problems are issues involving federal laws and administrative rules and their interpretation, administrative and legal processes, relationships between people, organizations, and different levels of government, financial support for federal management operations, and the interactions. These **Overarching Problems** are affecting the ability to make decisions, resolve conflicts, and implement projects on the ground to address problems of place. The four most important overarching problems are:

1. Federal laws, policies, and court decisions that govern federal forestlands have led to a **potpourri of goals and mandates** that often work at cross purposes and inhibit agencies from reacting decisively to issues such as declining forest health. This confusion complicates rather than solves the need to integrate social, economic and environmental values.
2. Past forest management, changing public values, lack of clear widely accepted goals, repeated court challenges, and the inability to implement decisions have led to a **lack of trust** between stakeholders and federal forestland management and regulatory agencies.
3. Federal, state, local, and tribal governments lack an effective **process to coordinate policy decisions** and achieve landscape scale objectives.
4. **Funding is not adequate** or appropriately allocated to achieve land management objectives on federal forestlands. Adequate stable funding sources are necessary to achieve long-term management goals and sustainability.

## Problem Interactions

All the problems described in this report are interrelated. For example, large areas of Oregon's federal forestlands are in need of an integrated approach to forest restoration and fuels management through thinning, which includes the use of prescribed fire, wildland fire, and mechanical treatments. The goal of this thinning should be to restore natural processes and make the landscape more resilient and reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire. At the same time, Oregon has been losing the infrastructure (i.e., skilled workers, mills, equipment, etc.) that could be employed to restore landscape resiliency while also supplying timber for the mills. And, the unresolved controversy over the amount and type of management needed to protect older forests is a major stumbling block to taking any large scale actions on federal forestlands.

The lack of a unified goal and conflicting values has led some to say there is a process predicament on federal lands. In a 2002 paper<sup>11</sup> the Forest Service describes the problem this way. "Unfortunately, the Forest Service operates within a statutory, regulatory, and administrative framework that has kept the agency from effectively addressing rapid declines in forest health. This same framework impedes nearly every other aspect of multiple-use management as well." Others have pointed out that the agencies have the tools to manage the forest, and Government Accountability Reports have shown that very few fuels reduction projects have been challenged or litigated.

Large scale issues like planning for fire risk reduction and maintaining connected blocks of older forests require working large-scale planning across multiple ownership boundaries. The lack of trust among stakeholders and insufficient funding for the Forest Service and the BLM have resulted in small, scattered projects instead of the coordinated strategy needed to address these large-scale landscape-level issues.

## Problem Interactions with Climate Change

Increasing landscape resiliency and restoring natural processes is a key goal for Oregon to address climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded that there is a strong likelihood of both global and regional climate change. Large closed-canopy fires are weather-driven, and hence closely related to climate. The acreage burned in the western United States has increased substantially since the 1960s and the area burned over the last two decades is the highest on record during the past century (*reference needed*). However, other studies suggest the acreage burned is not outside the historical range for these landscapes if we look at the fires that burned before Euro-American settlement occurred (*references needed for these other studies*). Regardless, there are more anthropogenic influences on the landscape and there is no doubt fire suppression and past management practices have reduced the resiliency of ecosystems and increased fire risk.

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<sup>11</sup> USDA Forest Service. June 2002. The Process Predicament: How Statutory, Regulatory, and Administrative Factors Affect National Forest Management. Washington D. C

This is likely due to a combination of factors that include an increase in fuel caused by fire suppression and a greater tendency toward wet and dry extremes that lead to more weather driven events. Increasing average temperatures in the future are expected to cause changes in relative humidity and drying over much of the West, which may increase the number of days of high fire danger.<sup>12</sup> Research is increasingly showing a strong link between climate change, fire size, and fire severity.<sup>13</sup> Wildfires also create large amounts of green house gases, potentially contributing to climate change. Four wildfires that burned a total about 145,000 acres released as much green house gases as half the cars driven in California during a year. Research estimates that thinning the forest before one of the fires burned could have reduced emissions by about 74%.<sup>14</sup>

Fire ecologists are warning us that historical fire regimes have been disrupted, and climate change may combine with wildfire to dramatically alter forest conditions and habitat types. One of their recommendations is to prepare for extreme fire events by restoring ecosystems and reducing uncharacteristic fuel levels through expanded thinning programs through prescribed burning and mechanical treatments.<sup>15</sup>

## Recommended Solutions

**Addressing the complex and interrelated problems identified in this report requires a strategy at different scales: 1) solutions at the state and local level, and 2) solutions at the national level.** Actions at both scales must be implemented simultaneously recognizing that change at the federal level will likely be a long-term endeavor. To date, the federal government has not adequately addressed pressing forest resource-related problems affecting Oregonians' well being.

More direct and focused action by Oregon State government in cooperation with local and tribal governments, citizens, and federal managers is necessary to facilitate immediate action by federal agencies to address crucial problems. To date, actions by the federal government have been largely inadequate to resolve the problems identified in this report. Moreover, unless a different approach is taken soon, these problems will worsen and become even more challenging and expensive to fix.

A successful partnership between the people of Oregon and federal forest managers is needed before progress can be made at the pace and scale required to solve the full spectrum of forest health issues. This partnership can be accomplished through shared

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<sup>12</sup> Brown et. al. The Impact of Twenty-First Century Climate Change on Wildland Fire Danger in the Western United States: An Applications Perspective. *Climatic Change* 62: 365–388, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Fried Et. Al. The Impact of Climate Change on Wildfire Severity: A Regional Forecast for Northern California. *Climatic Change* 64: 169–191, 2004

<sup>14</sup> Bonnicksen. 2008. Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Four California Wildfires: Opportunities to Prevent and Reverse Environmental and Climate Impacts. FCEM.

<sup>15</sup> Third International Fire Ecology and Management Congress. 2006. The San Diego declaration on climate change and fire management. The Association for Fire Ecology.

leadership, community engagement, and alignment with clearly articulated local, state, and national goals. Collaboration among diverse interests to develop broadly accepted methods to accomplish these goals must become the norm. A successful partnership can lead to outcomes that include protection, restoration, and conservation of natural resources, a sustainable supply of goods and services, and the development and maintenance of programs and activities that contribute to community vitality.

Some problems must be addressed at the national level (e.g., inadequate funding, potpourri of goals and mandates). Oregon can not make these changes alone but it can lead the charge. Political coalitions among governors and congressional delegations can motivate new policies or change bad policies that impact Oregon and other states.

## State and Local Solutions

The overall *strategy* for state and local solutions is to *take action to improve forest health*. Symptoms of forest health (e.g., uncharacteristic wildfire, altered water quality and quantity, degraded fish and wildlife habitat, and reduced biodiversity and ecosystem resiliency) are of immediate importance. However, long-term success will require solving related problems (i.e., reduced timber harvest and infrastructure, reducing conflict over the desired amount of older forests, lack of trust, and policy coordination).

This document makes five strategic recommendations dedicated to solving problems at the state and local levels. Each recommendation identifies the action items that will be necessary for successful implementation. The recommendations are:

1. The Governor and the State Legislature should create a **Federal Forestland Liaison Program** in the Oregon Department of Forestry to support efforts to improve forest health on federal forestlands.
2. The Governor and the State Legislature should provide administrative, financial, and technical resources to local collaborative partnerships to build trust and help identify scientifically informed and socially acceptable forest management projects to improve forest health.
3. Local collaborative groups in cooperation with the federal agencies should first assess forest health conditions and then plan projects at the landscape scale to address high priority needs.
4. Collaborative groups should define and delineate the amount of old growth that should be conserved and re-established to maintain ecological sustainability and resiliency as part of their landscape assessment.
5. Leaders from state and federal agencies, county and tribal governments, and private forestland owners should meet on a regular basis to discuss and coordinate policies that affect forest health issues and address the recommendations in this report.

### **State and Local Recommendation #1**

**The Governor and the State Legislature should create a Federal Forestland Liaison Program at the Oregon Department of Forestry to support efforts to improve forest health on federal forestlands.**

#### ***Justification***

Federal forest managers lack adequate human resources to address the forest health problem in Oregon. This problem puts the many values Oregonians treasure from these lands in increasing jeopardy. In addition, degraded federal forests threaten the health of adjacent nonfederal forests. Where it is strategic, ODF should assist federal land managers to design and implement treatments that will solve forest health problems. With increased capacity the state can provide technical assistance to accelerate the number of NEPA ready acres available for treatment and facilitate local partnerships involving state and local governments, tribes, citizens, and federal managers.

#### ***Action Items***

- The Governor and Oregon Legislature should create and fund a **Federal Forestland Liaison Program** in the Department of Forestry that will:
  - Provide strategic technical assistance to the BLM and Forest Service where capacity is inadequate to implement forest health treatments
  - Promote and encourage the formation of local collaborative partnerships to address forest health problems on federal forestlands
  - Provide administrative support and manage funding dedicated to support local collaboration. This funding will be used for neutral facilitation and to support the ongoing efforts of local collaboratives
  - Coordinate involvement of other state agencies in the collaborative process so that the State of Oregon speaks with one voice
- The Federal Forestland Liaison Program should be funded through legislative appropriations to the Department of Forestry in this biennium. Funding should be sufficient to provide pass-through funding to other participating state agencies. In addition, the appropriation should include the cost to hire neutral facilitators, support ongoing collaboration, and engage independent scientific expertise when needed to support local partnerships.

## **State and Local Recommendation #2**

**The Governor and the State Legislature should provide administrative, financial, and technical resources to local collaborative partnerships to build trust and help identify scientifically informed and socially acceptable forest management projects to improve forest health.** These funds should be managed by the Oregon Department of Forestry as one element of the Federal Forestland Liaison Program.

We recommend that funding be sufficient to create three new collaborative processes annually and provide ongoing support for existing collaborations.

### ***Justification***

For twenty years Oregon has been the center of controversy for the nation over federal forest management. Past management practices, and concerns over endangered species and old growth have led to a culture of distrust between, and among all interest groups.

As a result, Oregon's rural communities and forest lands are in crisis, especially in dry forests where forests and communities are at risk of damage caused by uncharacteristically severe fires; and economically challenged by declining harvesting, processing and marketing infrastructure that eliminates good paying jobs. Finally, overstocked dry forests result in resource damage manifested by unnatural insect and disease outbreaks.

Over the last ten years, collaborative processes have led to some meaningful changes in the way stakeholders and federal agencies work. These processes enable communities to effectively participate in management decisions on federal forests and woodlands. We see the formation of local collaborative partnerships as a major way to address the problem of a lack of trust among stakeholders. Experience and extensive analysis show that there are key elements of successful collaboration and the building of trust that include:

- Creation of a charter that defines the partnership's goals, clarifies the commitments of the participants, defines the decision making process, details how the land management agency will incorporate the work of the collaborative, and defines the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved
- Active joint learning, education, and sharing to create a context for identifying mutually agreeable solutions
- Neutral third-party facilitators (someone who has credibility with participants)
- A focus on the landscape and managing the landscape holistically rather than on a project by project basis
- Using small projects to operationalize the collaborative conversations, demonstrate outcomes, and create success

- Meaningful and committed involvement by the federal forest management agencies
- A process that is inclusive of the community (with community broadly defined – people who live outside the community and who are interested, committed and involved in management issues can become part of the community)
- A process that is transparent and fair
- Participants who understand and are committed to finding common ground
- Field trips and other activities that develop relationships, explore interests and foster understanding
- Monitoring to determine if results, agreements and expectations are being met (“trust and verify”)
- Strong fair leadership

#### *Action*

- The ODF will encourage the formation of local collaborative partnerships and once formed, provide administrative support for the partnerships.
- The ODF will contract with experienced professional facilitators to work directly with the local partnerships and to develop criteria to evaluate proposals for collaboration.
- The ODF will link local collaboratives to the technical expertise they need to help them assess forest conditions and design projects, coordinate landscape assessments, and develop and conduct monitoring.
- Three pilot collaboratives should be initiated in the first year to develop administrative and procedural processes and to learn how best to make this program successful. We recommend that the pilot partnerships be focused in eastern and southwestern Oregon where the forest health problem is most pressing and should be coordinated with the Forest Service planning schedule. Adjacent BLM lands would be incorporated in the partnership work as appropriate.

#### **State and Local Recommendation #3**

**Local collaborative groups in cooperation with the federal agencies should first assess forest health conditions and then plan projects at the landscape scale to address high priority needs.** By planning at the landscape scale treatments can be designed to improve the ecological effectiveness and efficiency of actions taken.

### *Justification*

Landscape scale analyses are needed to assess landscape conditions, establish coherent and integrated strategic goals, develop consensus on management and treatment options, and prioritize treatments across the landscape. A well designed landscape assessment will provide a systematic and efficient approach to comprehensively solve problems created by degraded forest health. A large scale systematic approach provides the opportunity to assess treatment effectiveness over time and to identify whether there may be unintended consequences.

Even though predicting the climate of the future is difficult, climate change has been and will continue to test the resiliency of federal forestlands. There is an urgent need to identify and prioritize forest health treatments based upon the best available science and principles of large scale ecosystem dynamics to deal with the potential effects of climate change.

### *Actions*

- Assessments should be developed through inclusive, collaborative processes, and be science-based.
- The landscape design should provide a long-term stable, sustainable and quantifiable supply of ecosystem benefits such as water filtration, carbon sequestration, wilderness, wildlife, fish habitat and fiber (i.e., timber, biomass/fuel) from public lands.
- The BLM, Forest Service, ODF and other relevant state agencies should provide technical information to local partnerships.
- Landscape assessments should be largely drawn from existing information.
- Assessments should develop a management template that will help to maintain and restore ecosystem processes, identify large-scale treatment opportunities, and prioritize actions that provide the greatest gains in increasing forest health and resiliency. The collaboratives should use the large scale assessment to:
  - Identify forest types and areas where work is needed;
  - Recommend map-based sideboards;
  - Prioritize treatments for restoring forest health and protecting key ecological features (i.e., endangered species, older forests, road maintenance/removal, water quality, etc.);
  - Identify areas where a timber sale program is possible if carefully planned with attention to ecological and cultural values.
- Assessments should lead to the development of outcome-based (e.g., reduced fire hazard, improved water quality) performance measures to track accomplishments instead of simply numeric measures (e.g., acres treated as opposed to quality of work accomplished)
- The priorities for selection of large-scale restoration projects should include the following criteria:
  - Fire threat to forest and to communities, both within the wildland urban interface as well as private, state, and federal forests

- The need for improvements in hydrologic conditions and road systems,
- Protection of biodiversity hotspots
- Economic viability; while initially they may require federal, state, local, tribal or private philanthropy support, over time they should become economically viable
- Project viability, including established transportation and timber processing infrastructure, and adequate supply of labor force. Focus should be directed towards communities where this labor, transportation, and processing infrastructure are vulnerable to loss
- The assessment should prioritize and urge investments in the forest road network. These investments should be based on ground-based assessments of the aquatic systems followed by restoration efforts to improve fish passage and stream crossings, curtailment of practices that slow or retard the attainment of riparian recovery and action to improve road location and reduce road density issues in watersheds. Initial proposals will be provided by the Forest Service or the BLM.
- The assessment should consider how to provide a stable, sustainable woody biomass supply, and a predictable supply of timber. Lack of stability and dependability in product supply makes it extremely difficult for business to make long term investments in the infrastructure needed to utilize products and help pay the cost of forest health treatments. Initial proposals will be provided by the Forest Service or the BLM.

#### **State and Local Recommendation #4**

**Collaborative groups should define and delineate the amount of old growth that should be conserved and re-established to maintain ecological sustainability and resiliency as part of their landscape assessment.**

#### ***Justification***

Old growth still exists in Oregon and there is widespread agreement that it should be protected. Saving all or most remaining older forests has clear benefits from the standpoint of biological conservation and landscape ecology. The delineation of areas for recruitment and management of future old growth (Late Successional Reserves and older forests) are more controversial.

Most old growth forests occur on federal lands. Agencies have implemented restoration programs to accelerate the development of stands with old growth habitat characteristics; however, many decades will be required to reverse the depleted status. The lack of social agreement on how much older forest is desirable and where it should occur are barriers to forest management operations.

Development of regional and forest-type specific definitions for older forests based on local-community stakeholder processes will help reduce tension and distrust over forest management. Definitions of older forests should be broadly based in science and social

perspectives and shared across the community of stakeholders and lead to successful management.

### *Actions*

- Local collaborative processes should:
  - Define "old growth" and "older forests" by forest type. We recommend that local partnerships work within the broad definition of older forests articulated in the 2008 publication "Beyond Old Growth" by the National Commission on Science for Sustainable Forestry.
  - Develop goals for older forests
  - Save what older forests exist and identify opportunities for additional older forests.
  - Initially proposals should be provided by the Forest Service or BLM.

### **State and Local Recommendation #5**

**Leaders from state and federal agencies, county and tribal governments, and private forestland owners should meet on a regular basis to discuss and coordinate policies that affect forest health issues and the recommendations in this report.**

### *Justification*

Forest ecosystems and forest health transcend ownership boundaries. Effective management of contiguous expanses of forest demands coordination of action across different ownerships. By working together, limited funding and human resources can be maximized to sustainably manage forests.

### *Actions*

- Semi-annually, the State Forester should organize a meeting of the chief executives of the state and federal agencies with responsibilities for forestland management, representatives of county and tribal governments, and private forestland owners. The purpose of these meetings should be to discuss and coordinate policies that affect forest health issues and the recommendations of this report.
- Forestland managers should use collaboratively developed landscape assessments as a framework to coordinate projects across public and private ownerships to meet common goals.
- The interface between public/private land ownership should be defined to develop and implement "good neighbor" policies and incentives for effective, efficient landscape-scale management and stewardship on both federal and private lands.
- Forestland managers should expand and fund research and pilot projects to guide future management strategies. By engaging private and public partners Oregon can expand its knowledge of long-term restorative benefits, hydrologic dynamics and cause and effect relationships among physical and biological parameters.

- Forestland managers should identify a comprehensive strategy to invest in creating and then expanding successful large-scale pilot projects that address the scientific uncertainties of dual-purpose (e.g., economic and wildlife) management practices.
- Federal agencies should work with state, local and tribal governments to address the legacy road system through contracting with these local staff to accomplish the priority objectives. Collaboration is essential because roads cross jurisdictional boundaries and local governments have systems and crews in place to undertake this work.

## National Solutions

Congressional action is needed to help address many of the problems that are identified in this report. Local groups and the State of Oregon working alone cannot solve the fundamental issues that are caused by uncoordinated forest policies, a lack of clear goals for sustaining all forest values, the potpourri of goals and mandates, or a lack of funding for federal agencies to carry out their management responsibilities.

In this report we have identified two recommendations directed at Congress and the President to help promote sustainable forest management. The recommendations are:

1. Congress should develop a new, single federal forest policy on a par with the federal Farm Bill or Energy Bill that harmonizes existing laws so that they do not work at cross-purposes; recognizes new scientific knowledge and contemporary stewardship goals that promote all environmental services provided by forests; and ultimately creates an overarching policy for sustainable forests.
2. Congress must increase funding for forest management activities. Stable funding is needed to meet long-term public forest management goals.

### National Recommendation #1

**Congress should develop a new, single federal forest policy on a par with the federal Farm Bill or Energy Bill that harmonizes existing laws so that they do not work at cross-purposes; recognizes new scientific knowledge and contemporary stewardship goals that promote all environmental services provided by forests; and ultimately creates an overarching policy for sustainable forests.** Legislation could create a renewed national commitment and social contract to understand, enhance, and protect the health, productivity, and sustainability of America's forests.

#### *Justification*

A national consensus for specific priority measures would help build trust among diverse groups and coordinate efforts of federal, state, and local agencies to achieve common goals. Legislation that sets goals for sustainable forests and enables forest restoration projects would help increase economic activity in local communities, support infrastructure, and provide social benefits to communities.

Eleven federal laws guide federal land management. This series of policy overlays creates competing management objectives, fails to incorporate contemporary conditions and desires, and leads to confused interpretations about the roles, objectives and goals of forest management.

This confusion has led to controversy and projects have become increasingly difficult to implement. Yet many forest landscapes need active management to restore forest health. In dry forests these treatments will reduce stocking levels, improve wildlife habitat, reduce the likelihood of stand replacement fire, and protect or accelerate the development of older forest conditions. Focusing on forest restoration and thinning are less controversial and could represent a middle ground that will benefit both the economy and the environment.

To sustain forests for the benefit of current and future generations forests must be able to deliver a full and integrated set of ecological and economic benefits. Ecological integrity is essential if forests are to be productive and resilient to climate change. The economic benefits of forests, whether they are habitat, wildlife, wood or water, create the context for public support and community vitality. A single, national policy is needed to restore forest health, clarify and enhance the roles of federal, state, and local governments, and promote a new paradigm for management that involves and supports collaboration.

### *Actions*

- The Governor should gain the support of the Oregon Congressional Delegation and other western governors to: 1) develop a new coordinated forest policy, and 2) increase the funding for federal forestland management.
- The Oregon Congressional Delegation should cultivate support for new forest policy from other western congressional delegations.
- Key constituent groups gain support of national organizations
- New legislation should consider the following concepts:
  - Our nation lacks a clear vision and policies that promote the sustainable management of the nation's public and private forests as an integrated and high priority. In this regard, we endorse the call for "an integrated 21<sup>st</sup> Century public-policy framework for U.S. forests" as proposed this year by the National Commission on Science for Sustainable Forestry. Many traditional forest management activities have become controversial on federal lands and projects have become increasingly difficult to implement. Yet many forest landscapes need active management to restore forests to historic stocking levels, improve wildlife habitat, reduce the likelihood of stand replacement fire, or accelerate the development of older forest conditions. Restoration projects are less controversial and could represent a middle ground that will benefit both the economy and the environment. Congressional legislation is needed to direct agency priorities, fund projects, and increase local capacity to do work on the ground.
  - Many of the problems faced by our forests derive from other much larger social and economic forces.

- Engagement and collaboration with other partners outside of the traditional forestry community will be needed to develop broadly supported policy changes.
- Forest types are different. The new policy should address the well-being of forests across all regions of the country while recognizing that forest types and local communities are different.
- The policy should reflect a unified national policy for sustainable forests that will guide the future stewardship of, and investment in, the nation's forests based on internationally supported concepts for defining and promoting sustainable forests.
- Develop a national consensus for specific priority measures to implement an integrated national policy and programs for sustainable forests that reflect contemporary forest ownership, science, uses and values;
- Promote, review, incorporate or amend if needed, existing federal authorities, policies and programs to ensure their support for sustainable forests.
- Promote regional landscape level approaches to forest management that assure core areas for economic/community sustainability and biodiversity.
- Ensure that restoring forest conditions and improving their resilience is identified as a priority in federal forest management plans.
- Provide targeted funds for community based collaborative projects with locally driven utilization plans for the material removed. This funding used to be in the Economic Action Program.
- Appropriate money for capacity building programs in local communities. This funding used to be in the Economic Action Program.
- Develop outcome based performance measures that focus achievements on ecological conditions, developing collaborative partnerships, and creation of rural jobs.
- Increase Forest Service and BLM funding for priority landscape forest restoration projects as an investment in future reductions in fire fighting costs, resource losses, and carbon emissions.
- Refine the scope of categorical exclusions to focus on restoration efforts for priority needs.
- Consider granting authority to the Forest Service and BLM to enter into longer term commitments – beyond 10 years – to supply biomass. Congress should make stewardship contract authority permanent and change the maximum contract length to 20 years.
- Find ways to assist rural power cooperatives and others to upgrade infrastructure through targeted tax incentives and loans.
- Find ways to create targeted incentives for co-generation, and upgrading of milling and extraction technologies to maximize high-value use of small diameter trees.
- Change federal law to allow county revenue sharing from stewardship contracts.
- Repeal the recently enacted federal law that prohibits bioenergy producers from using biomass tax incentive credits from wood fiber from federal lands.

## **National Recommendation #2**

**Congress must increase funding for forestland management activities.** Stable funding is needed to meet long-term public land management goals. For decades the forests of the Pacific Northwest have generated wealth for the nation. For the health of the nation, environment, and economy, we need to reinvest in the restoration of forest ecosystems and human communities.

### ***Justification***

There is a severe lack of funding for non fire suppression forest management at the federal agencies. Funding is not adequate or appropriately allocated to achieve forest management objectives. A stable funding source is necessary to achieve long-term management goals.

Current funding is insufficient to provide basic stewardship of the land and its resources, and to offer a high level of environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits. Declining budgets limit the agencies' ability to maintain staff with the expertise required to conduct the services needed to accomplish forest management objectives. For example: an increase in fire suppression funding has come at the expense of preparedness, fuel reduction and all non-fire programs. The proportion of fire suppression funds in the Forest Service budget was 13% in 1991; it is 45% in 2007, while the total budget for land management activities has decreased. This results in insufficient funding for environmental assessment and monitoring of aquatic ecosystems, wildlife habitat restoration, invasive species management, range management, facilities and access maintenance, road maintenance and decommissioning and recreation management.

In particular, funding, incentives and structural support are needed to prepare and execute a strategic effort to comprehensively address the negative environmental impacts from the transportation system on federal forests. The legacy road network including: failing culverts, inadequate stream crossings, and improperly designed roads, are aging and in need of attention. A new system is needed to fund a permanent, all-weather road system.

Additional funding for land management activities must be found through a combination of appropriations, revenue generation, and increased efficiencies. Stable funding is needed to meet long-term public land management goals. For decades the forests of the Pacific Northwest have generated wealth for the nation. For the health of the nation, environment, and economy, we need to reinvest in the restoration of forest ecosystems and human communities.

### ***Actions***

- Fire suppression budgets should be taken "Off-Line" and out of the Forest Service budget.

- Investments in restoration-based hazardous fuels reduction should be made to reduce long-term fire suppression costs. Improvements to the current system include:
  - Set new goals for restoration-based hazardous fuels reduction based on “initial treatments” and “maintenance activities.” There is a tension between fuels reduction targets and accomplishments. If targets are not met then funding is lost. This tends to concentrate treatments where they are easily achieved rather than where they are most effective at reducing fire hazards
  - Changes to the accountability measurement standards for fuel reduction should be made including:
    - Separating maintenance accomplishments from initial treatments and displaying each activity separately.
    - Initial treatments should not be counted as “accomplished” until a reduction in condition class is achieved.
  - NEPA and its implementing regulation can be as much as 40% of project costs. Categorical exclusions should be developed for vegetation “maintenance activities” to lower the costs of NEPA compliance.
  - Restoration-based hazardous fuel reduction projects should be designed to generate revenue.
  - Streamline all Vegetation Management requirements in the Forest Service Manual and Handbook for “forest health” activities.
- Further examine internal business operations policy to identify cost saving changes. Potential items include:
  - Reducing overhead costs from the current 30%.
  - Continue decommissioning of unneeded administrative facilities (i.e., buildings, etc.).
  - Contracting financial and human resource management to another agency or combining services with another agency.
  - Either eliminating or combining with other agencies the following detached units:
    - Inventory and Monitoring Institute
    - Corporate databases
    - Geospatial Services & Technology Center including the Remote Sensing Applications Center
    - Wildlife and Fish and Aquatic Ecology Units
    - National Riparian Service Team
- Appropriate funds to identify road related water quality problems at the local level. Goals should include:
  - Reducing the overall road network by limiting the construction of temporary or permanent new roads, while decommissioning and removing legacy roads.
  - Investing in improved fish passage and stream crossings to eliminate and minimize negative hydrologic effects.

- Create a new funding system to maintain a permanent, all-weather road system for needed uses. Federal agencies should consider incentives, structural adjustments and receipts from resource products for road maintenance and decommissioning.
  - Include an assessment across all budgets (i.e., fire suppression, recreation and other non-timber projects) to support maintenance of key road systems.
  - Dedicate the fees charged for road use to local maintenance.
  - Direct federal agencies to work with state, local and tribal governments to address the legacy road system through contracting with these local staff to accomplish the priority objectives.

