

## **Federal Forest Advisory Committee - Potential Solutions**

### **1.0 Background**

The Federal Forest Advisory Committee (FFAC) was directed by the Board of Forestry (BOF) and the Governor to develop a set of recommendations 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. The Governor has asked the Board to be bold, be open, and keep your eye on the big picture.

**Goal:** Identify legal/policy changes and new initiatives that could be used to implement the suggestions from the committee toward achieving the FFAC vision.

**Problem:** If the Guidance Document contains platitudes, not action items, it will sit on the shelf and the recommended changes will not be implemented.

### **1.1 FFAC Vision Statement**

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.

### **1.2 Goal Statements (taken from earlier FFAC document)**

#### **Ecosystem**

1. Forest and rangeland ecosystems are protected, restored, and managed for a full range of sustainable benefits, including wood, water quality and quantity, wildlife, fish, recreation, wilderness, grazing, human health, and aesthetic values. Protection of soil and water resources provides a foundation to sustain the land's capacity to absorb, store, and distribute quality water and soil productivity. Diverse native forest and rangeland types are maintained, in the absence of non-native and invasive species, to provide for healthy populations of native fish and wildlife species.
2. Active, sustainable management is employed to provide a healthy, diverse and resilient forest ecosystem that can accommodate disturbances from human activities and natural agents such as fire and insects. The success and failure of management activities are actively monitored, measured, and reported. Management activities are modified as needed based on monitoring and other relevant information.
3. New and better science is actively used to measure, anticipate, and mitigate the effects of climate changes on the management of forests. Adaptive management is

used to mitigate the potential effects of climate change on ecosystems and the values they provide.

4. Wildland fire management, prescribed fire, and a range of mechanical treatments are used in a coordinated, cost-effective and prioritized system to improve forest health, provide healthy, diverse ecosystems, and protect public health and property.

### **Social**

5. While national in scope, federal forestlands will respond, to the extent possible, to site specific variations and community based management principles taking into consideration both urban and rural needs and priorities. Management will provide opportunities for people to realize their material, spiritual and recreational values and relationships with the forest.

### **Economic**

6. Federal forestlands provide a predictable, sustainable supply of the full suite of forest products now and into the future. Federal forest policy contributes to the creation of stable jobs and economic well-being for communities across the State. Local counties are able to share the revenues from economic outputs over the long-term.
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## **2.0 Problem Statements/Potential Solutions**

### **2.1 Natural Processes:**

Natural processes have been disrupted in Oregon forests. Problems are most extreme in the dry forest types where unprecedented landscape scale forest health problems are resulting in the loss of key ecological components. Hydrologic regimes have been altered 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 and identifying the impacts is challenging. An integrated approach to forest restoration and fuels management that considers historic conditions, natural hydrology and adequate streamflows, fish and wildlife conservation, natural fire intervals, and silvicultural techniques is necessary to achieve long term management goals.

**(The following problems and potential solutions were identified at the FFAC meeting on September 7, 2007.)**

2.11.

**Issue/ impediment** – Public perception and understanding about natural resource management

**Cause of the issue** –

- There is a paradigm shift occurring in forest management – a change from managing based on concepts of a static ecosystem to management systems based on a dynamic ecosystem with large scale disturbances (e.g., landslides providing beneficial large wood to streams).

- Legal constraints (i.e., NEPA, ESA, CWA) continue to focus management on small scale, static approaches, rather than large projects that incorporate dynamic ecosystem processes, and the current rewards systems support minimizing disturbances and conflicts.

**Background Information –**

- Lack of public understanding about dynamic natural processes

**Desired outcome –**

- Increased public acceptance of dynamism and risk through education
- Large scale wildfire is not socially acceptable everywhere. Mimic fire with thinning regime in some areas.
- Remove legal constraints (e.g., G. Reeves suggestions for salmon)
  - Lawsuits – reduce numbers without jeopardizing rights to participate
  - Look at issues being litigated to understand problems
- Provide supervisory level with ability to make decisions and take risks
- Leadership for FFAC – stay engaged for action on the ground
- Public info about FFAC work and recommendations (press reports, media) – once reach consensus
- Public perception and understanding about natural resource management
  - Public discourse about state of forests (builds trust)
  - Cultivate broader public trust
  - Incorporate concepts of dynamic ecosystems into agency missions and cultures

**Solution to address the issue –**

- Create clear goals for the use of dynamic processes in land management plans and regulatory agency implementation plans.
- Commission a study to review the litigation against the federal agencies. Determine which issues are driving the litigation and whether there is a pattern to the court rulings against the agencies.
  - What are the barriers to active management?
  - What can we do to change them?

**How the solution will lead to desired outcome –**

**Who should implement –**

- Federal leadership – need model (discuss CO, AZ, and MT approaches at December meeting)

**Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –**

## 2.12

**Issue/ impediment** – Create and act on learning opportunities

**Cause of the issue** – Many forest issues are complex and the outcomes of treatments may be uncertain. Selecting any single alternative, when there are differences of opinion over treatment effectiveness, can cause a lack of trust among constituent groups.

**Background Information -**

Many forest issues contain a degree of uncertainty and risk associated with taking any course of action. These risks often lead to disagreements about how the land should be managed and can generate conflicts resulting in appeals and lawsuits. “Options forestry” is a systematic approach that includes a strict experimental design to develop multiple treatments and test competing ideas about how to achieve a single goal. Over time the treatments are assessed to determine how well they have performed and whether there are unintended consequences. Examples of issues where this technique would be of benefit include post-fire management and old-growth management.

**Desired outcome** – Uncertainty and risk should be systematically addressed in major decisions. Greater use of “Options forestry”<sup>1</sup> should be employed to expand the range of alternatives selected in controversial EIS’s.

**Solution to address the issue** –

- Expand the range of management options and actions selected in controversial Environmental Impact Statements
  - The Five Rivers Project provides an example where multiple strategies, proposed by different constituent groups, were selected as part of an alternative.

**How the solution will lead to desired outcome** –

- Selecting and testing multiple outcomes will help improve the scientific understanding of how to achieve land management goals.
- Openly admitting and systematically addressing uncertainty will help to build trust.

**Who should implement** –

**Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks** –

## 2.13

(Combined with 2.12 and 2.20)

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<sup>1</sup> Bormann, B.T.; Kiester, A.R. 2004. *Options forestry: acting on uncertainty*. Journal of Forestry.

## 2.14

**Issue/ impediment** – Watershed scale planning – create desired future conditions addressing economic, social, and environmental values.

**Cause of the issue** –

**Background Information** –

- Sufficient current reserves and/or restorable area must exist in a given watershed for a flexible standard to apply.
- Harvests must be concentrated in one area within the watershed (such as a single subwatershed).
- Rotation lengths must approximate natural fire return intervals to allow ecosystem and water quality (WQ) recovery.
- Guarantees must be in place that harvested and replanted subwatersheds would be consistently meeting WQS and beneficial use requirements before any other subwatersheds within that same watershed could be extensively impacted.
- Current guidance focuses on protection of the status quo as compared to recognition that our ecosystems are adapted to disturbance. Need recognition that systems are not static and that big events shape the aquatic landscape (increase productivity) for years to come.

**Desired outcome** –

- Manage based on what landscape can do (Coho example) – match ecological ability of land to expectations
- Eliminate admin boundaries for land management – match to landscape and forest types
- Water storage (where?)
- Water management to enhance snow pack (consistent with fuels reduction)
- Actions taken at a scale which address current depletion of surface and ground water due to amount of vegetation exceeding natural range of variation

**Solution to address the issue** –

Federal land management agencies need to better integrate into existing collaborative processes for landscape-scale watershed assessments and innovative approaches to forest management across land uses and ownerships.

- Identify, evaluate and participate in current collaborative processes, policy frameworks and scientific processes related to landscape management;
- Development of IMAP methodology should be a priority.
- Apply watershed assessment protocols consistent with watershed assessment protocols developed by OWEB
- Identify research needs, regulatory and non-regulatory policies, and technical methods to support landscape-scale approaches; and
- Improve cooperative approaches and partnerships among local, state and federal governments, and private landowners.

- Strengthen involvement in “Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds” support for basin and watershed-scale assessment, collaboration, and restoration by linking federal actions to basin and watershed priorities established by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB).
- Use these processes to assess opportunities for water storage and enhanced water management.
- The federal agencies should become strong partners in the Watershed Research Cooperative paired watershed studies to establish cause and affect relationships among physical and biological parameters.

**How the solution will lead to desired outcome –**

**Who should implement –**

**Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –**

2.15

**Issue/ impediment** – New research (pilot projects) with CWA exemptions to look for new solutions

**Cause of the issue** –

**Background Information** –

A “static perspective” dominates the existing policy frameworks under which "protection" is applied under federal regulatory and land management programs. This needs to be changed to a “dynamic ecosystem” perspective that avoids disturbance prevention and utilizes the inevitable disturbance as a basis for management and as an opportunity to become more effective and efficient.

**Desired outcome** –

- Change standards without changing laws
  - Admin rules and procedures – if problem let's say so
- Manage for disturbance and recognize variability (riparian buffers in right place for resiliency and positive recovery)

**Solution to address the issue** –

- EPA should change its regional temperature guidance to reflect knowledge of dynamic ecosystem processes.
- DEQ should create standards that reflects knowledge of dynamic ecosystem processes and that are applied based upon disturbance and resultant variability of conditions across the landscape. (See discussion of “options forestry.”)

**How the solution will lead to desired outcome –**

**Who should implement –**

**Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –**

**The following problems and potential solutions were identified at the FFAC meeting on October 15, 2007.**

2.16

(Combined with 2.20)

2.17

(Moved to section 2.2, continue to discuss options under the Timber harvest/infrastructure issue)

2.18

**Issue/ impediment** – Federal forestland road networks are aging and in need of rehabilitation

**Cause of the issue** –

- For a number of decades, the Forest Service had as a primary mission the production of timber. The Forest Service developed a transportation system to support that mission.
- Around 1990, the paradigm for the Forest Service shifted and the timber program was reduced, however the transportation system remained.

**Background Information** –

- There will always be a need for and a demand for a transportation system on the federal lands. The primary users of the transportation system will change, but the need for one will not go away.
  - Forest managers want access.
  - Recreation.
  - Forest health/biomass/fuel program.
  - Fire suppression.
- Activities that don't generate revenue still depend on road network (e.g., fire suppression)
- In landslide prone terrain the incidence of landslides from roads increases drastically.
- Road surfaces and road ditches are sources of surface erosion.
- Where the roads are connected to streams, this is point of direct entry for sediment to the streams.
- Roads may effect watershed hydrology and increase peak flows.

**Desired outcome** –

The practice of building and maintaining roads has improved drastically in recent decades, but many roads are still in need of improvements. Goals include:

- Reducing road densities and improving road locations.
- Reducing road/stream connectivity.
- Increasing fish passage and debris passage in stream crossing culverts.
- Improved spacing of drainage relief structures.

**Solution to address the issue –**

- As part of the land management planning process, federal agencies should assess fish passage, stream crossing, and road location problems and develop road maintenance and abandonment plans.
  - Strengthen involvement in the “Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds” and support for basin and watershed-scale assessment.
- Develop a new system to fund roads.
  - Budget separately for a “key” or administrative road system that is permanent and all weather.
  - Invest in roads for firefighting up front rather than have firelines/temp. roads built while fighting fire
  - Increase funding and trained personnel devoted to improving the road system.
  - Non-timber projects, (i.e. fire suppression, fuels/biomass projects, recreation, and others) need to have an explicit budget component to support the transportation system.
- Develop a “new paradigm” that allows the use of temporary roads for projects – local projects road systems that may or may not be all weather but are temporary and removed after the project is completed, i.e. no pipes.

**How the solution will lead to desired outcome –**

**Who should implement –**

**Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –**

2.19

**Issue/ impediment** – Much of Oregon’s federal forests are over-stocked and experiencing forest insect pest epidemics. During epidemics, widespread tree mortality alters the forest ecosystem and makes it more susceptible to large scale wildfires.

**Cause of the issue –**

- Overstocked forest stands are more susceptible to damage from insects. Crowded trees lack the water and vigor to fend off insects like bark beetles.

**Background Information –**

**Desired outcome –**

- Manage for pests and maintain ecosystem function
- No single answer – must be flexible and recommendations need to provide for flexibility
  - Bark beetles – stand density, remove or treat recently dead or dying trees, creating woody debris
  - Defoliators – fire suppression; reduce abundance of fir on warm, dry sites
- Trust issues – who's doing monitoring and assessing, who needs to be involved, and what resources are needed
- Learn as we go

**Solution to address the issue –**

- Clearly define and articulate management objectives – what is the mission(s)?
- Develop management plans that address the public-private interface
  - potential for conflicts, insects don't respect boundaries, management on public lands affects forest insect pests on neighboring lands
  - Lessons learned on private land will inform federal agencies and they should be encouraged to partner
- Maintain and enhance efforts to prevent new introductions of non-native insect pests and eradicate those that occur
  - Accountability for new introductions
- Revise NEPA process to allow more timely management actions
  - For example, harvesting windthrown or fire-damaged trees to prevent bark beetle outbreaks
- Provide resources for treating large areas
  - Reducing fire hazard
  - Treat overstocked stands

**How the solution will lead to desired outcome –****Who should implement –****Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –**

**The following problems and potential solutions were identified at the FFAC meeting on May 15, 2007.**

**Issue/ impediment** – Many of the dry forest types in Oregon are overly-dense, experiencing extensive insect outbreaks, and in danger of losing key ecological components to wildfire. Large areas of overstocked juniper woodlands also need treatment to limit the spread of juniper and restore healthy range conditions.

**Cause of the issue** –

- Natural processes, especially fire, have been disrupted in the forests of Oregon.
- Lack of trust on issues such as thinning in older forests and roadless areas.
- Inability to treat a large enough area of forest to address the issue.
- The cost of planning and developing an EIS for single projects prohibits addressing large areas of the forest.
- The priorities do not exist to effectively allocate resources to reduce the landscape scale threats.
- The high per acre treatment costs.

**Background Information** –

- When providing policy recommendations, make sure to consider the past forest management and their continued impact
- When managing forest land, it is important to plan and provide a range of management options for future decision makers. The broader the range of structure and age classes, the more options for future management choices.
- Hazardous fuels treatments are focused on the wildland urban interface, which is inadequately described (too limiting). Recognize that fire can and does move rapidly across large areas when vegetation and weather conditions favor such movement. A watershed/landscape approach is needed, which may also help deal with perceived disparate treatment between affluent developments and small rural communities.
- Hazardous fuels treatments may be “too light” because of political expediency.
- Too much money is spent reactively on fire suppression – need more focus on proactive pre-treatment.

**Desired outcome** –

- Establish clear management policies and goals for fire-adapted forests that include policies and goals related to forest stand type, fuel conditions and wildfire risk management.
- The policies should emphasize healthy stand conditions (create stand structure and composition which will reduce the susceptibility to insects and disease and catastrophic fires) including fuel treatment, rather than fire suppression.
- The fire suppression program needs to be better integrated into the land management program.

- Land management options should mimic natural fire when possible. A variety of tools including prescribed fire, mechanical treatments, and natural fire should be used to reduce fuel loadings based on the purpose of the land. Address all ownerships and management categories including wilderness and roadless areas using appropriate treatment tools for each setting.
- The task force should adopt the Governor's Eastside Forest Advisory Panel's 2002 11-point strategy for eastern Oregon forests as a "Code of Collaboration and Cooperation for Eastern Oregon Forest and Community Health".
- Scale – to return to range of natural variability
- Do something on the ground
- Maintain institutional capacity to manage land
- Landscape level treatment of juniper
- Funding mechanisms to ensure right treatment at right place with right motivations
- Activities need to create value
- Accounting methods need to recognize non-market values (e.g., forest health)
- Adaptive management – to learn from experience – monitoring has an upfront cost

**Solution to address the issue –**

- Create a statewide task force to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to effectively improve the forest health related problems in Oregon.
  - Develop a fuels management and stocking reduction strategy with the goal of identifying and prioritizing treatment opportunities across the landscape and across ownership boundaries. Development of performance measures to track accomplishments.
  - Coordinate with the National Fire Plan
- In coordination with the comprehensive fuels reduction strategy (#1 above), develop a programmatic EIS to cover fuels treatments in dry forest types. Clearly define and differentiate analysis that will be done at the statewide level and project level.
  - Tier EA's to reduce planning costs and expedite larger scale treatments.
  - Develop templates to expedite completion of project-level EA's.
  - Examine history of successful and unsuccessful EIS' and EA's (e.g., those that are appealed vs. not appealed, those that win appeals/lawsuits vs. those that lose) to identify key features of the process that lead to greater chance of success and more rapid approval of projects.
  - Analyze the impact of wildfire – there is no-no action alternative
- Sponsor Community Solutions projects (similar to the Lakeview and CROP Projects) to prioritize treatments and attract investments at the local level. The statewide strategy should be detailed out in local to mid-scale (up to 1 million

acres) treatment plans that address the unique characteristics and variety of landscape conditions.

- Federal land management agencies should develop short-term (2-5 year) and longer-term (10-20 year) treatment plans based on priorities developed at the landscape scale and initiate treatments in places where a collaborative process has preliminarily identified and prioritized landscape attributes at risk (#1 above).
- Treatment plans should consider site characteristics, the presence of sensitive ecological features such as endangered species or old-growth, and potential impacts to air and water quality.
- Fire-shed assessments should be done to design the pattern of treatments across the landscape to interrupt fire spread and get the maximum reduction of fire risk with minimum treatment of the landscape.
- Identify a coordinated strategy to provide a long-term stable, sustainable supply of small diameter material from multiple sources on public and private lands.

**How the solution will lead to desired outcome –**

**Who should implement –**

Task force sponsored by the Governor

- Coordinate with the National Fire Plan and the State of Washington Programmatic EIS sponsored by Forest Service Region 6 and Oregon BLM. State and federal agencies should develop short and long-term treatment plans

**Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –**

- Acres of condition class 2 and 3 returned to condition class 1.
- Total area of condition class 2 and 3.

**(Issues/Problems to be discussed at future FFAC Meetings.)****2.2 Reduced Timber Harvest**

Reduced timber harvest from federal forestlands has resulted in diminished forest industry infrastructure with unintended economic and social losses to rural communities.

## 2.21

**Issue/ impediment** – Biomass**Cause of the issue** –

- Biomass – need certainty of supply to make infrastructure investments
- Difficult to project social perspective and needs to 20 years

**Background Information** –

- Excess amount of juniper that could be used for biomass (high BTU value)

**Desired outcome** –

- Maximize utility of juniper (biomass) to get back to natural range of variability
  - **Barriers:** transportation costs, investors want/need 20 year guaranty of supply
  - Focus on – removal protocol/certification to make trade-offs acceptable

**Solution to address the issue** –

- Co-locate biomass facility with commercial for co-generation  
(Targeted incentives? Tax breaks?)
- Unequal subsidies for alternative energy and particularly biomass  
(Changing legislation? Which bill?)
- Focus on minimizing risk of investment  
(Government guaranteed loan program?)
- Ability for Forest Service to enter into longer term commitments beyond 10 years  
(Change to stewardship contract authority?)  
(Coordinated offerings within a region?)

**How the solution will lead to desired outcome** –**Who should implement** –

- Forest service can provide supply at specific price to provide certainty for biomass investment

- Recommend: Investment by OWEB to remove juniper throughout state following protocol for research and monitoring and partnering with federal agencies (check with Russ for language)

**Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –**

**2.3 Older Forests**

The desired amount of older forests on federal forestlands needs to be established and protected as a component of sustainable forest management. Habitat types should provide for wildlife diversity. 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

**2.4 Lack of Effective Processes**

Federal, state, local, and tribal governments lack an effective process to coordinate policy decisions and achieve landscape scale objectives.

**2.5 Lack of Adequate Funding**

Funding is not adequate or appropriately allocated to achieve land management objectives on federal lands. A stable funding source is necessary to achieve long-term management goals.