

## MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS

1. **Funding is inadequate to achieve land management objectives on federal lands. A stable funding source is necessary to achieve long-term management goals.**

There is a severe lack of funding for the federal land management agencies. 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 staffing levels of the past, resulting fewer employees to accomplish objectives. 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 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.

2. **The legal framework governing federal forestlands contains conflicting goals and provides little direction on how to balance the production of multiple resources.**

A clear and widely shared purpose is lacking for federal forestlands. Federal forestlands are managed under a complex set of statutes (NFMA, FLPMA, NEPA, ESA, CWA, etc.) that sometimes have conflicting goals. While NFMA and FLPMA provide the legal framework for balancing the production of multiple resources, consistent with the regulatory framework in other laws, the main issue is a clash of public values, as reflected in the laws and refined through court opinions. Conflicting public values have been expressed in lawsuits, which have contributed to increased paperwork, staff time, litigation, and public frustration and lack of trust. Agency and public focus often revolves around process more than desired outcomes. Current laws and rules also do not require analysis of the “balance of harms” that will occur if a project is not implemented. i.e., analyze the impacts of an action vs. no action; however, neither do they prohibit this analysis.

3. **Natural processes have been disrupted in the dry forest types of Oregon. The forests are over-stocked, experiencing massive forest health problems, and in danger of losing key ecological components to wildfire.**

Natural processes on Oregon's federal forests have been modified by a number of factors. For example, fire suppression and silvicultural practices on some federal forestlands have modified fire regimes and behavior producing changes in vegetative conditions (including species composition, stand density, and a large tree component). Growth has dramatically exceeded removals on federal lands during the past decade causing a build up of fiber across the landscape. High tree mortality and

fuels build-ups have altered how wildfire, insects, disease and invasive species interact with forests, ultimately modifying forest resiliency. Without an increase in active management these conditions will result in impacts to wildlife habitat, water quality, private timber investments, structures in the wildland-urban interface, and public impacts from smoke<sup>1</sup>.

**4. Climate change combined with wildfire may cause wholesale conversions of some habitat types.**

Climate change may be affecting forest and hydrological conditions in Oregon. If trends continue, changes from dry temperate forests to grasslands, moist forests to dry woodlands, and high-severity fires may eliminate entire forest types. This type of change would increase risks of species extinction, and reduce economic and social values derived from the forest. Management decisions will determine if federal forests will serve as net carbon sinks or carbon sources.

**5. The economic and social benefits produced by federal forests are below their potential. Critical family wage jobs have been lost and some rural communities in Oregon are suffering. Private forestlands are being converted to non-forest uses.**

Timber harvest on federal lands in Oregon has dropped 80 percent in the last 20 years. Oregon is beginning to lose the local capacity, markets and workforce needed to support a viable forest products industry and to provide forest protection and restoration services. Some sawmills in western Oregon are currently being supported by sawlogs imported from Washington, while the eastern Oregon timber industry has concerns about losing infrastructure in the future. Once the infrastructure is gone, it will be difficult to rebuild. This may be contributing to private forestlands being converted to non-forest cover and land uses. Oregon is at a crossroads: do we attempt to increase the economic diversity in many forest-based Oregon communities with recreation-based jobs, restoration jobs and non-commodity values – including jobs associated with tourism, fuels work, prescribed fire, weed control, road removal, erosion control, and instream habitat improvements - or do we increase federal timber harvest to help maintain the timber industry infrastructure and reduce the conversion of private forestlands to other uses? It is important to note that forest restoration, recreation and other non-commodity work, while clearly needed, depend on investments that do not compete well in Federal, State or corporate budgets. There is a mis-match among ecological/social need, public/political rhetoric, and the hard realities of budgets.

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<sup>1</sup> “Active management” means the application of practices through planning and design, over time and across the landscape, to achieve site-specific forest resource goals. Active management uses an integrated, science-based approach that promotes the compatibility of most forest uses and resources over time and across the landscape. “Active management” should not be equated with “intensive timber management.” Instead, it refers to taking proactive steps to achieve whatever management objectives have been established for a forest site. [Based on the *Forestry Program for Oregon* and OAR 629-035-000 (1).]

6. **Water quality and quantity may be insufficient to protect important uses in the future.**

Although water quality on Oregon forestlands is generally higher than on non-forested lands, in some forested areas on federal lands water quality is insufficient to protect beneficial uses, such as drinking water, fish and aquatic life, recreation, and irrigation, although water quality can also be impacted by grazing, mining, and recreation. Riparian vegetation, important for many functions, is in poor condition in some areas. Salmon and other aquatic life are especially vulnerable to temperature, sedimentation and toxic pollutants; federal forestlands often provide key refugia for at-risk fish species. The current backlog in road maintenance and road closures may be increasing sediment production and affecting peak flows. The ability to construct reservoirs on state or federal lands is limited. Oregon lacks an open dialogue with water users whose water sources are on federal forestlands and whose conveyance systems cross forestlands. In addition, there is not a comprehensive watershed restoration priority action plan that integrates the actions of all landowners.

7. **The amount and quality of some forest habitats are insufficient to provide for some wildlife species.**

Oregon lacks a comprehensive policy to ensure that biological diversity goals are being met through the combined management objectives of Oregon's public and private landowners. While many Oregon forests have been fragmented by roads and timber harvesting, Wilderness Areas and Inventoried Roadless Areas on National Forest lands comprise 27% of all NFS lands in the state (**need BLM figures**). They continue to provide valuable habitats for wildlife species that use contiguous blocks of interior forest. Some types of forest habitats on federal forestlands are in poor condition. The dense young plantations on the west side of Oregon are resulting in declining forage for deer and elk and in some areas a lack of dead wood for dependent wildlife. On the east side, there is a lack of large woody debris and wildlife habitat associated with late and old forest structural stages and old forest abundance on the landscape. Treating dry-site, high fire regime forests should be done with wildlife habitat needs in mind.

8. **The amount of late successional forest is below historic levels.**

Late successional habitat on federal forestlands provides for older forest associates and threatened species. Public values and congressional intent need to be clarified to determine how much late-successional forest is wanted, given the conflicting demands of humans and wildlife on the landscape.

**9. Decisions about forest outputs/outcomes should be made in a global context.**

Oregon's forests are important to the global environment, economy, and society. Both the federal government and Oregonians have not fully considered the impact of their decisions regarding federal land management at local, state, national, and international levels. As a result, environmental challenges and economic opportunities have been exported to other nations.

**10. Federal, state, and local governments lack a process to coordinate policy decisions and achieve landscape scale objectives.**

The Federal land management agencies are required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the National Forest Management Act to coordinate their activities with and/or to be consistent with state and local government planning activities. Historically there has been little if any coordination or consistency in Federal land management decisions other than to request comments from the agencies during the public comment period. As a result the concerns of the local governments in the communities that are most affected by the management of Federal forests have been afforded the same status of comments originating from communities far removed from the Federal forest. County and City elected officials' concerns relative to forest health, public safety, economic and other matters of county or city concern are therefore not afforded the consistency or coordination required by Federal land management statutes or State law. The discretionary actions relating to Federal lands must be fully coordinated between Federal, state and local governments through more extensive and true partnership relationship.