

Draft Board Work Plan: Assessing and revising the State Forests planning, decision making, and review framework.

Introduction

The framework for State Forests management planning, decision making, and review has evolved over the past 2 decades. The adoption of performance measure targets, and the Board interest in a more timely, systematic and transparent review process, necessitates a review and revision of this framework.

Historical Context

Prior to the adoption of the Elliott State Forest management Plan (FMP) in 1995, State Forest Management plans were very limited in scope, developed internally, and were developed with limited public process. They addressed basic statutory requirements and were approved by the State Forester. Periodic review of these plans was informal, limited in scope, and done internally.

In contrast, the FMPs developed and approved in 2001 for NW and SW Oregon State Forests:

- Addressed many resources;
- Were developed with involvement and review of numerous technical specialists within and external to ODF, and had an extensive public involvement process;
- Include an “adaptive management process” ;
- Were approved by the Board of Forestry, and were the first State Forests plan to be adopted in Oregon administrative rule (OAR).

Current Issues

In March of 2007, the Board approved a set of performance measures that will serve as a means of evaluating whether management plans result in outcomes that meet “Greatest Permanent Value” (GPV) as defined in OAR. The adoption of performance measures is a new component of forest management planning and decision making, and thus it is necessary to integrate the performance measures into the current framework. In addition, the Board has expressed an interest in a more transparent process to review and adjust the performance measures and the management plans over time.

Board products

- A State Forests planning, decision making, and review framework that identifies and describes :
 - The relationship and integration of the major components of State Forests planning (ex: performance measures, management plans);
 - The decision making authorities associated with the various planning components; and
 - The process for the review and adjustment of performance measures and plans.
- The resulting framework may be articulated in Board policy form and/or revisions to existing OARs.

Some criteria for success include creating a framework that:

- Describes the (biennial) Board performance measure review and integrates the program adaptive management process;
- Allows for an evaluation and adjustment of the performance measures and management plans to occur in a timely, transparent, and predictable way;
- Clearly defines decision making authorities and levels associated with the review of both performance measure and program plans;
- Is legally sound and defensible, and also provides administrative flexibility so that there is a good balance between stability and responsiveness.

Research and Information needed / Stakeholder and public involvement

- Staff will develop a background paper for the Board on past and current State Forests planning, decision making, and review processes. In addition, initial issues will be identified to be further developed in the issue paper phase of the project.
- Staff will develop an issue paper for the Board that identifies possible alternative approaches and their implications.
- If requested, staff will develop a recommendation on an approach for Board of Forestry consideration.
- Stakeholder involvement will primarily be through Board meeting participation and review of Board materials. Staff will develop a summary of feedback received from stakeholders at Board meetings. If and when adjustments or additions are needed to OARs, a formal rule making process with the associated public process would be undertaken.

Timeframes w/Milestones

January 2008 – Information and Discussion – Work plan

Staff will present a work plan associated with the revision of the framework. The Board will review and comment on the work plan, and provide guidance for any revisions to the process.

March 2008 meeting- Information and Discussion - Background Paper

Staff will present a background paper on past and current State Forests planning, decision making, and review processes. Staff will also identify initial issues associated with the development of the framework. These issues, and any identified by the Board, will be further developed in the issue paper phase of the project. The Board will review the background paper and provide comments and guidance on the development of the issue paper.

June 2008 meeting— Information and Discussion - Issue paper, alternatives

Staff will present an issue paper which outlines several alternative approaches and their implications for constructing the revised framework. The Board will provide feedback on the issue paper and alternatives. They may request additional information and/or may request that the department return to the Board with a recommendation on a preferred approach.

September or November 2008 – Board Decision

Depending on the degree of Board convergence on a preferred alternative, the Board may decide on a preferred approach, and direct the program to begin an administrative rule process revision, if necessary. If divergent views remain, additional discussion will occur on the remaining issues.

Resources Required

Staff resources are being re-directed to cover this topic. Staff time will be needed to develop the background and issues/alternatives paper, summarize feedback from stakeholders, and prepare presentations and discussion points for the Board. Additional staff time will be needed if decisions result in the need for administrative rule revisions.

Monitoring Achievement of this Objective

These monitoring questions are related to the criteria for success noted above. The Board and program may develop evaluation questions to track success of the framework over time.

Possible questions include:

- Is the Board able to have meaningful discussions about management plan performance, and how/whether Greatest Permanent Value is being achieved?
- Is the Board confident in the review and decision process? Do they use the framework as a means of addressing stakeholder issues, or are parallel or substitute processes developed?
- Are public input/review points clearly identified and meaningful?
- Is the planning framework legally defensible?
- Is the review and decision making process clear to the Board, the Department, and stakeholders – are these parties able to describe the process and its elements?
- When/if adjustments are made to performance measures and/or forest management plans is it clear why they are made? Are changes made in a timely manner?
- Are the roles of science and values understood and articulated in the implementation of the framework?
- Is the time spent by the Board on State Forests reviews manageable and efficient? Are Board decisions made within a reasonable time frame?