

Agenda Item No:	6
Title and # of Issue:	Board of Forestry Private Forests Work Plan Development
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SUMMARY

This agenda item provides an updated draft of the Private Forests work plan. The draft contains subject matter and direction for Board review related to current and future trends for Oregon's private forests, current statutory and Board policy specific to private forests, and a recommended approach for moving forward on Board clarification and prioritization of private forestland policies towards achieving forest sustainability in Oregon (Attachment 1). The Department recommends Board approval of the draft work plan, contingent upon any amendments requested as a result of Board discussion.

CONTEXT

At the June 2008 Board meeting, the Board directed the Department to revise the Forest Regulation work plan into the Private Forest work plan, in an interactive process with Board feedback. At the September 2008 meeting, the Department presented an outline and received Board feedback to incorporate into the work plan. Since that meeting, the Board work plan format has been restructured and reformatted, incorporating feedback from the work plan review conducted by a Board subcommittee.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

In developing the draft work plan the Department has incorporated feedback from the Board work plan review subcommittee in the following ways:

- The work plan and the Board's work therein focuses on the "primary board issue".
- The "primary board issue" for private forests involves Board policy review and direction for Oregon's private forestlands, with clear linkages-to and integration-with the 2011 *Forestry Program for Oregon* revision process.
- "Intermediate board issues" include tasks carried out principally at a staff level, utilizing current Board policy and direction to-date. These issues are still anticipated to require Board attention for implementation, but the policy basis of the work is considered to be in place.
- Intermediate board issues include the disposition/evolution of issues in the previous "forest regulation" work plan.

The Primary Board Issue of this work plan is the following:

How will the Board clarify current Private Forests program policy governance—at the statutory level, Forestry Program for Oregon strategic planning level, or otherwise—to best address the current and emerging challenges on private forestlands in order to fully realize the Forestry Program for Oregon vision of sustainable forest management across all Oregon's forestlands? What, if any, changes to program funding sources and/or mechanisms are needed in order to best ensure desired outcomes are achieved?

The Oregon Department of Forestry provides resource protection and landowner assistance services on Oregon's 10.7 million acres (35 percent of Oregon's forest land) under private forest ownership. Private forest landowners range from companies with thousands of acres to families with small tracts of land. Services provided by the Department within the Private Forest program include landowner assistance, forest and stream health protection and enhancement, urban and community forest assistance, enforcement of forest management laws, research and monitoring, and incentive programs. Oregon's privately owned forests are highly diverse, including large industrial ownerships, family woodlands of many sizes, and treescapes in cities, suburbs and rural residential areas. They provide values for all Oregonians, including watershed protection, economic activity, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation.

Since the Department of Forestry was founded in 1911, Oregon has seen a continuous evolution of the primary challenges to maintaining healthy, working forest on both private and public forestland. At the turn of the last century wildfire was the greatest threat to forest sustainability, and the Department's primary mission was—and is today—to address this threat with fire protection. Soon thereafter deforestation became the next challenge to forest sustainability, which the Department responded to with robust reforestation laws and practices. Later in the 20th century, and precipitating the passage of Oregon's Forest Practices Act (FPA), was an increase in the public's environmental awareness and concern regarding natural resource protection. The FPA and associated best management practices was the response, with an emphasis on a strong regulatory approach to ensuring desired public benefits from private forestlands are achieved. Today we are facing the next evolution of challenges to healthy, working forests and forest sustainability in Oregon, with the increasing trend in the conversion and fragmentation of forestlands (Attachment 2).

As Oregon grows and faces increasing development pressures, increasing numbers of forest tracts are being converted to other uses, or face a heightened risk of such conversion. Nationally, the U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters recognize that development and fragmentation are critical issues facing our forests today. Development and economic pressures on private lands are driving parcelization and/or conversion of forestland to other uses. Industrial lands close to expanding population centers and working family forests are particularly threatened by these trends. Attachment 3 is an example of how this issue is being looked at and addressed in another state with a significant proportion of private forestlands, with some similarities to the issues we are facing here in Oregon. Attachment 4 is an industrial forest landowner perspective on the trends towards the conversion and fragmentation of forestlands in Oregon and beyond.

Administering current statutory and rule mandates and providing forest landowner services in forest practices administration, forest education and assistance, and urban and community forestry services is a significant challenge given current program resources and the issues facing private forestlands in Oregon. Department field staff is spending an increasingly disproportionate amount of time dealing with natural resource situations and conflicts in forests at-risk of conversion and fragmentation. Today, the Department must ensure it continues to deliver a mix of services that meets the diverse needs of landowners, communities, developers, regulators and stakeholders across the broad diversity of forests, and that seeks to promote and conserve forest land and forest values.

In order to fully achieve the *Forestry Program for Oregon* vision of achieving sustainable forest management across all Oregon's forestlands, the Private Forests program needs to strategically address these challenges. The outcome of the Board's Private Forests Work Plan will ultimately guide how the Private Forests program will organize and respond to best achieve the Board's policy objectives for Oregon's private forestlands.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends Board approval of the draft work plan, contingent upon any amendments requested as a result of Board discussion.

NEXT STEPS

The Department will make amendments to the work plan, consistent with the Board discussion, and begin implementation consistent with what is described in the "Timeframe with Milestones" section of the document. Currently, the March 2009 Board meeting will be the next milestone that includes a Board issue paper presentation and discussion, pending Board approval of this agenda item.

ATTACHMENTS

- (1) Draft Board of Forestry Private Forests Work Plan
- (2) The Future of Oregon's Working Forests
- (3) The Future of Maryland's Working Forests
- (4) Preserving Oregon's Working Forests: A Landowner's Perspective on Sustainability