

EXPANDED OUTLINE
OREGON'S VISION FOR FEDERAL FORESTLANDS

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Preface

- Forest health and sound stewardship are critical to Oregon's current and future well-being. Need to sustain social, environmental and economic values.
- In the current system of governance, Oregonians have relatively little real influence on how these forests are managed and used.
- Oregon cannot chart a sustainable, productive future for its forests without considering federal forestlands.
- Therefore, Governor's charge
- Summary of FFAC process

Vision and Goals

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 That Vision Include

Process

- Take action immediately to address State and local needs.
- Federal forestlands are managed with a clearly defined vision and strategic goals developed and implemented through a collaborative partnership.
- Adequate funding from multiple sources for federal agencies
- Federal policy guidance provides stability and balances the need for accountability while preserving local flexibility.

Environment

- Ecosystems are protected, restored, and managed for a full range of sustainable ecosystem benefits.

Social

- Management responds to site specific variations and community based management principles.

Economic

- Predictable, sustainable supply of the full suite of goods and services

A Sense of Urgency

Oregon Not Alone – Local and National Issues

- US is a net importer of wood. Growth has exceeded harvest, yet US increasingly looks to other countries for wood regardless of the comparability of their environmental and social accountability.
- In the US today more than half of all forestlands are at risk of catastrophic fire and predisposed to moderate or severe risks of losing key ecosystem components. US treats less than 10percent of what is needed annually.
- Federal budgets show a long term trend of disinvestment in federally and privately owned forest lands.
- Overall loss of milling and logging infrastructure needed for forest health treatments.

Communities and the Environment – Everyone Loses

- “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. “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.*” (Governor Kulongoski, October 22, 2004)

Problems

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.

- Forest Health - and resiliency have been disrupted in Oregon’s forests. Problems like uncharacteristic wildfire, modified hydrologic regimes, climate change, and insect epidemics may result in the loss of key ecological components.
- Reduced Timber Harvest - from federal forestlands has resulted in diminished forest industry infrastructure with unintended economic and social losses to rural communities. This limits the ability to carry out needed forest health related treatments on the landscape.
- The Desired Amount of Older Forest - on federal forestlands needs to be established and protected as a component of sustainable forest management.

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 their interactions.

- Shifting Legal Landscape - governing federal forestlands contains multiple goals complicating the balancing of social, economic and environmental values.
- Lack of Trust - 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 and confidence in federal land management decisions as well as a lack of trust among stakeholders.
- Process to Coordinate Policy Decisions - Federal, state, local, and tribal governments lack an effective process to coordinate policy decisions and achieve landscape scale objectives.
- Funding Is Not Adequate - or appropriately allocated to achieve land management objectives on federal lands. Adequate stable funding sources are necessary to achieve long-term management goals and sustainability.

Problem Interactions – Problems of place and overarching problems are interrelated.

- Large areas are in need of an integrated approach to forest restoration and fuels management to reduce fire risk.
- Large scale fuels management projects could reduce fire risk and provide economic and social benefits to rural communities.
- Losing the infrastructure (i.e., people, mills, equipment, etc.) needed to manage the forest and reduce the fire risk.
- The unresolved controversy over protection of older forests is a major reason for the lack of trust and barrier to taking any large scale actions to address forest health.
- The statutory, regulatory, and administrative framework has contributed to keeping agencies from effectively addressing rapid declines in forest health.
- Lack of trust and insufficient funding has resulted in small scattered projects instead of the coordinated strategy needed to address these large scale issues like fire risk.

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.** More direct and focused action by Oregon State government in cooperation with local governments, citizens, and federal managers is necessary to facilitate immediate action. Current actions 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 remedy.

A successful partnership between the people of Oregon and federal agencies responsible for the management of federal forests can only result through shared 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 would result in 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.

However, some problems can only be realistically addressed at the national level (e.g., inadequate funding, shifting legal landscape). Oregon can not bring about change on its own at the national level but it can lead the charge. Political coalitions will be necessary among governors and congressional delegations if changes in policies negatively impacting Oregon and other states with large federal forestland holdings are to become reality.

State and Local Solutions

Strategy - **The overall strategy for state and local solutions is to focus on the problem of forest health.** Issues of forest health (e.g., wildfire, water quality and quantity, fish and wildlife habitat, biodiversity, ecosystem resiliency) are of immediate importance, but progress in solving this problem will by necessity mean that progress will also have to be achieved in solving related problems previously identified in the report (i.e., reduced timber harvest, desired amount of older forests, lack of trust, funding, and policy coordination). To achieve the desired outcome state government should create a new administrative entity with adequate staff and funding to liaison with federal agencies, local governments, and citizens and to facilitate the development and success of local collaborative partnerships between these same stakeholder groups at the ecoregion or sub-ecoregion scales.

Focus on Forest Health

Addressing forest health problems is the key action that, if undertaken, will contribute to solving many of the other problems that exist on federal forestlands. To achieve healthy forest conditions we must have properly functioning natural processes. The goal of healthy forests requires developing a comprehensive strategy to change forest stand structure and the associated risks of uncharacteristic wildfire, insect epidemics, and climate change. It includes improving watershed conditions and reducing negative water quality impacts from roads and other uses; while providing sufficient older forests to maintain healthy populations of associated animal and plant species.

Recommendations

Recommended actions to address Oregon's forest health problem fall into seven categories, some of which are among the seven major problems identified earlier. The seven categories are: 1) state leadership and support, 2) local partnerships, 3) assessments, 4) large-scale enhancement projects, 5) older forests, 6) trust, and 7) policy coordination.

1. State Leadership and Support

Issue – Federal forestland management agencies are not adequately addressing the forest health problem in Oregon thus placing many of the values Oregonians treasure that are derived from these lands in jeopardy. In addition, issues of forest health affect adjacent nonfederal forestlands. Oregonians can not rely on the federal government alone to solve the forest health problem.

Solution -- State government must take an active role in facilitating and accelerating management decisions and operations on federal forestlands designed to solve the forest health problem. This will be achieved by creating local partnerships involving state and local governments, citizens, and federal managers.

Actions --

- 1) Create and fund an administrative unit to facilitate local collaborative processes (legislation for budget and continuity)
 - Structure and location? (e.g., Governor's office lead and dedicated staff from multiple agencies)
 - Make toolset available for local processes
 - NEPA support – interdisciplinary team (e.g., Independent Multi-disciplinary Science Team)
 - Process support – facilitation

Note: Potential Funding Component ideas

- Funding for non-governmental organizations to participate? Where from? Travel, staff time.
- Mediator
- Scientists (ecology, etc.)/experts
- Need to fund the "capacity" of local communities to participate / tax credit based on hours or days devoted to the partnership / individuals not supported by employer
- Tax credit allocated to the project that determines distribution to participants
- Grant program

2) The Governor should secure the full cooperation of leaders of the federal forestland management (and regulatory) agencies.

2. Local Partnerships

Key tasks of local partnerships include directing large scale assessments of forest conditions, designing large-scale enhancement projects, defining and making recommendations on older forests, building trust, and coordinating policies across ownership boundaries. Local partnerships should be organized in each ecoregion/sub-ecoregion where communities are interested and willing to participate. The State will facilitate the formation and operation of local partnerships but will not direct them.

3. Large-scale Assessments

Large-scale assessments and local collaborative processes should be used to facilitate work on forest health. Large scale assessments of forest conditions are needed to establish strategic goals, provide managers with a range of treatment options, and prioritize treatments across the landscape. Assessments could provide a systematic approach to deal with large scale issues such as reducing fuel loads. A large scale systematic approach is also needed to assess treatment effectiveness over time and to identify whether there are unintended consequences. The approach should be one of adaptive management.

Issue - There is an urgent need to identify and prioritize forest health treatments based on the best available science and principles of large scale ecosystem dynamics. Even though predicting how climate will change is difficult, climate change has been and will continue to test the resiliency of federal forestlands.

Solution - Develop a system of ecoregion or sub-ecoregion scale assessments to establish strategic goals and prioritize forest health and ecosystem restoration treatments across the landscape. Assessments should be collaborative, science-based and provide a framework for ecological, economic and social sustainability.

Actions --

- 1) Develop a comprehensive framework for maintaining and restoring ecosystems
- 2) Develop outcome-based performance measures
- 3) Develop "good neighbor" policies for effective landscape-scale management on federal, state, tribal, and private lands
- 4) Fund and expand research projects
- 5) Implement and maintain a monitoring program
- 6) Develop a strategy to address scientific uncertainty

4. Large-scale Enhancement Projects

Issue - Federal forestlands in Oregon are not receiving sufficient levels of active enhancement to increase landscape resiliency in the face of increasing climate variability.

Solution -- Enable collaborative processes to identify action-oriented projects to implement the forest health and watershed enhancement recommendations from landscape-scale assessments.

Actions – 1) Design projects that improve forest health, protect key ecological features, and provide a long-term stable supply of ecosystem benefits.

2) Conduct ground-based assessments of, and make investments in, the road network and aquatic ecosystems.

3) Identify areas where a timber sale program is possible if carefully planned with attention to ecological values.

Note: Priorities for project selection should include: fire threat to forests and communities, improvements in hydrologic conditions and road systems, project and economic viability. Focus should be directed towards communities where labor, transportation, and processing infrastructure are at risk. Federal forestland management and regulatory agencies must make every effort to implement actions 1-3 above with the support and assistance of the other partnership members.

5. Older Forest

Issue: The majority of older 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 improvements in the management of older forests.

Solution -- Develop regional, community-based stakeholder processes to craft a vision for older forest that defines regional, forest-type-specific goals for older forests that reflect local economic, environmental and social values while meeting national needs.

Actions – 1) Define "older forests"
2) Develop goals for older forests.
3) Save what older forest exist and identify opportunity for additional older forests.

6. Trust

Actions –

7. Coordination of Policies

Actions –

National Solutions

Strategy – The Governor gains support of the Oregon Congressional Delegation and other western governors to address 1) the shifting legal landscape, 2) the need to coordinate forest policy, and 3) the funding of federal forestland management agencies. Western governors and Oregonian Congressional Delegation gain support of other western congressional delegations. Simultaneously key constituent groups gain support of national organizations.

1. Shifting Legal Landscape and Coordinated Forest Policy

Issue: To be sustainable, forests must be able to deliver a full and integrated set of economic, environmental and social values across large areas. A national policy could clarify and enhance the roles of federal, state, and local governments, promoting regional collaboration, joint planning and coordinated action.

Solution -- Create a “National Sustainable Forests Act” on a par with the federal Farm Bill

Actions -

- 1) Adopt a unified national policy for sustainable forests
- 2) Develop specific priority measures and programs
- 3) Review, and amend if needed, existing federal authorities
- 4) Promote regional approaches for economic/community sustainability and biodiversity

Solution -- Develop Forest Restoration Legislation

Actions -

- 1) Ensure that restoring forest conditions and improving their resilience is identified as a priority
- 2) Targeted funds for community based collaboration

2. Funding

Issue: There is a severe lack of funding for the federal forestland management agencies. 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.

Solution -- Increase appropriations and efficiencies

Actions -

- 1) Fire suppression budgets taken “Off-Line”
- 2) Investments in fuels reduction should be made to reduce long-term fire suppression costs
- 3) Identify cost saving changes
- 4) Fund road related water quality improvements
- 5) New funding system for roads