

Agenda Item No:	6
Title and # of Issue:	Forest Regulation – Issue #6 Objective 3 – Voluntary Methods
Date Presented to Board:	March 7, 2007
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SUMMARY

The agenda item addresses the Voluntary Methods component of Objective 3.

Governor Kulongoski is asking natural agency directors and boards to endorse and support the *Conservation Plan for the Oregon Coast Coho Evolutionary Significant Unit*. The purpose of this agenda item is to inform the Board of Forestry about this plan and to provide an opportunity for the Board’s endorsement and support consistent with the Governor’s request.

CONTEXT

The State of Oregon is nearing completion of a two-year conservation planning effort for coastal coho. The *Conservation Plan for the Oregon Coast Coho Evolutionary Significant Unit* has been reviewed by the public and was presented to the Oregon Fish & Wildlife (ODF&W) Commission in January 2007, with formal adoption anticipated at the Commission’s March 16, 2007 meeting. The Coho Conservation Plan is part of ODF&W’s Native Fish Conservation Policy requirements and represents progression of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds (Oregon Plan). Because NOAA Fisheries has decided not to list coastal coho as a threatened species, Oregon maintains management jurisdiction of this species. The planning effort included considerable agency input and public involvement, including the Department of Forestry and forest landowner representatives.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of the Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan is to ensure the continued viability of the Oregon Coast Coho Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) and to achieve a desired status that provides substantial ecological and societal benefits. The Oregon Coast Coho ESU is viable and does not currently require protection under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The viability was documented in the Coastal Coho Assessment that was completed by Oregon in partnership with NOAA Fisheries in May 2005. The current status of this ESU reflects a reduction in fishery harvest, improved hatchery management, and extensive habitat restoration work initiated or maintained under the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds (Oregon Plan). The Conservation Plan builds upon the knowledge gained through the Coastal Coho Assessment, maintains and enhances support of the Oregon Plan,

and meets the requirements of Oregon’s Native Fish Conservation Policy. The Conservation Plan does not propose new land-use regulations, maintains existing regulatory programs, and enhances support for non-regulatory cooperative conservation. A key element of this Plan is to provide a higher and more effective level of support to local conservation groups and landowners. Forest landowners have demonstrated an impressive record of planning, prioritizing, and implementing habitat improvement projects through their participation in the Oregon Plan.

The Conservation Plan elements include desired status and measurable criteria, Oregon’s coho conservation strategy, and key conservation commitments. Goals of the plan include doubling the number of returning spawners and roughly doubling the amount of high quality habitat across the ESU. Department of Forestry program commitments identified in the plan are focused on habitat and include:

- Effective leadership from the Governor’s office through a system of governance that includes an Oregon Plan Core Team, Monitoring, Communication and Regional Teams, all of which have Department of Forestry input and participation. These teams will be responsible for Oregon’s adaptive management commitments in the Plan.
- Providing landowners more effective financial and technical support to maintain and increase participation in cooperative conservation actions through the “Coastal Coho Plan Habitat Strategy.”
- Supporting the Conservation Plan through ongoing administration of the Forest Practices Act, conducting monitoring and research, and working directly with landowners to identify opportunities to improve coho habitat. New actions include:
 - Assist in identification and validation of high coho intrinsic potential and high aquatic potential (HAP).
 - Work directly with forest landowners and with the Oregon Forest Industries Council (OFIC), Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA), Oregonians for Food and Shelter (OFS), and the Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) to support restoration work in appropriate areas.
 - Design and implement projects to increase stream complexity and stream channel—floodplain connectivity on lands managed by ODF. (Tillamook, Clatsop, and Elliott State Forests)
 - Adoption of OAR 629-635-0200 (11), which applies the fish-bearing classification to stream segments upstream of artificial fish passage barriers to the first natural barrier to fish passage.
 - Adoption of OAR 629-640-0210, which requires landowners and operators to retain green trees and snags along steep, small, non-fish streams where landslides are likely to move them into fish-use streams for the benefit of fish habitat.

Continued success of the Oregon Plan and the Coho Conservation Plan requires active participation by private agriculture and forest landowners, especially in key habitat areas found in lowlands around streams and estuaries. These are predominantly rural residential, family forest and agriculture landowners, many of whom have not been heavily engaged in Oregon Plan efforts to date. The Oregon Forest Resources Institute has been asked by the Governor’s Natural Resource Office to assist in the development of effective communication

materials about landowner involvement opportunities and desirable behaviors related to the Oregon Plan and Coho Conservation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Forestry recommends that the Board of Forestry:

- Adopt a motion:
 - Endorsing the Coho Conservation Plan as Oregon's collective means for conservation of the coastal Coho under the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds.
 - Recognizing the extraordinary efforts of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife in leading the preparation of the plan.
 - Recognizing the efforts of the stakeholders, including forest landowner representatives, who assisted with the development of the plan.
 - Directing the Department to actively participate in the governance of the plan and to facilitate the forestland commitments and obligations to the extent provided for in the Department's budget.
- Direct the Department to prepare a letter from the Chair of the Board of Forestry to the Governor and the Chair of the Fish & Wildlife Commission describing the action of the Board of Forestry in this matter.

NEXT STEPS

- The Oregon Fish & Wildlife Commission will meet on March 16, 2007 to formally adopt the Coast Coho Conservation Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Governor's Letter to Agency Directors
- 2) The public draft *Conservation Plan for the Oregon Coast Coho Evolutionarily Significant Unit* is over 600 pages in length and may be found at:
www.oregon-plan.org/OPSW/cohoproject/coho_proj.shtml.

Also available at this website are public comments on the Plan and the information presented to the ODF&W Commission on January 11, 2007. See <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/commission/minutes/07/jan/index.asp> Exhibit E.