



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Department of Forestry

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February 18, 2005



To Individuals and Groups Interested in the Work of the Oregon Board of Forestry

Greetings:

In the past few months, there has been an important change in the way the Board of Forestry approaches its work. Those who attend our meetings have heard mention of a “decision system,” a “priority set of objectives,” and a series of evolving work plans.

These are all pieces of a bigger picture, and I wanted to take a moment to summarize what we are doing and why.

To put it simply, we’re adopting a more systematic way of setting priorities for action among the many issues before us, and of planning and overseeing the Oregon Department of Forestry’s work in support of those priorities.

Some background. The Board faces a long list of complex issues, tasks, and responsibilities related to the sustainable management of Oregon’s forestlands. These arise from many sources – including statutes, direction from the Governor or Legislature, activities of federal or other state agencies, and the evolving needs and interests of the public and our stakeholders. As citizens serving on a public board, we face great challenges in absorbing large amounts of information, in tracking the progress of multiple complex issues, and in determining where to best focus our time.

A new approach. The decision system that we are developing will help us address these challenges. By implementing the new decision system, we seek to increase our effectiveness as leaders in crafting public policy, and to ensure that we stay on track in implementing the visions described in the *Forestry Program for Oregon*.

Here are the main elements of the new decision system:

- A yearly issues scan, when the Board will develop a list of work priorities for the coming year. Some of these may be ongoing issues; others may be newly emerging. With each issue, it's important the Board identify possible outcomes for its work, such as a legislative concept, a new or changed administrative rule or policy, or direction to the department to undertake a particular initiative. In the future, we expect to conduct this issues scan each fall. The Board has developed its first list of priority objectives under the new process. A brief summary of the priorities follows this memo.
- The development, in consultation with department staff, of work plans to address each priority. These will include many elements, including information-gathering steps, means of collecting and addressing public input, timelines, and methods for monitoring and reporting progress. The Board has begun to review the proposed work plans developed by the department. As these drafts come to the Board, they will be included with the agenda materials that are available in advance of each meeting.
- A final disposition by the Board. This may be the policy decision or other outcome that we envisioned initially, or some other action.

The benefits. We have spent considerable time since late last year in developing not only the steps of this system, but also a means of documenting each step in the process – from our initial decision to adopt a priority objective to its eventual disposition. We are not done with this work; I expect the system will continue to evolve over the months ahead.

This is a worthwhile investment of time for us and for the department. I believe the new decision system will:

- Help the Board establish priorities among the many issues we face, and to focus resources on the key policy questions we need to resolve.
- Improve accountability by making clear to the public what the priorities are, what we are doing to address them, and how we're doing in realizing the vision of the *Forestry Program for Oregon*.
- Streamline the process, allowing us to make the best use of our time in absorbing information and tracking complex, interrelated issues.
- Help us and our stakeholders track and understand how decisions made in one priority area affect other areas.

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Ultimately, it will help us do what the Governor, the Legislature, and the citizens of Oregon expect of us, and what we have committed to do through the *Forestry Program for Oregon*: Make the best possible policies and decisions, based on the best science available and a broad range of public and stakeholder input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen D. Hobbs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Stephen D. Hobbs, Chair
Oregon Board of Forestry

attachment

cc: Members of the Oregon Board of Forestry
Mike Carrier, GNRO
ODF Leadership Team

Seven Priority Objectives

February 18, 2005

Using elements of its new decision system, the Board has identified seven priorities that will shape our agenda during 2005, and possibly beyond. These are broad areas, reflecting our efforts to “bundle” smaller, related issues or initiatives. Each relates to strategies or other elements of the *Forestry Program for Oregon*. The department and Board are in various stages of drafting and reviewing work plans to address the areas, a process that will continue for several months. The priority areas are substantial and just the briefest summaries are provided below. Those who are interested are encouraged to take a look at drafts of the plans as they become available.

Implementation of the *Forestry Program for Oregon (FPFO)*. The intent is to build Oregonians’ understanding, acceptance, and support for sustainable forest management, and to increase recognition of the Board’s leadership role, using the FPFO strategies and actions as the basis for discussion. Actions will include efforts to explain and promote FPFO strategies, and to develop sound indicators that can be used to measure progress toward implementing them.

State forests management. This priority area addresses a range of issues associated with state forests. *Adaptive management* involves working with a wide variety of stakeholders to determine whether new scientific and other information should lead to changes in management plans. The second key element involves continued work toward possible development of a *Habitat Conservation Plan* for state forests in Western Oregon.

The third involves developing an approach for the *systematic review of new scientific* information. The intent is to develop a process for the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of unbiased, credible research results that can be effectively incorporated into the decision-making process.

Forest viability. This area incorporates a variety of actions focusing on maintaining a healthy and productive forestland base, and encouraging landowner investments that enhance forest health. Among the many elements here are:

- Responding to Governor Kulongoski’s direction that the board work with the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department to develop a strategy to ensure the sustainability of Oregon’s forest sector and to enhance the sector’s contributions to our economy.
- Responding to the Governor’s direction to work with a broad range of groups to develop a unified vision of how Oregonians would like to see federal lands managed.

Outreach to urban populations. This priority area seeks to build urban Oregonians’ connections with forestry and its importance to our state’s quality of life. The work area envisions the use of various tools, such as urban forestry assistance, the Tillamook Forest Center, and public education opportunities, to raise urban Oregonians’ awareness about the principles and importance of sustainable forestry.

Dynamic ecosystems. This area involves the notion that landslides, blow-down and other disturbances we have often thought of as “damage” are in fact natural processes with some positive effects, such as benefits for wildlife habitat. Our objectives here include increasing scientific understanding of these processes, to improve policy-setting and resource-protection strategies.

Regulatory regimes. This priority area reflects the approach, expressed in the *Forestry Program for Oregon*, of using incentives and other non-regulatory means when possible, to lead landowners toward achieving public benefits – such as habitat protection – on private land. At the same time, however, this work recognizes the role regulations will continue to serve, and will incorporate several existing rulemaking efforts, along with analysis of the effects of Measure 37, and other activities.

Wildfire risk management. A key objective here is implementation of recommendations produced by a recent, comprehensive review of the department’s firefighting program. The recommendations cover a range of topics, including fuels reduction, fire prevention, business systems and workforce capacity. Another objective is completion of an ongoing review, conducted with many stakeholders and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, of the department’s smoke management program.