

VIII. Public Review and Comment

The development of the Assessment of Need was done to allow as much public participation as possible. Initially, ODF and ORNHP sent out a press release, asking for names, addresses, and emails of anyone interested in information on Forest Legacy in Oregon, or in the development of the AON. A copy of this press release, and the subsequent releases sent out in this process are included in Appendix C. A mailing list of all respondents was included, and all drafts, notices, new changes and meeting dates were sent to these citizens. In response to ODF and ORNHP outreach efforts, a Forest Legacy Steering Committee was formed in May 2001. This committee included all interested parties willing to commit the time necessary to review documents, data, criteria and maps created during the development of the AON. This committee included members of local governments, non-governmental agencies, state agencies and the Forest Service, some of who are also members of the State Stewardship Coordinating Committee. The current members of the SSCC are listed on the cover page of this AON.

The following individuals and organizations made up the steering committee:

Hillary Abraham * – The Nature Conservancy
Ray Abriel * – USDA Forest Service, Region 6
Brenda Brown * – Trust for Public Lands (Brenda replaced Sam Hodder of TPL in June)
Rick Brown * – Defenders of Wildlife
Jim Cathcart – Oregon Department of Forestry
Steve Gordon – Lane Council of Governments
Jimmy Kagan – Oregon Natural Heritage Program
Wally Rutledge * – Oregon Department of Forestry

Individuals with an asterisk are those who also serve on the State Stewardship Coordinating Committee. The committee currently has one vacancy, a forest landowner. The remaining members of the SSCC include:

Jeff Boechler - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Dick Courter - Consulting Forester
Ed Hendrix - Forest Products Industry
Dan Logan - General Public
Steve McClure - Local Government
Scott Reed - OSU Extension Service
Fred Ringer - Farm Services Agency
Philip VanDoren - Forestland Owner
Craig Ziegler - Natural Resources Conservation Service

This State Stewardship Coordinating Committee is significant since the Forest Legacy legislation requires that this committee be established and oversee the implementation of the Forest Legacy Program.

To assure that the public was able to participate, a Public Participation Plan was developed and reviewed by the committee. The plan, included in Appendix C, was modified from plans developed by the Indiana and North Carolina Forest Legacy Programs. The steering committee decided that it would be beneficial to receive public comment on the following areas of the Assessment of Need before finalizing the AON.

- ✍ The extent and boundaries of proposed Forest Legacy Areas.
- ✍ The priorities established for the proposed Forest Legacy Areas.
- ✍ Site selection criteria and the priority order (or weighting) of the selection criteria.
- ✍ Specific goals and objectives for proposed Forest Legacy Areas.

As soon as the first draft AON was developed, it was posted as a PDF file on the ODF web page. Public meetings were set up in 10 locations around the state, and a second press release was prepared, requesting the public attend these meetings or provide comments regarding the draft plan. A copy of the meeting announcement and schedule is in Appendix C. The second press release resulted in articles in newspapers in at least four cities: Portland, Salem, Eugene, and Roseburg. As a result, many comments were received, and both the criteria and legacy area boundaries were modified. The forest legacy program has compiled a compendium containing all of the letters and emails obtained during the development of the AON. This compendium is available upon request from ODF. Key visits, along with the results of the public meetings and additional comments are summarized below.

Public Meetings and Comments

Public meetings were held in ten different locations throughout the state of Oregon to facilitate public understanding, review and comment on the Forest Legacy Program as developed in the Assessment of Need. These meetings were attended by staff from both the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon Natural Heritage Program. The meetings opened with a presentation that explained the history and purpose of the Forest Legacy Program. The presentation explained what data were used to identify potential legacy areas and to evaluate each potential legacy area with respect to ecological, social and economic values as well as threats to conversion. The presentation also discussed how the program would be administered by the Oregon Department of Forestry and ended soliciting public comment on the AON. In addition to the presentation, printed maps showing the boundaries of the legacy areas, pre-settlement vegetation and current vegetation cover (key data used to understand historical trends in forest losses), and ecoregional boundaries were posted on the walls for public viewing. All the meetings were recorded on audio cassette.

Portland Area Meeting, 13 August 2001, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

The meeting was attended by two members of the public as well as two members sitting on both the steering and State Stewardship Coordinating Committees. All supported the effort to secure federal funding and move forward with the Forest Legacy Program in Oregon. Interest was expressed in written descriptions of the legacy areas to go with the maps in the AON and it was pointed out that this would be a component of the final AON. The spreadsheet (see Appendix B) showing the evaluation of the proposed legacy areas with respect to the ecological, social and economic data and threats to conversion was also requested and provided for their review. There was discussion of active public outreach and suggestions that local interest and funding would be very important factors. No one was in favor of dropping any of the proposed 17 legacy areas, and the criteria for choosing sites within those areas was discussed. It was suggested that how threatened a site was (i.e., the immediacy of the threat) should be added to the list of criteria. It was pointed out that threat data was used to pick the legacy areas, but it should also be included within the areas on a

site-by-site basis as what is happening in the larger legacy area may be different than on individual parcels within the area. It was also suggested that the cost efficiency of the proposed site should also be included as a site selection criterion. That is, sites should also be evaluated with respect to the purchase price of the conservation easement or fee-title and the number of acres of forestland protected from conversion.

In addition to the public comments at the meeting, interest in and support for the program, through email and verbal communications came from the staff of the Metro Greenspaces Program, the Oregon Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in Portland, the Mayor of Portland, and a number of citizens.

Salem Area Meeting, 13 August 2001, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

The meeting was attended by two members of the public. Both supported the effort to secure federal funding and move forward with the Forest Legacy Program in Oregon. Both attendees are private landowners and were interested in what this would mean for them in particular. Interest in keeping a broader perspective in regards to the number of legacy areas in the state was expressed. The criteria for prioritizing a site within a legacy area were also discussed and they felt that although threats had been assessed when determining the overall priority of a Forest Legacy Area, the degree of threat should also be a site selection criteria. Standards for appraisals were also discussed.

Eugene Area Meeting, in Springfield, Oregon, 14 August 2001, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

The meeting was attended by 10 members of the public, one of whom was also a member of the Forest Legacy Steering Committee. All supported the effort to secure federal funding and move forward with the Forest Legacy Program in Oregon. A question was asked on how the process for submitting areas for consideration would work and it was suggested that a point/ranking system might be good similar to the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) system. It was explained that details were not worked out yet, and that details depends some on response, but it would be a grant type application procedure. Those present from the city of Eugene were very supportive of the draft AON and thought the accelerated schedule so that fiscal year 2002 monies could come to Oregon was good. The city of Eugene is ready to move forward with specific sites for enrollment in the Forest Legacy Program. Eugene feels well positioned and has the expertise available to work with landowners in identifying proposed sites. The city of Eugene sees an immediate threat to oak woodlands/savannas. The general feeling was that this program would be good for saving upland forests rather than riparian areas which were being saved through other programs. Having a more narrow set of geographic areas was preferred by the city of Eugene as this would allow for larger contiguous blocks rather than smaller, isolated fragments. It was pointed out that site selection may want to look beyond immediately threatened sites and focus on acquiring those lands facing the possibility of conversion in the future so as to get more land (i.e., forest protection) for your money.

Lane County representatives thought that the science used in the analysis was supported and the multiple objective approach taken in the AON was a good one, as were the overall direction for the Forest Legacy Program and criteria to be used to select individual sites. However, the Lane County representatives pointed out that they were looking beyond ten years and wondered if the AON should go beyond that timeframe. They thought that points should also be awarded to an application if the land to be acquired was already part of a local plan. This is because occurrence in a local plan indicates community support and identification of the significance of the site.

It was also mentioned that it might be good to combine the proposed Springfield Forest Legacy Area with the Eugene Forest Legacy Area. ORNHP and ODF staff indicated that boundaries for legacy areas could be modified and welcomed any input or additional data/maps local interests could provide. It was also suggested that the maintenance or management component of an application should deserve points, as well as possibly adding points for forest restoration efforts.

Additional comments came from other staff of the City of Eugene, the City of Springfield, the McKenzie Land Trust, and local citizens. Specific comments included support for the inclusion of oak woodlands and savannas as priorities for Forest Legacy protection.

Corvallis Area Meeting (Philomath, Oregon), 14 August 2001, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

The meeting was attended by five members of the public. All supported the effort to secure federal funding and move forward with the Forest Legacy Program in Oregon. Support was expressed for keeping the extent of Forest Legacy Areas broad and not excluding any of the proposed legacy areas. Further, it was felt that the priority of the Forest Legacy Area should not weigh heavily in the selection of individual sites for funding. There is the possibility of a unique parcel within a lower priority Forest Legacy Area that warrants protection on its own and that could serve as a nucleus or outreach piece. This then could be used for further education and awareness on the use of conservation easements as a tool for protecting private forests from conversion. The site selection criteria were discussed and they thought that smaller communities may not have forest protection and land-use plans, and that awarding points based on this criterion may favor larger communities. The stability of long term management of the site after inclusion in the Forest Legacy Program was discussed and how partner organizations and a forest stewardship plan would play a role in that stability. There would be spot checks by ODF, but it was more likely that a partner organization would be doing the monitoring and that neighbors would be a good source for learning whether a forest stewardship plan was being followed.

Roseburg Area Meeting, 15 August 2001, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

The meeting was attended by three members of the public and two employees from the Oregon Department of Forestry. All supported the effort to secure federal funding and move forward with the Forest Legacy Program in Oregon. Interest was expressed in keeping the geographic extent of the proposed Forest Legacy Areas broad and possibly including more legacy areas than were shown on the map (i.e., include the South Coast Forest Legacy Area).

Concern was expressed that the private forest land areas near Coos Bay and Florence were not included in a Forest Legacy Area and should have been. It was suggested that specific sites chosen for funding should be distributed around the state and an effort made to include rural communities that may not be as prepared/organized as other areas such as Eugene. It was suggested that program dollars for funding sites be allocated based on population or a ratio of people vs. private forest lands affected. There was also some concern about liabilities/responsibilities that might be incurred by local governments in holding the conservation easements bought with Forest Legacy (i.e., federal) money.

Medford Area Meeting, 15 August 2001, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

The meeting was attended by two members of the public. Both supported the effort to secure federal funding and move forward with the Forest Legacy Program in Oregon. They felt that the identification of the proposed Forest Legacy Areas and the analysis determining their overall priority in the AON was well supported by the existing data. They offered to provide additional data for the immediate area and surrounding areas. They felt that all of the proposed Forest Legacy Areas should be left in as eligible in the final AON. They also thought that prioritizing sites ecologically should be considered more, since threats will always be there.

Klamath Falls Area Meeting, 16 August 2001, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

The meeting, on the campus of Oregon Institute of Technology, had no public attendees.

Bend Area Meeting, 16 August 2001, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

The meeting was attended by three members of the public. All supported the effort to secure federal funding and move forward with the Forest Legacy Program in Oregon. They felt that the geographical extent of all of the proposed Forest Legacy Areas was better than a narrower set of areas; feeling it would involve more communities and not leave any one area out. However, figuring out a way for specific sites to compete across such a broad area may be challenging. Those attending liked the idea of combining local interest and whether land was included in an existing local land-use plan as a criteria for individual site selection for funding. There was concern expressed for Crown Pacific (a private timber corporation) forestlands to the west of Bend as these lands could face development pressures in the future. It was indicated to them that large industrial timber companies could apply to participate in the program as long as the lands in question were included within a final Forest Legacy Area. There were also questions about the boundaries of the proposed Forest Legacy Areas in central Oregon. Attendees wanted to make sure it met the urban growth boundary to the west of Bend. There were also questions about the White River canyon area in Wasco County, Pine Mountain in Deschutes County, and the Ochoco and Prineville areas of Crook County. Comments indicated that the boundary of the Metolius area in Jefferson County may have excluded key private forest lands threatened with development. It was agreed that the Forest Legacy Area boundaries would be adjusted based on maps to be provided by the attendees. It was also suggested that the existence of other conservation easements or sites consistent with the Forest Legacy Program near a proposed site might be a good criteria for evaluating sites for funding.

LaGrande Area Meeting, 21 August 2001, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

The La Grande meeting had no public attendees.

Other comments from northeastern Oregon included those from Ben Boswell, a Wallowa County Commissioner, indicating concerns with the program. While he felt that recreational and residential losses of productive forests were a concern, his view was that federal programs had not helped Wallowa County over the last 10 years. Loss of federal timber and their associated, family jobs was the greatest threat, and he did not feel that the Forest Legacy Program could help in this regard.

The Dalles Area Meeting, 22 August 2001, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

The meeting was held in the classroom at the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center - Wasco County Historical Museum. It had no public attendees but was attended by a local ODF representative from The Dalles Unit office and a representative of the USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry programs.

Other comments from the area came from Judge J. Mabury, a Wasco County commissioner, who expressed strong reservations against removing any lands from the tax rolls, as well as concerns about landowners' choices being limited by government. After learning more about the program, he felt that easements would be the best option in Wasco County, but he could not support Forest Legacy acquisitions there.