



Roots

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State Forests Program*

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HARVEST AND HABITAT MODEL PROJECT COMPLETES WORK

The final report of the Harvest and Habitat Model Project was presented March 8 to the Board of Forestry.

The report's findings – along with other information – will be used to decide whether changes should be made to the NW and SW Oregon Forest Management Plans, to decide whether to pursue a habitat conservation plan (HCP), and to assist in setting harvest levels for annual operations plans.

An analysis was done to compare the outputs of the current forest management plans using an HCP with the plans using take avoidance (surveying for species). The study found that take avoidance increased short-term harvests, but produced lower long-term harvests when compared to the current plan with an HCP.

Another finding from the study found that changing complex structure goals could increase or decrease harvests. The current plans are being implemented to achieve 50 percent complex structure, a forest condition with a combination of larger and smaller trees, snags and decaying logs. The plan calls for a range of 40 to 60 percent.

In addition to examining the current plans with an HCP and with take avoidance, the study looked at two additional alternatives – wood emphasis and reserve based – that fall outside of the approved current management plans.

The report is posted on the ODF Web site at: http://oregon.gov/ODF/STATE_FORESTS/docs/Harvest-Habitat_Final_Report.pdf

Hats off to the H&H team (Dave Johnson, Pam Overhulser, Rob Nall and Dave Enck) for a job well done. The project took nearly three years to complete.

CHANGING THE PARADIGM: A NEW WAY OF TALKING WITH CONSTITUENTS

In the fall of 2005, ODF State Forests Program staff launched a new initiative with the State Forests Advisory Committee (SFAC) to discuss issues pertaining to state forests in a different way. The technique, developed by the United Nations Forum on Forests, is called multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD).

It's a type of communication that enables direct interactions between government and stakeholders on specific topics. It is becoming increasingly accepted as an official inter-governmental process. The dialogues provide opportunities for groups to share concerns, experiences and proposals in specific areas, and to discuss them in detail with governments. These exchanges promote meaningful participation.

Several elements critical to the success of a MSD include engaging a broad variety of constituents, submitting dialogue papers prior to the actual dialogue, creating discussions among stakeholders with differing viewpoints, revealing the underlying values and beliefs that contribute to individual positions on issues, managing a well-facilitated conversation, and summarizing the value-added dialogue in a way that is very different from meeting minutes.

This past year, SFAC was engaged with ODF on two major issues – Swiss needle cast and adaptive management. The reports of these dialogues were shared with Board of Forestry members, who said the dialogues contributed to the richness of their policy discussions.

More opportunities are expected in the future where we will use MSD processes with our stakeholders. You are encouraged to review SFAC agendas and view a dialogue.

SECOND-PARTY ASSESSMENT CHECKS HOW WE'RE DOING

A recent second-party assessment by a contractor not affiliated with ODF was designed to see if "we're doing what we said we were going to do."

Completed this month, the assessment was seen as a way to give the Board of Forestry an overall picture after four years of forest management under the plans for northwest and southwest Oregon. The assessment checked the implementation of the forest management plans, ranging from staff understanding of the plans to actual on-the-ground evaluations in the field to see if objectives were being met.

Preliminary findings show that the methods being used to achieve management goals "appear to be appropriate, effective, and professionally applied by a highly qualified staff, and they are continually being improved in an adaptive manner in keeping with the mission of the department and the provisions of the plans." The final report of the assessment will be presented April 27 at the Board workshop.

A primary goal of the NW and SW management plans for state-owned forestland is to achieve the "greatest permanent value" for the citizens of Oregon by providing a full range of social, economic and ecological benefits.

The Board needs a means to evaluate implementation and effectiveness of the plans to meet this goal. To this end, we contracted an assessment of the goals, objectives and procedures described in the plans to aid in measuring our performance against the full intent and standards presented in them.

The program plans to use the assessment to identify gaps in information. The assessment may ultimately position the program to conduct a third party audit prior to certification by an established certifier such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

PUBLIC SURVEY PROVIDES SNAPSHOT OF OPINIONS

A public opinion survey of Oregonians conducted by an independent contractor in April will provide a snapshot of the public's awareness and perception of how ODF manages forestlands.

It also will provide information on the public's general knowledge of state forestlands and the importance of forests and forest values.

Observes of citizen focus groups held in March in Portland and Coos Bay reported general

support among the participants for ODF, though most of them were unfamiliar with our planning processes and the term "structure-based management."

Most saw a need for some harvesting. As predicted, the participants had a difficult time distinguishing between state and federal forestland.

The contractor will provide a full report on survey and the focus groups to the Board of Forestry at its April 27 meeting.

The State Forests Program initiated a public trends survey to obtain and evaluate the opinions of Oregon residents on state forest management issues. These results are intended to provide baseline data for subsequent surveys every two years.

APRIL BOARD OF FORESTRY WORK- SHOP FOCUSES ON WAYS TO EVALUATE

The State Forests Program is guided by forest management plans – no question there. And we're implementing them – no question there. So why do we need performance measures?

Developing performance measures provides a tool for the Board of Forestry to evaluate our success in implementing the forest management plans. The measures also provide a way for Board members to "check" whether social, environmental, and economic values are being achieved according to the "greatest permanent value" (GPV) administrative rule.

In April, the Board will be asked to consider some annual performance measures for the program, and will be informed about decadal measures. At the same time, they will receive results from a second-party assessment of our forest management plan (are we doing what we said we were going to do and are systems in place to record these accomplishments?), the biennial survey of Oregonians (one way to capture our success in achieving social goals), and the Harvest and Habitat Model Project results.

The Board will consider whether or not any changes should be made to the forest management plans based on the performance measures.

For example, the Board could approve an economic performance measure that states we should achieve 3–4 percent return on investment on state lands. (This is a calculation that involves, to name a few factors, the revenue we generate from timber sales and the costs associated with managing these lands.)

Such a performance measure could come about after the Board reviews the results of the H&H modeling project. By assessing the volume produc-

tion within each alternative, the Board will determine if we are meeting the economic outputs envisioned under GPV for our state forests.

Absent performance measures, there's no concrete way to focus the debate on economic, environmental or social outputs.

Three important considerations to think about as we continue to develop these measures with all program staff: 1) They're annual measures and they're adaptable and changing, so we're not locked into a measure long term, 2) They're a great way to develop an ongoing conversation with the Board of Forestry about the many outputs state forests provide to all Oregonians, and 3) They're a way to demonstrate our accountability to the citizens of the state.

More information on performance measures will be coming.

ELLIOTT PLAN MOVES FORWARD

The Board of Forestry and the State Land Board each acknowledged the concepts in the completed draft Elliott State Forest Management Plan and directed the Oregon Department of Forestry to continue develop a multi-species habitat conservation plan.

The two governing boards said the HCP should be consistent with the concepts and strategies in the January 2006 draft FMP. Both boards are involved because the Elliott State Forest has both Common School Land and Board of Forestry land.

The FMP is the result of more than five years of work by a team of foresters, fish and wildlife biologists and other technical specialists. The process included a scientific review and an extensive public involvement process.

In directing the continued development of an HCP, the Board of Forestry in January 2006 deferred approval of the FMP, as did the State Land Board in February.

The 93,000-acre Elliott State Forest is Oregon's first state forest, established in 1930 through a trade with the U.S. Forest Service that consolidated scattered tracts of Common School Land. The FMP provides long-range strategic guidance designed to meet the constitutional mandate to maximize revenue to the Common School Fund, using sound techniques of land management. The HCP has concepts and strategies similar to the FMP, but provides additional specific strategies, and discusses their effects on fish and wildlife.

An HCP approved by the federal services (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and /or the National

Marine Fisheries Service) is one way to comply with the federal Endangered Species Act. The proposed HCP, if approved by the Federal agencies and the State, is intended to provide long-term management certainty, a significant increase in annual harvest volume, and diverse habitats for a wide array of native fish and wildlife species.

The revised FMP and HCP take a comprehensive landscape approach to managing the forest by establishing conservation areas to protect important habitat for northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets, and by maintaining a diverse range of habitat types. The plan also includes aquatic/riparian strategies designed to provide properly functioning watershed conditions.

The timeline for the planning process calls for approval of both the FMP and HCP in mid-2007. Until a decision is reached on the revised plans, the 1995 Elliott Habitat Conservation Plan will continue to guide management of the forest.

