

STAFF RESPONSE

Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests Preliminary Evaluation of Indicator of Sustainable Forest Management



B.b.: *Forest-related employment and wages*

Current desired trend/target: Forest-related Oregon employment and compensation are stable or increasing.

The following is a response by Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) technical and policy staff to the October 25, 2010 Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests preliminary evaluation of Indicator of Sustainable Forest Management B.b.: *Forest-related employment and wages*. This evaluation can be accessed at: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/indicators/InitialIndicatorBbRoundtableEvaluation.pdf>

The current data report for this indicator can be accessed at: <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/indicators/indicatorB.b.shtml>

This online report reflects the revisions indicated in this response.

Key Roundtable findings

1. Clarify the intent and purpose.
2. County-level reporting is more common and it would improve the use of this indicator.
3. Consider separate reporting for eastern and western Oregon.
4. The participants agreed with the “Poor” rating for “Condition.”
5. It is unclear what criteria will be used to trigger changes in the “Condition” rating. What if jobs go down and wages go up?
6. The participants agreed with the “Deteriorating” rating for “Trend.”
7. Clarify to what extent public sector employment and wages are included in the data and how the employment of foreign workers addressed.
8. Look at available USDA data as an alternate rich set of information on rural economies.
9. There is a serious concern that future ODF or other agency budgets will not be adequate to support the work.

Changes Made to the Indicator Report in Response to Key Roundtable Findings

1. Indicator text has been rewritten to clarify the intent and purpose of this indicator and to show why this indicator is important.
2. Metrics for forest-related employment for urban/rural cannot be displayed at the substate level because of data confidentiality issues. Instead, for those interested in more detail, additional metrics is available to show information about forest-related employment for east, west, and all Oregon. Seventy-eight percent of forest-related employment is in rural areas, so tracking forest-related employment trends at

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the substate level gives us good information about what is happening to forest-related employment in rural areas. In addition, regional information about forest-related employment as a percent of traded sector employment is being developed and will be displayed when Indicator B.b is next updated.

3. See #2 (above).
4. The condition rating for Indicator B.b. will be kept as poor. State-level econometric projections show forest-related employment improving very slowly, even if Oregon's economy rebounds vigorously.
5. Condition rating for Indicator B.b. is based on job and wages relative to the most recent 5-year average. If employment and wages are higher than most recent 5 year average, condition is good; if employment and wages are lower than most recent 5-year averages, condition is poor; otherwise condition is mixed. Trend is determined by using the most recent 2- and 5 year averages for both employment and wages. If employment and wages are higher than the most recent 2- and 5-year averages the trend is improving; if employment and wages are lower than the most recent 2- and 5-year averages the trend is deteriorating; otherwise the trend is uncertain.
6. The trend rating for Indicator B.b. will be kept as deteriorating until employment and/or wages rebound to above the most recent 2- and/or five-year averages.
7. Government forestry-related employment is included in the data used to build and update Indicator B.b. Employment Department staff was asked how foreign workers were accounted for in the data. They do not track foreign workers. "There is no way to know for sure how many foreign workers are employed at any given time in Oregon. We do know that in 2009 Oregon forest contractors received visa certification for approximately 300 foreign workers. We do not know if they brought in all of those workers. Washington State employers received certification for 548 visas. California employers received certifications for 2,035 visas. Those states would have to be examined to see how many of those visas were for reforestation contractors. I did not take the time to do that."
8. USDA has data that is useful for assessing rural economies. However, USDA does not have the data to populate the metrics of indicator B.b.
9. The serious concern that future ODF or other agency budgets will not be adequate to support data collection and reporting is legitimate. ODF and Employment Department staff time is required to update the metrics used in this indicator. This indicator cannot be updated without time being budgeted for ODF and Employment Department analysts.

Changes/additions in the online report:

Text and graphics have been extensively revised based on Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests review and comments.

Staff responses to other Roundtable comments

1. Several comments were made that wages needed to be included. Wages were added to address these

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comments and thereby, as specified by the Roundtable, shifts Information Quality rating from “Partial” to “Adequate”.

2. Several points were made regarding better clarity is needed. In addition to rewriting the Indicator text to clarify the intent and purpose of this indicator and to show why this indicator is important, text was revised to clearly specify that the indicator data will be updated annually, and to better define terminology.

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