

STAFF RESPONSE

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



C.b.: Timber harvest trends compared to planned and projected harvest levels and the potential to grow timber

Current desired trend/target: Oregon timber harvest levels are 90 to 110 percent of planned and projected levels (Oregon Progress Board target for Oregon Benchmark 83) and the potential to grow timber is stable or increasing.

The following is a response by Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) technical and policy staff to the January 12, 2011 Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests preliminary evaluation of Indicator of Sustainable Forest Management C.b.: *Timber harvest trends compared to planned and projected harvest levels and the potential to grow timber* (this evaluation can be accessed at:

<http://egov.oregon.gov/ODF/indicators/docs/CbEvaluation.pdf>

The current data report for this indicator can be accessed at:

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/indicators/indicatorCb.shtml>

This online report will reflect the revisions indicated in this response as soon as possible.

Key Roundtable findings

1. A statewide reporting scale is appropriate but regional breakdowns of the data are also desirable. Consider eastside/northwest/southwest.
2. The condition rating should be changed to from mixed to poor. The trend rating should be changed from uncertain to deteriorating. Use Gary Lettman's alternative rating rationale that was presented at the roundtable meeting.
3. Separately and distinctly address the planned/projected levels of harvest and the amount of total wood growth potential that is being harvested. Consider a separate indicator addressing how much of wood growth potential is being harvested or at least add a separate set of ratings for this aspect.
4. Avoid jargon and unclear terms.
5. Display harvest levels by landowner categories and sub-state scales—county level, if possible.
6. Cross reference land ownership proportions with harvest proportions.

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

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1. Indicator metrics will report for eastern and western Oregon as well as continuing to use a statewide reporting scale. Eastern and western Oregon's forests and forest economies are different and it is appropriate to report forest conditions and trends at regional as well as statewide levels. However, it will be three years before data is available to comprehensively report metrics for this indicator at substate levels. The current computer simulations used to calculate biological potential timber harvest are useful for statewide analyses but the projections are too imprecise to credibly represent substate areas. This is particularly true in eastern Oregon with periodic but unpredictable insect outbreaks and the likely sensitivity of eastern Oregon's forests to climate change. It is possible to calculate biological potential harvest levels from FIA annual inventory plot data along with an accounting of forest timber growth and drain (see #3, below). Complete data will not be available for another three years. It is possible to determine planned harvest levels from current timber sale plans. However, we do not currently have planned harvest levels that can be broken into substate regions. Links to the Oregon Timber Harvest Reports will be provided so that those who wish to look at the data for different geographic analysis areas or for different time periods can do so.
2. The condition rating was changed to from "mixed" to "poor." The trend rating was changed from "uncertain" to "deteriorating." Gary Lettman's alternative rating rationale presented at the roundtable meeting was used to validate the Roundtable's ratings. In 2010, timber harvests rebounded from the record low timber harvest of 2009. The rebound was not enough to upgrade the condition from "poor" but was strong enough to for the Roundtable to consider changing the trend rating back to "uncertain."
3. Actual harvests compared to 1) the planned/projected levels of harvest and 2) the amount of total wood growth potential will be addressed separately and distinctly. A separate metric addressing how much of wood growth potential is being harvested by ownership group will also be created. Setting targets for this metric will be up to the Oregon Board of Forestry or, if they are funded, the Oregon Progress Board. Completing these metrics at the requested geographic scales will require availability and use of three years of remeasured FIA annual plot data; only one year of the 10-year plot remeasurement cycle has been completed by mid-2011. A private vs. public split will require two-years worth of remeasurement data, which will be available at the end of 2011. Parsing the data further to include an eastern and Oregon split in addition to the ownership group split will take 3 years worth of remeasurement data, which will be available by the end of 2012.
4. Indicator text has been clarified and the use of jargon avoided as much as possible
5. Harvest levels will be displayed for Oregon, western Oregon, and eastern Oregon. As timber harvests have declined, volatility in the data has made portraying data at finer geographic scales less useful. For example, in some counties the harvest of one large timber sale could increase an ownership's harvest dramatically over previous years. Links to the Oregon Timber Harvest Reports will be provided so that those who wish to look at the data for different geographic analysis areas or for different time periods or ownership groupings can do so.
6. Land ownership proportions will be cross referenced with harvest proportions in the text comparing actual harvests with the biological potential for timber harvesting.

Changes/additions in the online report:

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

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Staff responses to other Roundtable comments

The Roundtable agreed that information generated for this indicator is an important part of the sustainable forestry story and that the indicator should clearly describe the implications of the information. Specific comments included:

1. It is important to understand that there may be environmental, economic, and social consequences of both overharvesting and under-harvesting compared to planned/projected harvest levels.
2. This indicator is also pertinent to overharvesting or under-harvesting relative to biological wood growth potential.
3. It is unclear how the indicators addresses external market forces that dictate harvest trends regardless of what management plans or harvest projections call for.
4. Recognition is needed that the management plans themselves may not be environmentally, economically, and/or socially sustainable.

These are valid comments and indicator text was changed to include this additional information.

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