

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



Indicator D.b.: *Biological integrity of forest streams*

Current desired trend/target: Index of biotic integrity values in forested Oregon watersheds are stable or improving.

This is a summary of the Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests discussion and conclusions regarding the staff report on an Oregon Indicator of Sustainable Forests Management. This evaluation summary is organized around nine questions identified by the Roundtable as being central to evaluations of all 19 indicators. It reflects the input from Roundtable participants who attended the January 10, 2011 meeting where the indicator was discussed and from an electronic survey of those participants following the meeting. The summary is based on interpretation of the Roundtable discussions by the six-person Roundtable Leadership Group, with the assistance of Oregon Department of Forestry staff. For context, readers are encouraged to first become familiar with the full set of Oregon indicators and particularly the report for Indicator D.b. on which this evaluation is based. This evaluation and a follow-up staff response will be posted on both the Roundtable and Indicator D.b. web pages. The current data report for this indicator can be accessed at:

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

Evaluation Summary: ¹

Key Roundtable findings

- The science is clear but it remains unclear to some how to interpret the data and what conclusions can be drawn from the information.
- Improve terminology and maybe get away from using the term “disturbance” altogether. Perhaps “degree of variance from reference conditions.”
- Increased sample sizes would be an improvement, particularly in Eastern Oregon. Increased probabilistic sampling will improve statistical strength.

¹ *Conclusions may not have been reached by the Roundtable for every evaluation question. The summary should not be considered as expressing a consensus of the meeting participants or the Roundtable in general. However, this information will be immediately useful to the technical staff working to implement and improve future indicator data collection and reporting and to the Board of Forestry and other Oregonians desiring to use the indicator as one tool in assessing Oregon’s progress towards sustainable forest management.*

It is anticipated that the Roundtable will proceed with discussions on all the indicators and will then discuss the body of indicators as a whole – looking for common themes and synthesizing conclusions about the indicators project. Therefore, Roundtable conclusions for this indicator may be revisited and revised at a later date.

- Report raises unanswered questions about what is happening on family forestlands that is different than other forest ownership classes. Better identify ownership--more detailed analysis needed.
- Strength of protocol will be better known once a trend can be established.
- No trend is available. Future data collection is needed to establish a trend.
- Need to provide criteria on what numbers would have to be to be considered in “good” or “poor” condition.
- Recommend changing the trend rating to “not available.”
- Need to provide criteria on what numbers would have to be to be considered an “improving” or “deteriorating” trend.
- Concern about reduction in funding for continued future data collection.
- The report should be simplified for better reader comprehension.

Additional Roundtable comments organized by indicator evaluation questions

1. Is the purpose and intent for the indicator clear?

- Most agree the purpose and intent are clear, but there may be technical problems addressed under other questions.
- Clarify indicator is just using PREDATOR information and not the displayed fine sediment and temperature stress data. They are supplemental and removing the latter two from the online report would make the information on which conclusions are being drawn much clearer.
- PREDATOR has the potential to integrate a lot of possible aquatic stressors.
- Biological communities are beneficial uses. The information can be used to address water quality impairment--better than just water quality index which only looks at water chemistry.
- Is all “disturbance” considered bad? Riparian blowdown is an example of a disturbance that has potential positive and negative disturbance effects. Temporal story is important. Additional large wood in streams from blowdown could be good for macroinvertebrates in the long run.
- The report is clear on the limits of a single sample and need for some more detailed information.

2. Is the protocol for indicator data collection clear and technically sound?

- There is some concern about the subjective determinations of what is disturbed and what is not.
- Improve terminology and maybe get away from using the term “disturbance” altogether. Perhaps “degree of variance from reference conditions.”
- Increased sample sizes would be an improvement, particularly in Eastern Oregon. Increased probabilistic sampling will improve statistical strength.
- Report raises unanswered questions about what is happening on family forestlands that is different than other forest ownership classes. Better identify ownership--more detailed analysis needed.
- The report relies on “found data.” Data collection protocol would be different if it was specifically designed for this indicator. The probabilistic sampling design used in the Willamette Basin Study provides stronger data.
- Better acknowledge data and sampling limitations.

Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests

Preliminary Evaluation of Indicator of Sustainable Forest Management D.b.:

Biological integrity of forest streams

March 9, 2011 Draft – Subject to further Roundtable discussion and revision

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- Some confusion over what defines reference sites. Natural disturbance occurs in reference sites. Clarify reference conditions are real world and not “potential” or “optimal.” By definition 10 percent of reference sites are “most disturbed.”
- Improve ownership determination protocol. Limit to upstream catchment and do not include a radius area downstream from the sample point.
- An assessment is difficult or impossible with only one measurement point.

3. Are indicator data being reported at the appropriate spatial and temporal scales?

- Some regions lack enough replication to make statements about them.
- Ideally data would be collected reflecting seasonal variation as well as daily variability as noted.

4. Has the Department appropriately assessed the quality of the indicator information?

Original indicator report conclusion
Information = Partial

Conclusion following Roundtable evaluation
Information = Partial



- No specific comments and no changes recommended to the assigned information quality rating.

5. Has the Department appropriately assessed the conditions measured by the indicator?

Original indicator report conclusion
Condition = Mixed

Conclusion following Roundtable evaluation
Condition = Mixed



- No changes recommended to the assigned condition rating.
- Conflicting factors are affecting conditions in positive and negative ways.
- Need to provide criteria on what numbers would have to be to be considered in “good” or “poor” condition.
- Information about what the likely stressors are should be included.

6. Has the Department appropriately assessed the current trend measured by the indicator, when compared to the Desired Trend Statement?

Original indicator report conclusion
Trend = Uncertain

Conclusion following Roundtable evaluation
Trend = Not Available



- Cannot measure trend with only one data point. The Roundtable concluded the trend rating should be changed from “uncertain” to “not available.”
 - Need to provide criteria on what numbers would have to be to be considered an “improving” or “deteriorating” trend.
- 7. Can a case be made that other technical information should be considered as a supplement or an alternative to the information already provided for the indicator?**
- This is the most feasible biological indicator to continue.
 - More information is needed to assess the impact of lands in non-forest use that are intermingled with forestlands.
- 8. Do you believe there is an adequate level of institutional commitment and resources allocated for continued full implementation and reporting of this indicator into the future?**
- No. Biomonitoring money was eliminated from DEQ's budget in 2009.
 - No. Coordination of efforts at multiple scale would probably be the only way to update this indicator.
 - Impossible to make commitments in current budget cycle progress.
- 9. What improvements would you like to see in future reporting for the indicator?**
- The multitude of graphs should be simplified.
 - Systematic surveys on forestlands and a long term commitment to the indicator are needed.
 - Need additional remeasurements
 - Use more value-neutral language in reporting for this indicator.
 - The Board needs to use this existing indicator information to determine what changes in policies and practices are needed.

Oregon indicators of sustainable forest management ratings explanations

Indicator Condition:



Good

Desired trend or target is being achieved



Mixed or Fair

Conflicting factors are affecting the status in both positive and negative ways



Poor

Desired trend or target is not being achieved

Indicator Trend:



Improving

Current status is an improvement compared to previous data



Mixed, Uncertain, or No Change

There are either conflicting (mixed) trends, trend direction is uncertain, or there is no significant change compared to previous data



Deteriorating

Current status is a deterioration compared to previous data

Quality of Indicator Information:



Adequate

Data coverage, frequency, currency, sources, and reliability are sufficient to draw conclusions with high confidence



Partial

Data coverage, frequency, currency, sources, and reliability are of mixed quality which affects the ability to draw conclusions



Inadequate

Data coverage, frequency, currency, sources, and reliability are of insufficient quality to draw conclusions