

Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests

Preliminary Evaluation of Indicator of Sustainable Forest Management



E.b.: Extent of area by forest cover type in protected area categories

Current desired trend/target: Following establishment of a statewide plant and animal conservation policy, allocations of Oregon forest cover types to protected area categories are consistent with desired future conditions.

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

Evaluation Summary: ¹

Key Roundtable findings

- The indicator is really a zoning map for forest uses in Oregon. The zones are clear but more discussion is needed on what land allocations go into each zone category.
- There are questions on whether using the amount of restriction on human activity in a location relates very well to conservation of animal and plant species.
- The Roundtable identified terminology issues that need to be corrected. The names of classes implied different meanings, depending on the experience and affiliation of the participant.
- The emphasis for this indicator should be biological diversity zoning, not wood production zoning.
- A dilemma with this indicator is that finer delineations are needed to truly understand management allocations, but coarser scaled delineations are needed to aggregate and simplify information for public understanding.
- Clarify how riparian buffer acres are included in the statistics.

¹ *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. The 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 September 30, 2010 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 seven-person Roundtable Leadership Group, with the assistance of Oregon Department of Forestry staff.*

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.

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Additional Roundtable comments organized by indicator evaluation questions

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

- The indicator is really a zoning map for forest uses in Oregon. The zones are clear but more discussion is needed on what land allocations go into each zone category.
- Further clarity is needed on indicator purpose and intent. Look at Indicator E.c. report for a better example of a purpose and intent statement.
- While the intent may be understandable -- using the amount of restriction on human activity in a location as a proxy for how well rare species are conserved in that location, then aggregate individual locations into a statewide view—there are questions on whether the proxy really relates very well to conservation of animal and plant species.

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

- The way the data were collected and how the results were mapped seemed clear.
- The Roundtable identified terminology issues that need to be corrected. The names of classes implied different meanings, depending on the experience and affiliation of the participant. The way the data were collected and how the results were mapped seemed clear.
- The emphasis for this indicator should be biological diversity zoning, not wood production zoning.
- Nature Conservancy and state parks lands do not fit the definition given for “reserves.”
- It is confusing that late successional “reserves” and riparian “reserves” are not in the “Reserves” category.
- Consider separating forest cover data for recent burns and harvested areas.
- It is appropriate that no federal forest lands be designated as “wood production forests.” That would be inconsistent with the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act.
- Change riparian buffers to “administratively withdrawn” on federal lands.
- Consider a stand alone category for riparian buffers.
- Clarify the difference between “wood production” and timber harvest. Trees may still be harvested under some “administratively withdrawn” land allocations.
- Look at earlier similar land allocation work done in the Blue Mountains by the PNW Research Station.
- Based on the definitions used, more “protection” does not necessarily equal more biological diversity.
- Maybe remove references to "protection" in this indicator and focus instead on management emphases.
- It seems like in the context of this indicator “protection” means protection from ground disturbing activities.
- Change the indicator title to “percent of area by management classes by forest cover type.”
- The protocol may be oversimplifying riparian buffer impacts on family forest landowners. The land allocation to riparian buffers may be more significant for landowners who tend to be lower down in watersheds.
- Many family forest landowners do not manage primarily for wood production. The percentage of

private forest lands designated as “multi-resource” emphasis should be increased. Timber sales off this land are dramatically lower, partly because land owners emphasize other values, and partly because of neglect and lack of knowledge and capital.

- Clarification is needed on federal riparian buffers—both their extent and what management activities can, and cannot take place.
- Describing private lands as 99 percent “wood production” emphasis timber is misleading. More than that is subject to regulation and activity restrictions.
- Correlate this analysis with the Indicator A.c. analysis of Forest Practices Act encumbrances.

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

- Time frame for the reported data could be made clearer.
- The data covered the whole state. Reporting by ecoregion would enrich the information.
- The data seemed up-to-date and refreshed on a periodic basis.
- The level of resolution and the ability to tie to a location are appropriate for a statewide indicator.

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

Original indicator report conclusion
Information = Adequate



Conclusion following Roundtable evaluation
Information = Adequate



- Not specifically discussed at the Roundtable meeting.
- The validity of the indicator hinges on the notion that where a rare species location is overlaid by zoning that restricts human activities, the rare species will be conserved. ODF mapped "protected land" well, but such protection may not have much to do with conservation. So, the indicator could point towards a false conclusion.

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

Original indicator report conclusion
Condition = Mixed



Conclusion following Roundtable evaluation
Condition = Mixed



- Not specifically discussed at the Roundtable meeting.
- Clarify whether the data graphs for the report include or do not include riparian buffer areas.
- Provide examples by species and/or geography supporting the report conclusion that "other forest cover types are not well represented in reserves and may be more vulnerable to alteration or conversion to another land use."
- Again, the relationship is tenuous between the metric of land allocated to restrictive zoning and the

desired future condition of conservation of species and their habitats.

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 = Uncertain



- Not specifically discussed at the Roundtable meeting.
- The report might be more specific about where there is tremendous fuel build-up in or near many reserved forest areas in southwestern and eastern Oregon.
- The relationship is tenuous between the metric of land allocated to restrictive zoning and the desired future condition of conservation of species and their habitats.

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?

- Not specifically discussed at the Roundtable meeting.
- It is not clear whether a disaggregation of reasons for administrative withdrawal would be useful. In some cases it is inarguable, and in others a policy choice has been made that may be unwise or ineffective for the purpose set forth. Ultimately, such choices may affect sustainable forest management.
- Some question the whole assumption behind the indicator and do not see a dependable, long term relationship between restrictive land use zoning and conservation of diverse forestland species and habitats.

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?

- Not specifically discussed at the Roundtable meeting.
- The Department of Forestry will be able to generate these data into the future.

9. What improvements would you like to see in future reporting for the indicator?

- A dilemma with this indicator is that finer delineations are needed to truly understand management allocations, but coarser scaled delineations are needed to aggregate and simplify information for public understanding.
- Clarify how riparian buffer acres are included in the statistics.
- Riparian buffers should be considered as “administratively withdrawn” on federal and as “multi-resource” on private.
- Some “late successional” forestlands should be considered as “administratively withdrawn” and

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some as “multi-resource.”

- The nomenclature is confusing. Federal, state, and private terminology differs. Terms do not mean the same thing across ownerships.
- Can forest cover data and protected areas designations be cross-walked with species at risk locations? What if 20 species are declining--where are they declining in relation to management allocations?
- The online version of the report needs to be updated with color versions of the data, maps, and graphs shared at the meeting.
- We need to come up with some other way of thinking about the role that humans play in the landscape. Doing little or doing nothing may appear protective in the present, but inaction could prove expensive and negative in the future.
- Some participants are not sure of the extent to which there is any substantial correlation between plants and animals at risk and wilderness areas. Historically much of wilderness was near or above tree line.
- An important question this indicator does not address is forest fragmentation and the extent of plantations versus natural forests. A plantation should not be considered a forest.

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