Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests
Meeting Summary
9:00 to 3:00p.m. May 10, 2011
Tillamook Conference Room, Oregon Department of Forestry
Salem, OR

Meeting summaries for the Roundtable characterize the meeting discussion but do not document every comment made. Presentation materials and web links to important documents are usually posted on the Oregon Roundtable webpage on the Oregon Department of Forestry website, http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/indicators/roundtable.shtml.

Introductions and Agenda
Brief introductions were made and Roundtable processes and progress to date were summarized. Meeting handouts and the day’s agenda were reviewed. Attachment A provides the participant list.

Roundtable Evaluation of Indicator of Sustainable Forest Management A.b.: Development and maintenance of sustainable forest management knowledge

Based on the discussion of this indicator at the March 4 Roundtable meeting and after the results of the online surveys were compiled, staff prepared a draft report describing the key Roundtable findings. This draft report was then distributed to Roundtable participants prior to the May 10 meeting. No additional comments were provided by Roundtable participants. Department of Forestry staff will finalize the initial Roundtable evaluation for this indicator and post it on the Roundtable webpage and Indicator A.b. web page.

Presentation and Discussion on Indicator A.a.: Ability to measure and report on all other Oregon sustainable forest management indicators

The Leadership Group has developed nine indicator evaluation questions to guide Roundtable discussions on the Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management. Discussion points raised on the indicator reviewed during the May 10 meeting are assigned to the nine questions. Listed below is the staff’s and Leadership Group’s summary of the comments from the May 10 meeting. Roundtable participants asked clarifying questions, discussed its strengths and weaknesses, and generated ideas for improvements.

Everyone may not agree with the assignments and the Roundtable participants are encouraged to make alternative assignments or use the comments as makes sense to them as they consider the nine questions.

A short summary report for the indicator will be generated to summarize the draft Roundtable responses to the nine question. Following Roundtable Leadership Group review, this report will be distributed and posted online.

It is anticipated that the Roundtable will proceed with discussions on each of the indicators and will then discuss the body of indicators as a whole – looking for common themes and synthesizing conclusions about the indicators project.
David Morman (ODF) presented the indicator report, referencing information posted online at: http://egov.oregon.gov/ODF/indicators/indicatorAa.shtml.

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

- The online report needs to more clearly spell out up front what the basis is for condition and trend rating determinations. This information was provided in the presentation and it would be helpful to also appear in the report.

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

- The current protocol is subjective at this point. Consider a more developed technical (mathematical) integration of information for the other 18 indicators.

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

- This evaluation question is not really relevant for Indicator A.a. Each of the other 18 indicators has different embedded temporal and spatial relationships. Should they be more uniform than they are currently?

- Need to change reported data frequency for Indicator D.b. The staff response for that indicator provides little hope for continued monitoring. The Indicator D.b. data frequency rating in Indicator A.a. should be less than optimal.

- Consider assigning a point scale to the four information quality sub-categories.

- Make sure the online report symbols are current.

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

- It is a clear repeatable process for developing conclusions but a primitive basis so far.

- Some are not satisfied with information rating and believe it should be changed to “inadequate.”

- Three indicators still are unreported. So the data set is incomplete.

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

- Change condition to “poor” with the ratings basis for “poor” ratings changed to when less than half of the indicators have adequate information quality.
f. Has the Department appropriately assessed the current trend measured by the indicator, when compared to the Desired Trend Statement?

- There is no data series available to assess trend.

g. 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 applicable for this indicator.

h. 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?

- Yes, but the challenge remains to provide capacity to maintain the other 18 indicators.

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

- Indicator should also address data relevance as it is not covered by other four information sub-categories but it came up in the evaluations for some of the other 18 indicators.

- Can low ratings help focus better cooperation and coordination on data collection in those areas? Illuminating those gaps is one purpose of the indicator framework. If a high priority is placed on informing the indicators, there may be an opportunity to restore budgets for this kind of work.

- Better tie indicators to required statewide forest assessments like the northeast states have done.

- Consider scoring of data sources.

- Data is drawn from sources not designed specifically for the indicators.

- More formal interagency coordination for indicator data collection and reporting is needed.

- Learn from what other states have done or work at larger and smaller scales, especially where they have succeeded in reporting high quality indicator data. If indicators were compared both within Oregon and across other regions we could compare and learn about how different approaches yield different results.

- Look towards building common western states indicators.

- Consider addressing the importance of forests to people in a future indicator.
Logic-based Evaluation of Forest Ecosystem Sustainability

Keith Reynolds (PNW Research Station) presented an illustration of the utility of a logic-based approach in designing a formal specification to evaluate criteria and indicators. He highlighted the roles of science and policy in this effort. Background information is available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecosystem_Management_Decision_Support

Keith made the following observations during his presentation:

- A barrier to greater use of this logic model is politics and fear of the answers such an analysis might provide. There is some subjectivity involved in the organization and establishing the relationships in the logic model. Who should make those decisions?

- There is currently insufficient data for the Oregon indicators to fully inform a logic model. A lack of data means lack of evidence. But the model can actually be used to evaluate how to fill in missing data gaps most efficiently.

Future of the Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests

The meeting participants shared thoughts about the future of the Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests and possible next steps. The discussion was directed by the following questions:

1. *Are Roundtable concept paper, charter and Declaration of Cooperation documents still relevant?*
   - In general, the Roundtable participants agree these documents remain relevant.
   - The Roundtable should not undertake new work outside of the Board’s charter at this time.

2. *To what extent have their aspirations been achieved?*
   - The Oregon Roundtable is a noble and novel idea.
   - Participants believe the original aspirations have only been partially achieved. Indicator evaluations have been limited by the information available.
   - The original Roundtable concept paper spoke to seeking a better understanding of the contribution of the various forest estates (federal, other public, tribal, private industrial, family forest, etc.) to sustainable forest management. It is not clear if or when that objective will be addressed.
   - Process has largely been driven by the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Forest Resources Planning Program Director’s energy and efforts. The program’s Principal Forest Economist has been responsible for managing seven of the 19 indicators. Both are leaving the agency this summer. It is not evident to Roundtable participants that anyone remaining in the department is up to speed on the Roundtable and ready/available to step into these roles.
3. **Has the Roundtable lived up to the original expectations?**
   - Some participants have found the process interesting and engaging.
   - A greater number and diversity of Roundtable participants is needed. New methods are needed to get the right people at the table.
   - The Columbia River Gorge Commission staff sees significant value in the indicator framework and is adapting concepts for that local scale.

4. **What have we learned?**
   - We have learned some forest resource conditions and trends are not as good as we thought they were.
   - We picked a difficult way to evaluate the indicators.
   - Roundtable concept has not caught fire due to its complexity and time commitment needed.
   - Indicator results are a call to action. Roundtable participants are now the most knowledgeable of anyone on these topics. More work is needed, including a “synthesis” of the entire body of indicator information to assess how Oregon is doing compared to the desired triple-bottom line of environmental, economic, and social sustainability.
   - The big negative and big positive indicator conditions and trends being reported really tell a story. Are we asking the right questions? Pesticides are not being addressed and social indicators are lacking. What else is missing?
   - The Roundtable has been a really good “focus group” for the Department of Forestry and the Board of Forestry but may not be the best group to now undertake an indicator synthesis project.
   - We need to look at other technologies for truly statewide Roundtable communication and collaboration.

5. **Should the Roundtable continue to exist?**
   - The Roundtable is chartered to continue operating through December 2012. Some participants argue if not the Roundtable, who else will engage to meet the charter’s objectives? Others believe they cannot commit to more time on this process. A real service has been provided, but it should not be an open-ended commitment and process.
   - There is concern about losing momentum with ODF staff retirements.
   - The Leadership Group and the Board should assess whether the Roundtable is yielding sufficient value to justify the time and resources invested.

6. **What possibilities should be considered for future Roundtable work (with the “how” to be determined later)?**
   - Roundtable participants generally believe the indicator evaluation work is a value-added process. Continued work is needed to improve the indicators and to keep the Board of Forestry informed on their conclusions. The indicators should remain central to the Board’s strategic planning. However, the Board should be given a range of options on how to proceed from here, which could include:
     a. Keeping the Roundtable effort a finite process focused in indicator evaluations.
Finish indicator evaluations and then the Roundtable process should be suspended until further Board of Forestry direction is provided. The indicator synthesis is not part of the Roundtable charter. Some participants believe ODF resources are better spent on its three core business functions.

b. Continue to drive the process until we have good conditions, positive trends, and quality information for all Oregon indicators.

c. For the three indicators without first reports, there is interest in considering alternative metrics and/or protocols that can be immediately implemented.

d. Further work on a “framework for indicator integration” leading to an “indicator synthesis” was supported by several participants. Should this synthesis occur at the indicator level, Forestry Program for Oregon goal level, or both? Options could include:
   i. Delaying synthesis work until indicator data and trend information is more complete,
   ii. Making recommendations to the Board on how others could continue evolution of a synthesis process,
   iii. Continued Roundtable engagement in a synthesis process—at least initially to define its superstructure (probably less painful than indicator evaluation work to date), or
   iv. Spin-off synthesis work to another group for continued work.

e. Anticipate a significant new workload if the Board asks the Roundtable to lead an indicator review and revision process. The Roundtable probably cannot accomplish both that and an indicator synthesis.

f. Take advantage of the 2011 International Year of Forests and use the Roundtable forum to promote greater awareness of sustainable forest management.

g. Promote a wider conversation among Oregonians exploring the importance of forests to people and evaluating the current indicators’ relevance to those values. The 2010 Oregonians’ values and beliefs study provides a strong foundation for such work.

h. Work to better incorporate reference conditions for the indicators. That concept is not limited to “historic” or “desired” conditions, but rather to the outer bounds of sustainable forest management, within which a range of sustainable pathways can be followed.

i. A better explanation is needed of the Board of Forestry’s strategic planning process and how indicator reports can directly influence future Forestry Program for Oregon objective revisions, Board priorities, and Board work planning.

7. What ideas do Declaration of Cooperation co-signers have for possible future Roundtable projects?

- The Bureau of Land Management is willing to remain committed to the Roundtable, as stated in the Declaration of Cooperation. It is important for the Roundtable Leadership Group to assess if it has received the support it expected from the BLM and other organizations that signed the Declaration.
- USDA Forest Service Region Six regards the Roundtable experience as positive.
- More effort is needed to institutionalize the sustainable forest management framework within participating agencies at the field level.
Next Steps

ODF staff and the Roundtable Leadership Group will prepare a Roundtable status report to be presented to the Board of Forestry as a consent agenda item at its July 29, 2011 meeting in Coos Bay. Summary will include the number of meetings conducted under the Board’s charter and who has been involved. The indicator “horse race” matrix and the Indicator A.a. summary matrix will be included. May Roundtable meeting participants and other selected past Roundtable participants will be given the opportunity to review and comment on the status report before it is finalized.

The participants agreed that while staff transitions within ODF are underway to not schedule another meeting until the fall of 2011, at the earliest, and then decided if and how the Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests will proceed.

Reports From Roundtable Participants - Recent Sustainable Forestry Developments

State Forester Doug Decker thanked the Roundtable for its’ work to date and discussed it in the current context of other Board and Department of Forestry priorities.

“Structure Oregon” will be held at the Oregon Convention Center in June. It will bring together green builders and Oregon wood products manufacturers with a focus using wood, particularly local wood. (http://www.structureoregon2011.com/)

Information on the Columbia River Gorge Commission’s work on a “Vital Signs Indicators Project” was shared. (http://gorgevitalsigns.org/)

David reported on a presentation about the Roundtable to the Klamath-Lake Forest Health Partnership. That collaborative group expressed interest in being able to access indicator information broken down to their local scale. They also would like the Roundtable to consider providing tools to local groups to bring the statewide sustainable forest management conversation down to local groups throughout the state. In response, Roundtable participants noted that the Roundtable will need agency partners besides ODF and the Board to participate in multiple local forums, as well as to continue to manage a statewide forum. More effort is needed to institutionalize the sustainable forest management framework within participating agencies at the field level.

The topic of possible western state’s agreement on common set or core indicators is being discussed at this week’s Western Forestry Leadership Coalition meeting. The State of Oregon’s leadership in this area is highlighted in a Western Governors’ Association report introducing the topic.

The Board of Forestry will receive a report from its ad hoc Forest Cluster Working Group at its June 8 meeting. (http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/RESOURCE_PLANNING/forestclusterstrategy.shtml#Forest_Cluster_Working_Group_Report)
The Board of Forestry considered the public comments received on the draft 2011 *Forestry Program for Oregon* at its April 29 meeting and is expected to approve the strategic plan at its June 8 meeting.
Attachment A - Participants
Paul Barnum, Oregon Forest Resources Institute
Steve Calish, USDI Bureau of Land Management
Michele Dailey, Columbia River Gorge Commission
Doug Doust, USDA Forest Service
Janet McLennan
Susan Morre, OSU College of Forestry
John Poppino
Keith Reynolds, PNW Research Station
Dillon Sanders, Inbound, LLC
Rex Storm, Associated Oregon Loggers

Oregon Department of Forestry Staff: Doug Decker, David Morman, Andrew Yost, Cathy Clem,
Mediator: Mike Schnee