

Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan and companion Forest Management Plan

Virtual Meeting Open to the Public

Thursday, May 6, 2021

Meeting Summary

Introduction and Overview

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) is in the final phase of developing the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for Western Oregon State Forests. The HCP is currently undergoing environmental review under the federally required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. ODF is also in the process of developing a companion Forest Management Plan (cFMP) and Implementation Plans (IPs). It is important that the HCP, FMP, and IPs complement one another. As ODF updates the FMP and continues the HCP development process, a key goal of ODF is to provide information and engage in dialogue with all Oregonians who want to weigh in on these important planning efforts. As part of the stakeholder engagement process for the effort, ODF held a virtual meeting open to the public on May 6, 2021. The meeting was recorded and posted to the [ODF YouTube channel](#).

Purpose of Meeting

- Learn about the companion FMP & regional Implementation Plans and the engagement process for this effort
- Hear updates on the Administrative Draft Western Oregon State Forests HCP
- Hear updates on the HCP NEPA process

Attendees

Over 70 participants attended the meeting open to the public. Those in attendance represented conservation groups, county representatives, government agencies, industry representatives, recreation representatives, tribal representatives, and the general public, as well as members of the Scoping Team (a technical level HCP working group) and Steering Committee (a policy level HCP working group).

Notification Methods

ODF invited agencies, interested parties, stakeholders, members of the Steering Committee, members of the Scoping Team, and the general public to the meeting.

Notification methods included:

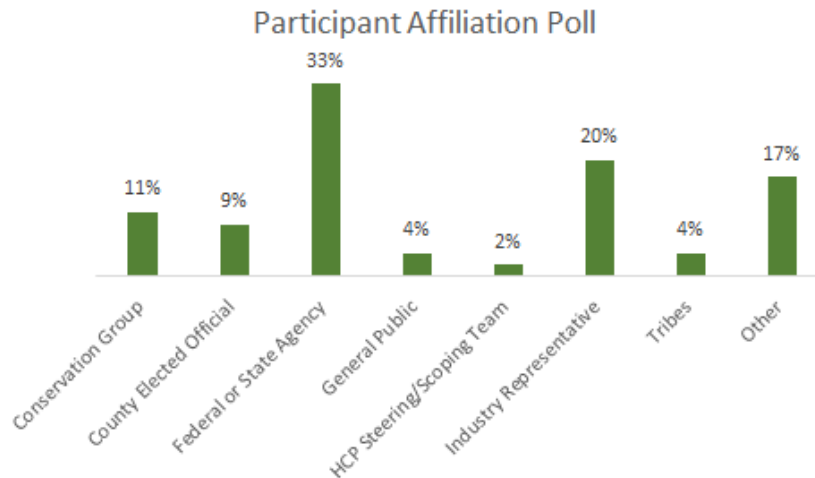
- Email distributions to interested parties
- Posts on ODF social media including Facebook and Twitter

- Meeting notice via FlashAlert to media in areas that would be potentially covered in the HCP (including Portland media)
- Post on the ODF news site
- Post on the Western Oregon HCP and cFMP project webpages
- Post on the State of Oregon Transparency website

Format

The meeting open to the public was a two-hour webinar that included presentations and question and answer discussion opportunities. The meeting was followed by an informal, one-hour virtual discussion period for participants to ask questions and discuss topics of interest. Participants were able to submit questions or comments through the chat to the meeting host and co-hosts.

Participants were encouraged to write and confirm their name as they joined the webinar to track attendees. Participants also received the opportunity to provide their affiliation through a webinar poll. The Participant Affiliation Poll received 46 responses.



Meeting Summary

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Overview

Sylvia Ciborowski, Kearns & West, reviewed webinar instructions before introducing Liz Dent, ODF. Liz thanked everyone for attending and for their interest in management of state forests. Liz updated attendees that the Administrative Draft of the HCP was completed at the end of March. NOAA Fisheries issued a Notice of Intent in early March that kicked off the NEPA process. Liz announced the development of a companion Forest Management Plan (cFMP) and explained that the cFMP is a more holistic strategy for the management of state forests. In 2020, ODF put a revised FMP process on hold to focus on the development of the HCP. Liz noted that the meeting would include updates on key changes made to the HCP from October to March, and how to provide feedback on the Draft HCP. She explained that any further changes made to the HCP will be facilitated through the federal NEPA process and that the Public Draft EIS is expected to be available in winter 2021.

Liz then provided context for the HCP, cFMP, and IPs. The HCP is a 70-year plan that works in tandem with the cFMP. The cFMP has a shorter time period than the HCP, and the IPs have a smaller scale and shorter, 10-year, timeframes. ODF is anticipating bringing the HCP, cFMP, and IPs to the Board of Forestry for adoption in 2023.

Sylvia sent out the affiliation poll to participants and went through the agenda: 1) Introduction: Companion Forest Management Plan (cFMP) and regional Implementation Plans (IPs), 2) Updates on the Western Oregon Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and NEPA Process, 3) Summary and Next Steps, 4) Information Discussion on Topics of Interest. Sylvia also provided a brief summary of discussion guidelines.

Introduction: Companion Forest Management Plan (cFMP) and regional Implementation Plans (IPs)

Sarah Lathrop, ODF, introduced Mike Wilson, the Resource Support Unit Manager for the State Forests Division. Mike provided an overview of the planning framework and the differences between the HCP, cFMP, IPs, and Annual Operations Plans (AOPs). He noted the importance of maintaining a balance between social, economic, and conservation values when moving from high level goals to implementation. He explained that the intent is that Board of Forestry adopt an FMP as administrative rule after making a finding that the FMP will achieve greatest permanent value. Mike discussed how the HCP and FMP complement one another and noted that, under the new FMP, the geographic scope and time horizon may change. The FMP is a long-range plan made up of guiding principles, goals, strategies, guidelines for implementation plans and asset management, and different implementation levels.

Mike moved on to IPs and AOPs, explaining that IPs are the mid-range plans that describe the current condition of the forest for specific geographic areas over a 10-year time horizon and AOPs provide the project level detail to support HCP and FMP goals. These plans are approved by the state forester and achieve a specific set of objectives for the FMP. IPs address key resources and land ownership, annual harvest objectives for timber harvest, current forest structure, and desired future conditions. AOPs are meant to achieve IP objectives. Objectives include habitat improvements, young stand management activities, monitoring, and research.

Mike described other efforts related to the FMP, including recreation and education and interpretation. He noted that the Santiam Restoration Plan will support development of content in the FMP and IPs related to the management of catastrophic events like the Labor Day Fires. This will serve as a useful template for learning how to build response for these events into the FMP. The Climate Change and Carbon Plan will also support development of climate change and carbon related content in the FMPs, IPs, and AOPs.

Mike concluded by noting that, as the cFMP is developed, the draft Western Oregon FMP that was paused in 2020 will serve as a starting point. There are 11 guiding principles that were approved by the Board of Forestry in this plan that will be carried over.

Sarah Lathrop introduced herself as the Operations Project Leader for the State Forest Division. She described the FMP and IP timeline and highlighted Board of Forestry meetings. Sarah noted that execution is expected to begin on June 1. The IPs will be developed on a staggered

timeline, with drafting anticipated to begin next May. The execution for cFMP includes: draft (10 months), refine (6 months), rulemaking and finalization (4 months). She anticipates presenting to the Board in February 2023. The execution for the IPs includes: data preparation (6 months), draft (modeling and analysis – 1 year), refinement (6 months). There will be a public comment period in spring of 2023 and submission for approval will follow.

Sarah explained that the Work Plan will be used as an opportunity to build meaningful engagement opportunities. Sarah walked the group through the cFMP Organizational Chart. She noted that a strong interprofessional team has been designed for this effort.

cFMP/IP Organizational Chart



Sarah introduced the Engagement Plan and noted that ODF would be working with Kearns & West to develop a strong and meaningful engagement process that builds on lessons learned over time. The Project team is working to finalize an Engagement Plan that will be available on the Project website soon. She noted that they want to offer input opportunities at multiple levels throughout the process and these will likely include workshops and stakeholder focus groups.

Sarah briefly went over next steps. The Core Team is meeting on a weekly basis with a deliverable of the cFMP Work Plan. The Core Team will prioritize FMP content, develop schedule for workshops, and look for IP dependencies. The team is working on model updates and anticipates engaging Districts in the process. She noted that upcoming key dates include the June Board of Forestry Update and October 2021 and April 2022 meetings open to the public.

Q&A and Discussion

Sylvia Ciborowski asked for any clarifying questions. She asked everyone to think about the current FMP; what is working well and what do you want to make sure continues? What would you change and why? She noted that, on the process side, there's interest in what stakeholders and the public are most interested in engaging on.

- **Question:** Questions about who is on the FMP Steering Committee, and whether ODF considered adding any other members from the counties specifically or any outside agency or stakeholder groups.
 - ODF: Liz Dent, Andy White, Lena Tucker, and Dave Larson are the Steering Committee members. The reason the team is small and internal is because the role and purpose of the Steering Committee is to track the work that's getting done and to give the project team a place to vet questions around high level direction of the work that they're doing. It's focused on project management rather than policy development. ODF is committed to county engagement and can consider how best to do that. The Forest Trust Lands Advisory Committee is made up by the 15 counties and serves as an Advisory Committee to the Board; really rely on this group for these types of discussions.

- **Question:** Can you say more about the Carbon Plan?
 - Mike Wilson: The state agency is required to have a Carbon Plan. It is in early draft phase and applies to the agency as a whole, and has to do with maintaining a resilient forest in response to disturbance or situations. For example, identifying areas especially sensitive to climate threats and working to conserve those, disease and pest issues, and identifying areas that might be good for high carbon storage. There is some overlap with HCP strategies.

- **Questions and Comments:** Questions and comments about opportunities for public involvement in developing the Carbon Plan.
 - ODF: The plan is to have a kickoff in late May to share how the Carbon Plan is being developed and to initiate a public comment process. The agency will be looking for input on the draft and it will be released May 27. There will be a series of targeted engagement meetings over the summer to look through the lens of equity and inclusion, revise the Plan in spring and summer, and plan a workshop for the Board to review with a decision by the end of 2021. Additionally, stakeholders can be engaged in topics related to carbon as part of the cFMP planning process.
 - **Comment:** The Carbon Plan should include attention to rotation lengths. This is a long-term concern in relation to long-term forest management and speaks to the ability of state forests to be a biodiversity reserve. ODF has an important role to play in being a counter-balance to the way private lands are being managed.
 - **Comment:** It seems like there is a lot of interest in engaging in the carbon issue. Suggest conversations around carbon sequestration in a Task Force that could then provide input into the FMP group.
 - Liz Dent: Will consider the Task Force idea. ODF does have a State Forest Advisory Committee. This is a volunteer group with broad range of experience and interests that ODF utilizes for policy and discussions. Membership of the group does change over time and there is a process by which people are selected to be on the Committee. ODF presents feedback from the group to the Board.

- **Question:** Are there going to be smaller stakeholder meetings in between large public meetings? If there are, when will that schedule be released?
 - Sarah Lathrop: We haven't set dates yet. The Core Team is working on a content delivery schedule. Our goal is to involve stakeholders in the development process and to involve the right people at the right time so this input can be gathered. We will create a more detailed schedule when we know when topics will be ready for discussion.

- **Question:** Where can we get information and documents related to the FMP process?
 - ODF: Information is available at the ODF websites. A video recording of today's meeting will also be available online.
 - HCP Website: <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/aboutodf/Pages/HCP-initiative.aspx>
 - FMP Website: <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/aboutodf/pages/fmp-companion.aspx>
 - [Sign up for ODF updates](#)

- **Question:** The past draft of the FMP was aspirational in tone and lacked specificity. Is that changing or is it still going to look like it did a year ago?
 - Mike Wilson: It is changing, as ODF heard that a lot of people wanted more detail. The intent is to define the timber management strategy, and to include measurable outcomes and key performance measures that are meaningful.

- **Question:** Will the FMP include a projected harvest level?
 - Mike Wilson: We will be refining those estimates as part of the process. We will be doing updates over the summer (data updates) and this fall we anticipate beginning modeling. We have several habitat models in the HCP tied to forest inventory metrics that will give us a more precise estimate of harvest and habitat outcomes. The IPs will include harvest objectives for the IP period and they will likely be presented as an appendix in the FMP.

- **Comment:** Oregon Trout Unlimited has interest in clean and abundant water for wildlife, fish, and human supply. We would like to be involved and have an interest in making sure that we have adequate protections for water.

- **Question:** Question about timing of Board of Forestry meetings, and which will be informational updates and which will include discussion, public comment, and decision-making.
 - Liz Dent: 1) Public comment at Board meetings – they are talking about what it looks like to create space for public comment outside of public meetings. Written public comments are always welcomed and encouraged. We think there will be a change to include public comment outside of decision items, but this hasn't been determined yet. 2) Working with the board – the Board is briefed throughout the year and we characterize these meetings as updates because they are not asked to make a specific decision at these meetings.

Updates on the Western Oregon HCP

Troy Rahmig introduced himself as the project manager for the technical team and provided background on where the team is in the process. Troy reviewed the timeline for the HCP and reminded everyone that the Administrative Draft was completed on March 31. He noted that the HCP process will be a little quiet while the NEPA process plays out. He asked anyone with questions about the draft to reach out to Cindy Kolomechuk or himself. He informed everyone that the next opportunity for public engagement will be during the official NEPA review period. This is a required 45-day public review period and during this time the Public Draft EIS and Public Draft HCP will be available for review. Any comments received during public review will be responded to as part of the Final EIS in December/January.

Troy noted that an HCP draft was posted on the ODF website in October 2020. The ICF/ODF team filled in gaps during that time, and it is now a complete Administrative Draft. The changes that happened were primarily clarifying changes, tightening up the document and addressing inconsistencies. However, there was some new technical information developed during this time and added as additional detail in the HCP or as appendices. Troy reminded everyone that the Draft is available on the [website](#) along with the Key Changes document.

Mike Wilson discussed the Conservation Fund, which has been fully described in the HCP. The Conservation Fund sets timber harvest dollars aside for species conservation and is funded at a rate of \$5/1000 board-feet. The Conservation Fund provides certainty for conservation projects because it is a dedicated source of funding overtime. There will be an estimated \$325,000 for aquatic projects and \$250,000 for terrestrial projects per year with the remainder available for either category. These will be tracked and recorded to ensure funds are spent on appropriate projects. Funding for terrestrial projects is anticipated to largely be spent on barred owl management.

Mike provided an update on the Monitoring and Adaptive Management Chapter. He noted that the Aquatic and Riparian Monitoring Program will focus on habitat monitoring, water quality and quantity, and structure. ODF will partner with ODFW to implement and expand the aquatic inventory program. Terrestrial monitoring will include habitat monitoring to document changes in habitat quality and quantity over time and will include species monitoring to document response to conservation actions. Annual reporting will focus on compliance with HCP strategies and five-year check-ins will be used to assess habitat trends. A 10-year comprehensive review will be conducted in preparation for the next 10-year IP cycle. This will be an opportunity to adjust policies and programs to more efficiently implement the HCP. Mike stressed that adaptive management will be used at all levels within the HCP to address policy and operational concerns. While adaptive management can be applied at any point during the permit term, the most formal use of this will be during the 10-year review. Adaptation to large scale changes like climate change will be conducted in conjunction with state and federal efforts.

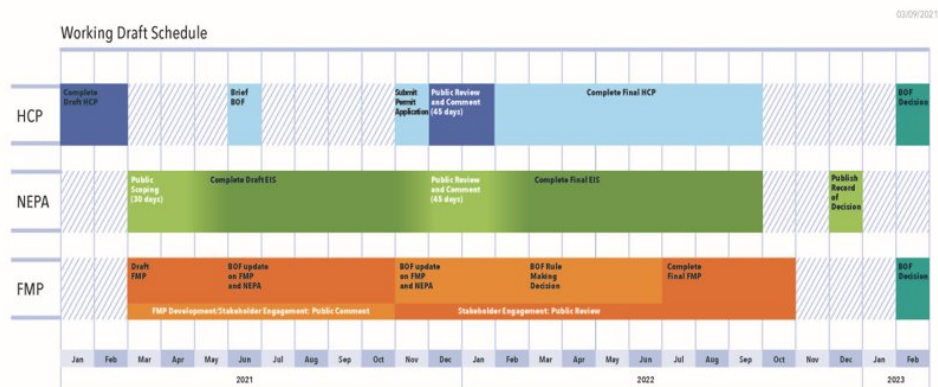
Nick Palazzotto introduced himself as the lead wildlife biologist for ODF. Nick discussed the management of habitat conservation areas (HCAs). He explained that HCAs are the primary strategy used to achieve the biological goals and objectives of specific species. The HCAs comprise a 275,000-acre area (43%) of the permit area. The size and proportion of HCAs varies by planning area and is dependent on a number of factors, including geography and ownership. One third of the acres in the HCAs are in sites where a covered species is known to occur and ODF is not proposing timber harvest in these areas. One third of the acres are in poor or difficult

to manage areas and ODF is not proposing timber harvest in these areas either. The final third is a candidate for active management. Nick explained that both passive and active management will be used within the HCAs. Activities inside of the HCAs will not be economically driven; the driver will be to increase the quality and quantity of habitat during the permit term. Activity is proposed on approximately 75,000 acres within HCAs. This activity will occur primarily within the first 30 years to allow for full gains to be made over the 70-year period. Management activities in the HCAs will follow principles of ecological forestry: emulating small scale natural disturbances, protecting biological legacies for wildlife habitat, and promoting stand and landscape complexity and diversity. Management activities will occur primarily in younger stands and dense stands with simple structure. There will be additional focus on conifer restoration, alder dominated stands, and areas with moderate to severe Swiss Needle Cast infestations. Reforestation work will focus on developing high quality habitat.

Sylvia Ciborowski acknowledged that, for participants new to the process, this may feel like a lot of information. For those that have been part of the process, this was intended to be a recap of where things landed. Sylvia thanked Mike and Nick before turning it over to Tere to provide an update on the NEPA process.

Update on NEPA Process

Tere O'Rourke provided a brief update on the NEPA process, noting that federal agencies will be making a Decision on whether or not to issue an Incidental Take Permit under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Tere explained that the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will analyze the HCP, presented as the Administrative Draft, as well as other alternatives. The NEPA process includes identifying the Purpose and Need for the project and holding a Scoping period which occurred in March-April 2021. The team is currently analyzing the comments provided during the Scoping period and identifying potential alternatives. From June through December, NOAA Fisheries will develop a draft EIS and hold another public comment period in late December or early January. After public comment is considered, a Final EIS will be released and a Permit Decision will be made.



Q&A Discussion

Sylvia Ciborowski asked if there were any questions or comments.

- **Question:** Is there a target number of species that ODF is hoping to achieve through the HCP?

- Nick Palazzotto: Most monitoring would occur within the HCAs. The intent is to measure whether we are meeting the goal of persistence of species over time. Monitoring is not pegged to species numbers; it is focused on measuring growth of habitat as defined in the biological objectives.
- **Question**: Part of the reason for pursuing the HCP was that the department was spending a lot of money on surveys. How does the cost of monitoring under the HCP compare to the cost of surveys under take avoidance?
 - Nick Palazzotto: The HCP keep costs relatively fixed as opposed to two decades of increasing costs under take avoidance. Under monitoring, we are spending money asking more valuable questions about species responses and conservation.
 - Liz Dent: The other challenge with using the take avoidance approach is that we have to do surveys for several years ahead of the timber sale and, whether we detect the species or not, we may have to adjust the timber sale boundary or drop the sale altogether or apply new restrictions. This operation-by-operation approach is costly.
- **Question**: When will the public learn which alternatives are being analyzed under NEPA?
 - Tere O'Rourke: NOAA Fisheries is reviewing Scoping comments and developing alternatives that represent a reasonable range of alternatives. These will be presented in the Public Draft EIS in December or January. You can view comments now by going to [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).
- **Question**: Does the department track and report on conservation projects done as part of timber sales?
 - Mike Wilson: ODF reports projects as part of annual reports to Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (for example, barrier removals, replacing or improving a fish passage on a culvert).

Summary and Next Steps

Sylvia Ciborowski went over next steps, reminding everyone that the next meeting open to the public to provide update on FMP will likely be in October 2021. She asked the group to send requests to the FMP contact for ODF (Sarah Lathrop) if there are other topics people want to discuss in a small group setting.

Liz Dent thanked participants and recognized that many people have been part of the process for a long time. She welcomed those jumping in and expressed excitement about hearing their ideas. She noted that ODF will debrief internally and think about what they heard during the meeting. Managing the land base for multiple benefits brings multiple voices together. ODF will be thinking about how best to have a collaborative process to secure greatest permanent value.

Discussion on Topics of Interest

Sylvia Ciborowski opened the meeting to discuss topics of interest. No requests for further discussion were made and the meeting was closed.