

Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan Public Kick-Off Meeting Thursday, March 21, 2019 – Salem, OR

Meeting Summary

Introduction and Overview

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) is considering a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for forest lands in western Oregon. As part of the stakeholder engagement process for the effort, ODF held a public kick-off meeting on March 21st, 2019 in Salem, Oregon. The meeting was also livestreamed for accessibility by additional audience members.

The livestream is available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQNHQlpPpdI&feature=youtu.be>.

Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Introduce the Western Oregon State Forests HCP process to a wide range of stakeholders.
- Present the Phase 2 Scope of Work and Schedule to the public.
- Explain the process, including the roles of the policy level Steering Committee, technical level Scoping Team, and stakeholder engagement.

The intended outcomes of the meeting were to:

- Provide a high-level overview and introduction to the HCP process, timeline, and milestones.
- Meet the agencies and stakeholders engaged in the effort and provide the opportunity for questions and comments.

Number of Attendees

24 individuals attended the public kick-off meeting and an additional 31 individuals participated in the livestream. Those in attendance represented conservationist groups, industry representatives, government agencies, and county representatives.

Notification Methods

ODF invited agencies, interested parties, stakeholders, members of the Steering Committee and Scoping Team, and the general public to the public kick-off 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 project webpage
- Post on the State of Oregon Transparency Website

Format

The public kick-off meeting included a two-hour meeting and question and answer discussion period. The meeting was followed by an informal, one-hour meet-n-greet for participants to ask questions one-on-one and to meet other stakeholders and agency partners engaged in the process. Participants were encouraged to sign in as they arrived and create a name tag. There was the option to fill out and drop off a public input card to provide additional feedback and comments to the project team.

The public kick-off meeting was livestreamed for those who could not attend in person. Online participants were able to submit questions via email to be addressed during the meeting.

Meeting Summary

Introductions

Liz Dent, ODF, provided an overview of the HCP process and introduced the project team that includes: Cindy Kolomechuk, ODF; Troy Rahmig, ICF; Brett Brownscomb, Oregon Consensus; Deb Nudelman, Kearns & West; and Sylvia Ciborowski, Kearns & West.

Brett Brownscomb explained Oregon Consensus' role as providing a neutral forum for parties to reach agreement on contentious public issues. Deb Nudelman and Sylvia Ciborowski presented Kearns & West's role as leading the public engagement and facilitation process.

Participants were asked to provide brief introductions.

Steering Committee Member Introductions

Members of the Steering Committee introduced themselves and briefly addressed two questions:

1. Why is your agency motivated to consider a potential HCP for Western Oregon and why is this effort a priority to you?
2. From your perspective, what makes this HCP process different from past efforts?

The following Steering Committee members introduced themselves and addressed the questions:

- **Kim Kratz, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries** – NOAA Fisheries is involved to provide input on the HCP and the Endangered Species Act. The HCP is a priority because there is value in conservation and preventative actions and an HCP can address economic and environmental needs. There are a few key components of a successful HCP including: shared commitment between management levels, a degree of trust across all parties and agencies, and a willingness to explore innovative and science-based solutions. This HCP process has these elements.
- **Leah Feldon, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)** – DEQ's mission is to protect and restore Oregon's land and water. An HCP supports DEQ's efforts. DEQ is committed to a thorough, collaborative process and often works with sister agencies with overlapping objectives. We see the value in collaborating across agency perspectives.
- **Doug Cottam, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)** – As ODFW manages fish and wildlife in Oregon, many of which are threatened or endangered, ODFW works alongside and consults with other state agencies. An HCP provides cost efficiency, certainty, and security for agencies, staff, and for the state forests. A successful HCP will benefit ODF and other state agencies as well as Oregon's fish and wildlife.
- **Dan Edge, Oregon State University** – Dan Edge has a background that is valuable to developing an HCP. He is a researcher and biologist and served on the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Land Management Committee. Oregon State University produces much of the science that will be relevant to the HCP conversations. OSU scientists may review some of the products and provide input throughout this process.

Presentation: Western Oregon HCP Overview

Troy Rahmig, ICF, presented an overview of the Western Oregon HCP including the background, purpose, scope, scale, process, and timeline.

The main topics presented include:

- Overview of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)
- Permit area and permit term of the HCP
- Covered activities and covered species

- HCP process timeline, phases, and Steering Committee and Scoping Team roles
- HCP draft development and key milestones

Public Engagement Process

Following the presentation, Sylvia presented on the stakeholder engagement process. Sylvia outlined the roles of various groups: the Board of Forestry is the decision maker, ODF is the convener of the process, the Steering Committee provides policy guidance, and the Scoping Team provides technical guidance. The public, including stakeholders and Forest Trust Lands Advisory Committee, plays a role in providing input at all levels. Sylvia mentioned the public engagement strategy is still being developed and will be shaped in part by comments from today's meeting. It is anticipated that the process will include public meetings, email and website informational updates, and stakeholder engagement meetings or workshops for deeper-level discussions at key milestones.

Public Input and Questions and Answers

A discussion and question and answer period followed the presentation. Participants were asked to consider the following questions during the discussion:

- What key issues should we keep in mind as we move forward in the HCP process?
- What would contribute to an overall successful outcome?
- What ideas do you have for shaping a productive engagement process?

Below are key topics from that discussion, as well as a more detailed summary of input, questions, and answers.

Input and Q&A Key Themes

The main topics that were brought up during the discussion period included:

- Science and data used to inform the HCP process
- Metrics used to monitor HCP goals and objectives and the metrics used to evaluate the overall success of the HCP
- Predictions and modeling for the future, including climate change, wildfire, and ecological changes
- Adaptability and modification of the HCP over its anticipated 50-year permit term
- Timeline and calendar objective of the HCP process
- Funding for the HCP

Input and Q&A Summary

Participant comments and questions and project team responses during the discussion period included:

- Q: What role will existing science play in the development of the HCP?
 - A: The team is working to identify the best available science, and that science will be incorporated into development of the process. The best available science will be used in developing strategies related to the covered species list, developing the monitoring program, and all other aspects of the HCP.

- Q: Can you clarify what the permit is? Who issues the permit? Is the HCP itself a permit?
 - A: The HCP is not a permit itself but will include a permit. There is another process that writes the Incidental Take Permit following the HCP. The permit is determined by the activities listed and the species listed in the HCP. The permit allows a certain amount of incidental take and mitigates anything that cannot be avoided.
 - ODF currently operates under take avoidance, meaning there needs to be a demonstration or proof of avoiding take. For example, prior to a project activity, a group must demonstrate a listed species is not in the project area or must modify the activity to accommodate the species.
 - The Incidental Take Permit, accompanied with the HCP, would allow take to occur at some level should an HCP be implemented.

- Q: Since the HCP will cover a 50-year term, how is the process taking into account the uncertainty of ecological features and of forest fires?
 - The HCP will include monitoring process, as well as adaptive management strategies to adjust to future conditions.
 - Regarding wild fire, we try to estimate what fire will look like in the future, specifically estimating the size and frequency of fires, during the HCP development process.

- Q: An HCP needs a secure funding source and there are very expensive restoration projects. What agencies are being considered for funding sources? How does the funding of restoration services conflict with other uses of funds that come from ODF?
 - A: The State Forest Division does not receive public funding and is primarily funded by the sale of timber. Funding strategies are an important piece in developing the HCP and the process will include an analysis to determine if the funding for restoration and monitoring is sufficient. Other agencies are not being asked to help fund the HCP effort.

- Q: It seems that the HCP process has the potential for delay if the project team and committees seek new data, solicit public input, and consider new science.

How will the process take this potential for delay into account, and what does the timeline look like?

- A: The Western Oregon HCP process is operating under an ambitious 3-year timeline driven by outcomes and deliverables. The project team feels the ambitious timeline is possible because of all the work that has already occurred and because of the commitment of those who are currently engaged and involved in the process. Momentum is valuable for maintaining progress, and the team will seek to stay on schedule while also being flexible if new data or input requires us to slow down.
- Q: How does climate change fit into the HCP and how is that integrated and included in the discussion?
 - Climate change is viewed as a certainty and is the lens by which we view and predict the ecological future. The intent is to develop conservation strategies for each species that are resilient within the context of climate change. The modeling and projections of the HCP design incorporates how habitat stressors change with climate changes.
- Q: What is the process to make modifications to the HCP? How long do the modifications take?
 - A: There will be monitoring of various metrics to determine if we are achieving the goals of the HCP. The HCP utilizes an adaptive management process that allows for administrated changes to occur and provides the ability for ODF to manage lands toward meeting agreed upon objectives. These changes are built into the process and no new agreements are needed.
 - If new information is found in the future during the HCP permit term, it is possible to amend the HCP. For example, an amendment could be made to add a new species to the list. A major amendment would require a formal process that can take several years.
- Q: Can you explain what it means to have federal agencies provide no surprises assurances?
 - A: The phrase means it is the responsibility of ODF to alert other agencies and determine if a change to the HCP is needed in order to meet the biological objectives. There is an annual reporting process and on-going monitoring process. If there is a need for a change it will not come as a surprise to the agencies involved.
- Comment: One of the goals of the HCP is to maximize long term assurance and minimize the need for amendment. The lands are working lands; there is an economic component missing from this goal.
 - A: That goal is an objective for the process; the Steering Committee is developing program goals for the HCP. The intent is to develop a plan that will stand the test of time. The Steering Committee is looking at the economic, social, and environmental benefits. ODF will need to be able to

afford to implement the plan, so the goals will include an economic component.

- Q: How will metrics be developed to measure the goals and outcomes? How will we know that the HCP is effective?
 - A: Metrics will be developed for biological goals to help assess whether there is a benefit to a species overtime. The HCP will include a monitoring program to see if the HCP is in compliance and to examine if the task designed to meet an objective is being implemented and if the task is working to meet that objective. When the details of the HCP process are developed, the evaluation methods will be more tangible and specific.

- Q: What is the benchmark you are using to establish a baseline to measure change? The Steering Committee and Scoping Team are not as broad as anticipated for a group that is establishing the goals for the HCP.

- Q: Would the metrics be confined to the permit area or plan area?
 - A: The metrics would be confined to the permit area. The HCP is limited to the permit area as we cannot depend on what is happening outside the permit area.

- Q: Will pesticide use be included in covered activities list?
 - A: Pesticides can be proposed as a covered activity. ODF uses pesticides in state forests for a variety of reasons and that likely won't change in the next 50 years, thus pesticide use will most likely be included as a covered activity. For any covered activity, there would be a discussion as to how the activity will affect a species and the HCP would include a strategy to offset the effects. If an activity is not covered under the HCP, then that activity would be addressed through a take avoidance strategy.

Key Themes from Public Input Forms

Three members of the public provided comments on public input cards. Key themes include:

- Participants expressed their interest in receiving email updates about the process and attending meetings to hear updates.
- Participants found the public kick-off meeting helpful.
- Participants expressed the value in being informed throughout the process, ODF's goal in implementing an HCP, and the expected outcomes.
- Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn about the Western Oregon HCP process and the opportunity to meet other stakeholders.