

Work Plan:	State Forests
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## **DIVISION OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose & Objective**

The Oregon Department of Forestry, State Forests Division, manages approximately 730,000 acres of forestlands across Oregon. These state forestlands are actively managed to provide economic, environmental, and social benefits to Oregonians. Timber sales on these forests create jobs and generate revenue that fund counties, local districts, and schools throughout the state. These forests also offer recreation and educational opportunities, and provide essential wildlife habitat and clean water. Management costs associated with managing these public forests are funded primarily through the sale of timber off these lands.

The Division's core businesses include financial accounting and log tracking, timber sale contracting and administration, fish and wildlife surveys and implementation of conservation measures. We collect, manage, and analyze data and report outcomes. Field and Salem staff conduct and coordinate reforestation activities, road construction and maintenance, collaborate with local communities and other organizations on habitat improvement projects, maintain recreation facilities and opportunities, and provide educational programs to schools and the public.

### **Current Issues and Focus**

It has become increasingly difficult to support all priority work and core business. Unanticipated legal actions have further impacted workloads, are costly, and often displace other priority work. We are addressing these issues on multiple fronts. We modernized our organizational structure to more effectively manage Oregon's state forests and deliver greatest permanent value to Oregonians now and into the future. We continue to make significant improvements in our business processes. We are revisiting policies and are seeking to diversify funding streams so we can sustainably manage state forests to provide the full range of social, economic, and environmental benefits. This effort includes potential changes to Forest Management Plans and the development of a Habitat Conservation Plan, both of which are intended to improve financial and conservation outcomes within the context of the Greatest Permanent Value mandate.

The Santiam State Forest was greatly impacted by the Labor Day fires, resulting in over half of the forest suffering some level of damage. Restoration and recovery efforts will be a significant focus for the Division over the next few years.

## Achievements

- The Division completed the Draft Western Oregon FMP and submitted it to the Board in April 2020.
- The Division continued with its efforts to have a robust public outreach and engagement process for both the FMP and HCP. This included:
  - A workshop for the Counties and stakeholders to review and provide input on the measureable outcomes proposed in the draft FMP;
  - Presentation and discussion of the draft FMP with the Forest Trust Lands Advisory Committee (FTLAC);
  - Consistent outreach and invitation to FTLAC to engage during development of the HCP;
  - Presentation and discussion of the draft FMP with the State Forests Advisory Committee (SFAC);
  - Presentation and discussion of the draft FMP with the public-at-large at three separate meetings (two in Salem, and one in Astoria at the invite of the Clatsop Board of Commissioners);
  - An open public comment period, paired with an online survey to collect feedback on the FMP and management of State Forest lands;
  - Quarterly HCP meetings for the public-at-large, where draft HCP work products are presented;
  - Individual and focus group (recreation, forest industry, and conservation) meetings between the project team and stakeholders for focused discussion and feedback for the HCP Steering Committee and Scoping Team to consider;
  - Meetings to discuss the modeling done for the HCP with industry and conservation stakeholders;
  - Regular updates on the HCP at SFAC, Conservation Collaboration, and Industry Ad-Hoc meetings;
  - A meeting with the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde; and
  - Several meetings with the FTLAC.
- The Division has adapted these outreach and engagement efforts in light of the COVID-19 pandemic to conduct these meetings solely as webinars (a webinar option was always available prior). These webinars have been very successful and have been well-attended by the public and our County partners.
- The Division completed the Draft HCP and presented it to the Board in October 2020. The Draft HCP includes:
  - HCP Mission and Vision;
  - HCP Program Goals;
  - Description of the Permit Area and Plan Area, and Permit Term;
  - A description of the Covered Activities and Covered Species;
  - The Conservation Strategy;
  - The Effects Analysis;

- A description of Monitoring and Adaptive Management associated with the HCP; and
- A description of HCP implementation, including the costs and funding of the HCP.
- The Division also submitted the Comparative Analysis prepared by its consultants in support of the Board's decision on whether to move the HCP into NEPA.

## **DIVISION TOPICS FOR THE BOARD OF FORESTRY 2020-2022**

The Division has been pursuing forest management policy work in parallel processes- Developing a Draft Western Oregon Forest Management Plan (FMP) and a Draft Western Oregon Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). Following the Board's decision in October of 2020, the Division is proceeding with continued development of the Habitat Conservation Plan for Western Oregon State Forests, including development of the FMP that will be adopted as a companion document to the HCP, using the draft Western Oregon State Forests FMP as a starting point.

### **ISSUE: Habitat Conservation Plan for Western Oregon State Forestlands**

#### Overview

The Board of Forestry has directed staff to continue exploring options for improving financial and conservation outcomes, including the pursuit of a programmatic Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance tool, such as a Habitat Conservation Plan.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this work is to develop a Western Oregon Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to achieve programmatic Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance. The State Forests Division is taking the following 3-phased approach to evaluate the possibility of an HCP to cover state forestland west of the Cascade Mountains:

- ✓ Phase 1: HCP Initiation/Scoping: *Completed*
- ✓ Phase 2: HCP Draft Development (*Completed*): Development of an administrative draft HCP that includes conservation measures and mechanisms to provide operational certainty into the future.
- ✓ Phase 3: National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process and Companion FMP development (*Pending*).
  - Submit the draft HCP into the Federal National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process.
  - An HCP must be coupled with a companion FMP. Concurrently draft a companion FMP drawing on the Draft Western Oregon FMP (see Issue below).

### **Board Deliverables with Timelines (see Work Plan Matrix)**

- ✓ October 2020: Decision Item
  - Administrative Draft HCP for decision to go into NEPA process.
    - Submit HCP into the NEPA process, which will take approximately 18 months.
    - Begin adapting the Draft Western Oregon FMP into the Companion FMP.
- ✓ June 2021: Informational update
  - Update on Draft HCP and NEPA process
  - Update on the companion FMP
- ✓ November 2021: Discussion Item
  - Present the Draft Companion FMP for review and discussion.
- ✓ March 2022: Decision Item
  - Present the Draft Companion FMP for decision to go into formal rulemaking process. FMP rulemaking: a minimum of 2 months.
- ✓ June 2022: Final Approval of Western Oregon Habitat Conservation Plan and companion Forest Management Plan

### **Outreach and Public Involvement**

Counties within which state forests are managed have a protected and recognizable interest in the management of these lands. The Forest Trust Land Advisory Committee is updated during scheduled meetings. The Department regularly and consistently invited FTLAC and Council of Forest Trust Land Counties to engage during the development of the HCP.

All standing stakeholder groups and committees (State Forests Advisory Committee, Conservation Collaboration, and Forest Industry Ad Hoc) have been invited to participate in the HCP scoping process. The parties have participated to varying degrees.

The Department recognizes the importance and value of reaching out to all Oregon's federally-recognized Tribes on issues related to managing Oregon's state forests. We will continue to pursue opportunities to meet with Tribal Chair Council and Tribal staff directors to listen and learn from the Tribes, seek opportunities for input and collaboration, and build relationships.

This work is being conducted collaboratively with our state and federal sister agencies including-National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - Fisheries, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of State Lands, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Environmental Quality.

**ISSUE: Santiam State Forest Restoration and Recovery**

The Santiam State Forest saw extensive damage in the Beachie Creek Fire of 2020. The Beachie Creek Fire was slowly growing in a remote, steep and rugged portion of U.S. Forest Service land in the Opal Creek Wilderness. A historic wind event on September 7, 2020 caused the fire to grow from about 500 acres to over 130,000 acres in a 24-hour span. Communities throughout the Santiam Canyon were evacuated. The fire claimed five lives, destroyed 470 homes as well as numerous businesses, decimated private and public forestland, and altered the Santiam Canyon for decades to come.

Approximately 24,700 acres of the Santiam State Forest were within the fire perimeter, but the fire burned in a mosaic pattern across the landscape with varying intensity. As part of this mission, ODF forests are managed for fire resiliency, including thinning activities that can help slow intensity and spread of fire. Several large ODF-managed tracts within the fire perimeter showed low-intensity burns, and it's possible that this management strategy contributed to reduced impact in these areas. Even so, many areas saw high or extreme fire intensity that killed most trees on the landscape and caused extensive damage to roads, trails and other infrastructure. These include some of the Santiam State Forest's most popular recreation areas, including Shellburg Falls, Rocky Top/Niagara areas, and the Rhody Lake/High Lakes areas. Additionally, the ODF district office in Lyons was destroyed in the fire.

The Division is evaluating the damage and determining what policy considerations may be needed to recover and restore these forest lands. Initially the Division has identified a rulemaking topic to address forest closures. Additional topics could arise as the evaluation of needs continues.

State Forests Division Work Plan	2020						2021						2022		
	Apr	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Jan	Mar	Apr	Jun	Jul	Sep	Nov	Jan	Mar
<b>Issue: Western Oregon Habitat Conservation Plan (including a companion FMP)</b>															
<b>Milestones</b>															
❖ BOF progress updates	i		i							i					
❖ Administrative Draft HCP with Decision to continue into NEPA process					d										
❖ Status of HCP and NEPA										i					
❖ If continuing to pursue an HCP - Begin Companion Western Oregon FMP					d					i					
❖ Rulemaking update on Companion FMP													i		
❖ Rulemaking begins on companion FMP															d
<b>Issue: Santiam State Forest Restoration and Recovery</b>															
<b>Milestones</b>															
Forest closure rulemaking								D							
Santiam State Forest Restoration Update								i							

**Matrix Key:**

- i – Informational item
- d – Preceding Decision item
- D – Final Decision item

**Color Key:**

- Green** – Milestone Completed
- Yellow** – Milestone Change
- Magenta** – Milestone Tabled or Stopped