

Work Plan: ODF State Forests

Version: 2022-2024 Final

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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 under a legal mandate to secure the “greatest permanent value to the people of Oregon” (ORS 530.050 and OAR 629-035-0020). To secure the greatest permanent value (GPV), these state forestlands are actively managed to create and maintain healthy productive forests that provide social, economic, and environmental benefits to Oregonians. Timber sales on these forests create jobs and generate revenue to support our county partners and provide funds for local districts and schools throughout the state. These forests offer recreation and educational opportunities and provide essential wildlife habitat and clean water. Costs associated with managing these public forests are funded primarily through the sale of timber from 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

Climate change is an existential problem that poses a threat to the health and resiliency of Oregon’s State Forests through increased severity and incidence of wildfire, drought, and greater susceptibility to insects and disease. The impacts of climate change differentially affect vulnerable populations, including people of color and lower income Oregonians. Most of the revenue from State Forest timber sales is distributed to 15 rural counties and then to local taxing districts, which can further exacerbate the impacts of climate change to communities that are dependent on natural-resource economies.

The costs associated with forest management and conservation are covered by a portion of the revenue generated from timber sales from these lands. Reliance on one source of revenue makes the Division vulnerable to the volatility of the timber market. We are addressing this issue on multiple fronts. We continue to make improvements in our business processes. We modernized our organizational structure to efficiently meet the expectations for managing public forests. We

continue to explore ways to diversify funding streams and build partnerships so we can sustainably manage state forests to deliver the greatest permanent value to Oregonians now and into the future.

The Board of Forestry establishes overarching policies that govern the management of State Forests in Forest Management Plans (FMPs). FMPs address a full range of forest and social resources such as timber management, protection of fish and wildlife, and providing for clean water and recreation. Among the many benefits provided from state forests is the protection of threatened and endangered species. As is the case with any forest manager, State Forests must comply with state and federal laws such as the state and federal Endangered Species Acts (ESA). Efficient and effective conservation and protection of ESA-listed species will support long-term management objectives.

#### Focus Areas

The Division policy work is focused on revising Forest Management Plans and pursuing a Habitat Conservation Plan, both of which are intended to manage State Forests equitably and sustainably through a lens of climate change.

#### **TOPICS FOR THE BOARD OF FORESTRY 2022-2024**

Following the Board's direction at the October 2020 meeting, the Division has been pursuing forest management policy with a focus on obtaining an Incidental Take Permit, by developing a Draft Western Oregon Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and drafting a Western Oregon Forest Management Plan (Draft FMP) to accompany the HCP. Development of these two policy documents is occurring simultaneously to ensure a complete and comprehensive policy package is prepared for Board consideration.

In June of 2021, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission determined that the marbled murrelet should be uplisted from a threatened status to endangered status under the State Endangered Species Act. This decision requires the Oregon Department of Forestry to write an Endangered Species Management Plan.

1. *Habitat Conservation Plan for Western Oregon State Forests*
2. *Forest Management Plan for Western Oregon State Forests*
3. *Endangered Species Management Plan*

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

##### Overview

The Board of Forestry directed the Division to continue exploring options for enhancing GPV outcomes, including the pursuit of an HCP which is a programmatic Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance tool.

### Purpose

The purpose of this work is to develop a Western Oregon State Forests HCP to achieve programmatic 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 Draft FMP development (*In Progress*).
  - Submit the draft HCP into the Federal National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process.
  - An HCP must be coupled with an FMP. Develop a Draft FMP (see Issue below).

### Board Deliverables with Timelines

- ✓ November 2021: Information Item
  - Provide project update, including an update on the NEPA process.
- ✓ May 2022 (special session): Information Item
  - Present Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).
- ✓ June 2022: Decision Item
  - Summary of the Western Oregon HCP from the NEPA Process.
  - Board direction to move the proposed action forward.
- ✓ April 2023: Decision Item
  - Board direction to State Forester to implement HCP.

## **ISSUE: Draft Western Oregon Forest Management Plan**

### Overview

The dominant management plan for State Forests is the NW Forest Management Plan (Northwest FMP) which includes 650,000 acres, about 75% of the total state forest land base, and generates over 90% of the revenue from the Board of Forestry lands. The Board of Forestry approved the original Northwest FMP in January 2001 as the first integrated resource management plan for the state and approved a plan revision in 2010 to improve financial outcomes. The foundation of the plan is an approach called “structure-based management” under which the forest is managed to produce a range of forest conditions across the landscape. The original (2001) plan was intended to be coupled with an HCP. However, the state was not able to acquire an HCP. The lack of an HCP combined with costs associated with take avoidance and some challenges with implementing structure-based management are impacting the State Forests Division’s financial viability.

### Purpose

The purpose of this work is to develop a Western Oregon Forest Management Plan to guide the management of all State Forests west of the Cascades, in conjunction with the Habitat Conservation Plan. The goal of the Draft FMP is to enhance GPV outcomes and equitably and sustainably manage State Forests through a lens of climate change. The BOF has also directed the Division to pursue an HCP, and these two efforts are now merged.

### Board Deliverables with Timelines

- ✓ November 2021: Information Item
  - Board direction on Guiding Principles and draft Goals.
- ✓ January 2022: Decision Item
  - Board review of the Management Focus of State Forest Lands.
- ✓ March 2022: Information Item
  - Board direction on draft Strategies.
  - Provide reports on Stakeholder Engagement.
- ✓ November 2022: Information Item
  - Presentation of draft FMP.
- ✓ January 2023: Information Item
  - Board direction on FMP modeled outcomes.
- ✓ May 2023: Decision Item
  - Board approval of final draft FMP.
  - Board approval to initiate formal rulemaking on the final draft FMP.

## **ISSUE: Endangered Species Management Plan**

### Overview

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) directed the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to conduct a status review of the marbled murrelet in December 2019 to determine if its status should be changed from threatened to endangered under the state Endangered Species Act (ORS 496.171 to 496.192). The Commission voted to uplist the marbled murrelet to endangered at its June 2021 meeting. The decision to uplist triggers a statutory requirement for state landowners and land managers to develop an Endangered Species Management Plan (ESMP) for the listed species. Landowners have 18 months to develop and submit their ESMP to the ODFW Commission, who then has 6 months to approve it.

The process of development and final approval of the ESMP by the Commission is required to be completed within 2 years (ORS 496.182).

### Purpose

The purpose of this work is to draft an ESMP for the marbled murrelet. The State ESA establishes a process of plan development and approval, and plan content requirements have been established in Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR 635-100-0140).

### Board Deliverables with Timelines

- ✓ November 2021: Information Item
  - Present the statutory requirements and process to complete the ESMP.
- ✓ March 2022: Decision Item
  - Board approval of Agency role and ESMP content framework.
- ✓ July 2022: Information Item
  - Status update.
- ✓ November 2022: Decision Item
  - Board approval of the Endangered Species Management Plan.

### **Outreach and Public Involvement**

Developing sufficient understanding, acceptance, and support from stakeholder groups will be important to completing these policy projects in the planned timeframes. Providing accurate and timely information to stakeholders will be of critical importance, and the Division is committed to an open, equitable, and transparent stakeholder engagement process. Additionally, counties within which we manage Board of Forestry lands have a statutorily established relationship with the Board through the Forest Trust Lands Advisory Committee (FTLAC).

The Division will provide accurate and timely information to ensure FTLAC has the information they need to advise the Board of Forestry and the State Forester. The Division will continue to seek public engagement and convene informational meetings for all interested stakeholders with the purpose of providing the information in a clear and transparent manner and allowing sufficient time for the stakeholders to prepare their input for the Board of Forestry meeting.

Our county partners represented by the FTLAC, all standing stakeholder committees (State Forests Advisory Committee, Oregon Forest Conservation Coalition, Conservation Ad Hoc, Industry Ad Hoc), multiple conservation non-governmental organizations, and Oregon Forest & Industries Council have been invited to engage and participate in the HCP and FMP projects, including multiple meetings open to the public, focus group meetings, and stakeholder meetings. The FTLAC has expressed concerns about an HCP on state forestlands. Despite these reservations, no committee or stakeholders have actively declined participation.

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 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 Marine Fisheries Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of State Lands, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Environmental Quality.

State Forests Work Plan	2022							2023							2024		
	Jan	Mar	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Nov	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jul	Sep	Nov	Jan	Mar
<b>Issue: Western Oregon Habitat Conservation Plan</b>																	
<i>Milestones</i>																	
❖ Draft Environmental Impact Statement – special session of the Board			i														
❖ Summary of the Western Oregon HCP from the NEPA Process. ❖ Board direction to move the proposed action forward						d											
❖ Board direction on implementation of HCP											D						
<b>Issue: Draft Western Oregon Forest Management Plan</b>																	
<i>Milestones</i>																	
❖ Review Management Focus of the Lands	D																
❖ Strategies, Engagement Update		i															
❖ Draft FMP, Engagement Update							i										
❖ FMP Modeled Outcomes								i									
❖ Board approval of final draft FMP, initiate rulemaking												D					
❖ Board approval of Final FMP, conclude rulemaking															D		
<b>Issue: Endangered Species Management Plan</b>																	
<i>Milestones</i>																	
❖ Agency role and ESMP content framework		d															
❖ Progress update					i												
❖ Board approval of ESMP							D										

**Matrix Key:**  
**TBD** – To be determined  
**i** – Informational item  
**d** – Preceding Decision item  
**D** – Final Decision item