



Chair Imeson, State Forester Daugherty, members of the board, thanks for allowing me time to speak with you again today. For the record my name is Seth Barnes and I am the Director of Forest Policy at the Oregon Forest & Industries Council.

I come before you today to talk about the effort to create a new Forest Management Plan for the Northwest State Forests. I am encouraged to hear the urgency expressed by members of this board as well as State Forester Daugherty regarding the need to make decisions and move forward towards finalizing a new management plan. I agree that this should be the highest priority of this board until a plan is finalized.

The famous basketball coach John Wooden once encouraged his players to “be quick but don’t hurry”. There may be some wise counsel in that statement that would apply to this board and this process. I wish to specifically address just two points today, that I think would help us to move quickly without hurrying.

1. Create a baseline that allows you to quantify the costs and benefits of policy decisions.
2. Request that the Department provide you with alternative plans so that you have the opportunity to compare and contrast options.

Creating a baseline

What is the productive capability of the forest? It’s a very basic question, one that is at the base of every prudent forest management plan ever created. Whether the goal is to produce squirrel habitat or material to manufacture tall wood buildings in downtown Portland, or some combination of both, you need to know what you’re starting with. Once known, a baseline gives you the opportunity to weigh potential outcomes of certain policy choices, providing the ability to compare and contrast alternatives. In Oregon, this board sets that baseline through the Forest Practices Act. I would remind you that this Act exists to provide a level of protection for state and private lands that protects public interests, such as water, wildlife, or reforestation for carbon storage. Each non-federal forest landowner creates their own management plan with an understanding of that baseline -the state Forest Practices Act.

How can this board be expected to make any decisions without having this basic information? You need to know the costs and benefits associated with the decisions you are making. If I were in your shoes, I would request that the department run a model that projects growth rates across the forest, and establishes maximum projection of volume relative to the state’s Forest Practices Act. In the absence of such information, this board will be asked to make decisions with no real knowledge of the relative opportunity costs. I’m no CPA, but in forestry school we were required to take Econ 201, and one concept that has never left me is that there is an opportunity cost with every decision we make. As prudent stewards of the land, you should seek to understand those costs before making lasting decisions.

Alternatives

This board has heard my concerns regarding the parallel process suggested by the Department -making iterative decisions that would be rolled together to produce an FMP while also negotiating for an HCP

with federal agencies. I testified regarding those concerns at your November meeting in Eugene. Recently I sat through a presentation given by Mark Rasmussen from MB&G at an FTLAC meeting where he expressed similar concerns. I was impressed with how Mark laid out the issue, clearly articulating the potential pitfalls in such a process. While I very much share your sense of urgency in this process, I am not convinced that this approach to forest planning is ultimately the wisest approach. Rather, I would encourage this board to request the department to produce alternatives that could then be considered and discussed. Sticking with the theme of moving quickly, the alternatives considered need not be infinite, the department could produce a few alternatives, each aimed at achieving the ultimate outcome. Then, coupled with the baseline discussed above, you could readily assess the trade-offs. We've been at this for a number of years already, and the state has robust information on the forest. It has modeled forest outputs over and over. We refuse to believe that contrasting outputs under different management regimes would add a material amount of time to the process. In fact, we believe it could be done in months, if not weeks – certainly not years.

In closing, I am eager to participate in this process, and even more eager to see this process brought to a successful, and durable conclusion. The two points I've presented here I offer in good faith as a stakeholder interested in making sure our process is set up to be successful. My members, as well as the communities that depend on them, have a lot at stake. Let's work together to achieve the best outcome: maximizing the potential good from these lands, maintaining high levels of productive habitat, clean water, and a vibrant forest products industry.