

# Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan Virtual Meeting Open to the Public Monday, July 13, 2020

## 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 virtual meeting open to the public on July 13, 2020. The meeting was also recorded and posted to the [ODF YouTube channel](#).

### Purpose of Meeting

- Learn about the components of the aquatic and terrestrial conservation strategies.
- Hear the results of the aquatic conservation strategy modeling and species habitat modeling.
- Learn about policy-level forest management modeling.

### Attendees

Over 100 members of the public attended the meeting. Those in attendance represented conservation groups, industry representatives, government agencies, tribal representatives, and county representatives, 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, counties, tribes, 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 project webpage
- Letter from ODF to specifically invite county commissioners
- Targeted outreach to watershed councils

## Format

The meeting open to the public was a two and a half-hour webinar meeting 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 most interest. Participants were also able to submit questions or comments via email to Jason Cox, ODF, at [Jason.r.cox@oregon.gov](mailto:Jason.r.cox@oregon.gov) to be addressed during the meeting.

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.

## Meeting Summary

### Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Overview

Deb Nudelman, Kearns & West, introduced herself as part of the facilitation team and welcomed participants. She mentioned that this is the fifth meeting open to the public. The intent of the meeting was to share more information about the HCP process and to provide updates on HCP development. She reviewed ground rules for the meeting as well as webinar instructions and protocols. She then launched a webinar poll to gauge members affiliation.

Liz Dent, State Forest Division Chief for Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), welcomed meeting attendees. She explained that ODF is working closely with sister agencies and partners to develop the HCP as part of the Scoping Team (ST), a technical level working group, and the Steering Committee (SC), a policy level working group. The intent of the ST and SC is to ensure there is alignment across the agencies and alignment from a science and policy standpoint. Liz acknowledged that many stakeholders are interested in learning the details of the HCP and noted that today's meeting will share information of the conservation strategies and the policy-level forest management modeling. Liz emphasized that the HCP is a work in progress and the components and strategies of the HCP may change as more analysis is completed. ODF will continue to share work products as they are refined.

Liz provided background information and explained that the Board of Forestry (BOF) directed ODF to pursue an HCP for state lands west of the Cascades. The benefit of an HCP is to provide long-term certainty to manage these lands and comply with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). An HCP provides a long-term, multi-decade ESA permit so counties and communities have assurance for how state forests are managed from an economic and environmental standpoint.

ODF will present a draft of the HCP to the BOF in October. The BOF will then make a decision on whether ODF staff should continue working on the HCP, including completion of the Administrative Draft and assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. At the July 22 BOF meeting, ODF will provide updates on the development of the HCP and will present the same information that will be shared during today's meeting open to the

public.

Deb briefly introduced the project team. The project team has a variety of expertise and is working alongside ODF to develop the HCP. The project team includes ODF, ICF, Oregon Consensus, and Kearns & West. Cindy Kolomechuk is ODF's lead on this project. ICF is providing technical support to write and develop the HCP. Kearns & West is leading the public engagement and facilitation process and helping to build alignment around the process. Oregon Consensus is providing a neutral forum for parties to reach agreement on contentious public issues.

Deb reviewed the meeting agenda which included the following topics: 1) Updates on the HCP process, 2) Updates on the conservation strategies, 3) Policy-level forest management modeling, and 4) Summary and next steps.

Deb explained that ODF has a strong interest in hearing stakeholders' questions, interests, and concerns. After the webinar meeting, there is a session for informal discussion to ask questions and discuss topics of most interest to participants. She explained participants are also welcome submit written questions and comments via email to Jason Cox, ODF at [Jason.r.cox@oregon.gov](mailto:Jason.r.cox@oregon.gov).

## Updates on the Western Oregon HCP

Troy Rahmig, ICF, provided updates and an overview of the development of the HCP to date. He noted there has been a lot of progress in developing the technical components of the HCP at the ST and SC level. Key topics of the presentation included:

- The purpose of the HCP.
- The covered species list.
- The HCP development timeline and key milestones including the development of the companion Forest Management Plan (FMP), the NEPA process, and the BOF decision points.

## Update on Conservation Strategies

Mike Wilson, ODF, provided updates on the riparian conservation strategy. Key topics of the presentation included:

- The purpose of the riparian strategy is to meet the biological goals and objectives for listed fish species and torrent salamanders.
- The riparian conservation strategy focuses on three key process: 1) Instream habitat (primarily wood recruitment), 2) Stream temperature, and 3) Sediment delivery.
- The riparian conservation strategy includes:
  - Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs)
    - RCAs are buffered areas around streams with no management.
    - Relies on a tiered buffer approach using stream size and type, includes minimum buffer widths, and uses horizontal distance to measure buffer widths.

- Horizontal distance and the aquatic zone including: 1) The minimum buffer widths for all Type F streams and large and medium Type N streams, and 2) The minimum buffer widths for small perennial and seasonal Type N streams.
  - Diagrams showing the temperature protection zone and the size of the riparian buffers for the various stream types.
- Road System Management
  - Minimizes potential impacts of transportation in and near streams.
- Restoration
  - Activities include key habitat features, wood enhancement, flood plain reconnection projects, etc.
  - Relies on a holistic strategy and best management practices for restoration potential across the landscape.
- Aquatic modeling which aims to determine if the riparian conservation strategy achieves the biological goals and objectives. This includes evaluating:
  - Biological goals and objectives with a focus on instream habitat structure and water quality and quantity.
  - Wood recruitment models by source.
  - Temperature sensitive stream reaches.
- The results of the aquatic modeling for wood recruitment and temperature were presented.

Mike then reviewed the terrestrial conservation strategy. Key topics of the presentation included:

- The terrestrial conservation strategy focuses on Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs).
  - HCAs aim to protect known occurrences and highly suitable habitat and seeks to maintain landscape connectivity.
  - A combination of passive and active management will be used.
  - HCAs aim to increase the quality and quantity of habitat over the permit term.
- The boundaries of the HCA are developed to:
  - Protect most currently occupied sites for covered species.
  - Protect historic northern spotted owl sites.
  - Incorporate majority of highly suitable habitat.
  - Increase connectivity to provide movement across the landscape.
- Management activities inside HCAs.
  - The pace and scale of management activities are still being determined but will likely be implemented early in the permit term.
- Silvicultural treatments including density management, selective harvests, and regeneration of stands with low potential to develop habitat for covered species.
- Range/approximation of HCA size and distribution.
- The use of habitat suitability models to determine the suitability of habitat across the permit area.
- Combined conservation areas of HCAs and RCAs.

## Policy-Level Forest Management Modeling

Brian Pew, ODF, provided updates on the policy-level forest management modeling. He noted the modeling is a work in progress and will be updated and refined in the coming months. Key points of the presentation included:

- The policy-level forest management modeling will be used to support decision making by ODF and the BOF.
- It is intended to provide enough details to understand the anticipated outcomes of the HCP.
- Seeks to inform the effects analysis on the covered species, timber harvest volume and revenue, and Greatest Permanent Value (GPV).
- Modeling will occur across ODF managed lands in the permit area using sub-geographic areas.
- Another iteration of the modeling will be completed to help inform policy decisions.
- Model outputs to be evaluated include:
  - Timber harvest volume
  - Revenue generated
  - Forest inventory overtime
  - Covered species habitat quality and quantity
  - Carbon storage
- Anticipated outcomes for timber harvest include:
  - Final modeling including final HCA configuration and refinements of the forest management model.
  - The final numbers will be available by the October BOF meeting.

## Public Input and Q&A Summary

A question and answer and discussion period followed the presentations. The main topics that were brought up during the discussion period included:

### Overall HCP Process:

- Q: Does the timeline for the FMP change even if the BOF does not approve moving forward with the HCP?
  - A: If the Board decides not to move into the NEPA process, ODF will develop a separate proposed workplan for January 2021.

### Conservation Strategies:

- Q: Will ODF separately categorize roads and other inoperable areas in addition to the HCAs and RCAs?
  - A: Yes, roads and other inoperable areas will be included as part of the forest modeling. Suitable habitat and volume acres will also come out of the forest modeling. This will be used to develop the effects analysis and will provide a better understanding of what the full landscape will look like under the HCP.
- Q: How was the amount of wood recruitment calculated? It seems high given the riparian buffers.

- A: The amount of wood recruitment was calculated from ODF forest inventory data and from the amount of available wood over the permit term.
- Q: The majority of HCAs seem to be distributed on the north coast. Is this proportional to ownership or because the habitat is more suitable on the north coast?
  - A: The distribution of HCAs is proportional and is around 50% per district. The HCAs in this area aim to provide connectivity for the dispersed habitat. There are large portions of land in HCAs in the north coast meaning most of ODF management will be done in this area. Additionally, there is a problem with swiss needle cast and large swaths of alder in this area.
- Q: How does the HCP address landslide initiation points? What will be buffered in terms of landslide terrain?
  - A: The approach is to identify all areas that could contribute to a landslide, such as inner gorges, seeps, and springs, and to buffer these areas. ODF will be doing on-the-ground work during the implementation of the HCP that will map out the features of the landscape and will identify where the buffers should be. ODF understands that landslides behave differently on the landscape versus what is modeled in Geographic Information System (GIS).
- Q: What is the harvest activity level in HCAs?
  - A: ODF is still determining the pace and scale of harvest in HCAs and is continuing to conduct modeling. It is important to note that any harvest conducted inside of HCAs will be for the benefit of the species, not with an economic goal in mind. There will be a fairly significant amount of management in HCAs to mitigate forest health concerns and for density management. Harvest activity levels will be presented to the BOF in October.
- Q: Will there be any management in RCAs?
  - A: There will be no management in RCAs. However, there could be exceptions, such as stream restoration activities. If there is a need for management, ODF would work with NOAA Fisheries under the HCP but this is not something that will be prescribed in the HCP.
- Q: There seems to be a 5% differential from the low to high end of HCA and RCA ranges and total acreage. What drives that difference?
  - A: Operational review drives this difference. Biological criteria, such as occurrence of the covered species, suitable habitat, connectivity, etc., was used to define the HCAs. The biological criteria were also balanced with operational concerns. The development of the HCAs and RCAs is an iterative process that is ongoing.
- Q: In addition to the HCAs and RCAs, what additional fraction of the forest would be inoperable? Will the HCP include the total number of acres that are operable and inoperable? This will inform the financial viability of the HCP.
  - A: Yes, the total acres of operable and inoperable areas will come out of the modeling results and will be shared at a later time. The totals will also be

included in the final modeling that will be presented to the BOF in October.

- Q: How many acres of swiss needle cast acres are in the HCAs?
  - A: There are a little less than 120,000 swiss needle cast acres identified. 46,000 are inside HCAs and 73,000 acres are outside of HCAs.
  
- Q: When will maps showing where the HCAs are located on the landscape be available?
  - A: ODF is working to finalize the configurations and incorporate the HCAs into the modeling. More information and maps of the HCAs will be presented at a meeting open to the public in September, prior to the October BOF meeting.
  
- Q: How will the HCP deal with seasonal and non-seasonal changes in the landscape, especially in light of climate change?
  - A: A key strategy in the HCP is to develop resilient terrestrial and aquatic habitat and to allow for adaptive management. ODF will have monitoring and adaptive management in place under the HCP and FMP that will allow ODF to adapt to changes in the environment. ODF is striving to design a resilient HCP and will be relying more heavily on the implementation process, managing for what happens on the ground, and building in flexibility. More information on implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management will be available in September.
  
- Q: What does the restoration component of the conservation strategy include? Is there an expectation of the number of acres or stream miles treated? What are the restoration objectives?
  - A: The restoration activities that occur will be in tailored to meet the biological goals and objectives. Restoration projects would deal with instream management, wood enhancement, reconnection, water quality and quantity, fish passage, etc. Restoration activities would occur throughout the permit area. It is important to have connectivity and benefits from the restoration actions relative to where the effects are occurring on the landscape. The HCP will outline a mechanism to provide funding for restoration activities. ODF's role would be to provide funding to other entities to implement the restoration activities (e.g., watershed councils). There will also be monitoring and annual reporting to determine if restoration activities are providing the expected benefits.
  
- Q: At the beginning of the permit term, will ODF set expectations for the level of restoration activities that would occur?
  - A: Yes, there will be an expectation level set for restoration activities; however, ODF will not be identifying specific restoration projects or locations in the HCP.
  
- Q: How do restoration activities connect to the overall conservation strategy? Is restoration used for mitigation or are restoration activities above and beyond?
  - A: Restoration activities are used as part of the mitigation package.
  
- Q: A 120' buffer in a large stream does not provide as much benefit to wood recruitment and shade as a larger buffer upstream. Was there consideration during the modeling to not use a one-size-fits-all method?

- A: When looking at variable buffer widths, there were simpler prescriptions. We let the process drive the buffering strategy and evaluated the objectives of wood recruitment, instream structure, and sediment protection. From a wood recruitment perspective, the buffers did not have much effect on the amount of wood delivered to streams adjacent to fish bearing streams. The literature and stream processes support this as well.
- Q: Is the conservation strategy presented today considered to be HCP compliance or an enhanced approach?
  - A: The Western Oregon HCP is not an enhanced HCP or an “HCP plus.” The HCP is wholly designed to comply with the ESA and is not intended to exceed compliance with the ESA. The strategies and numbers are not finalized. Implementation modeling will help inform how much can be harvested in a way that meets financial viability needs and supports rural communities.
- Q: It is important to include standards around road management as road construction can cause landslides. What standards will be applied to roads? Will there be any efforts to reduce road networks?
  - A: Best management practices and standards will transfer into the HCP. The HCP will include details on roads and the riparian strategy will include actions focused on road system management and road construction. The HCP seeks to reduce interaction with streams by minimizing stream crossings and new construction along streams and within RCAs.
- Comment: Road construction and maintenance has a negative impact on watersheds, sediment in streams, and landslides. It is a debt that has accrued at benefit of the timber industry and at the expense of Oregonians. Spending will need to occur to correct the environmental damage eventually.

### **Policy-Level Forest Management Modeling:**

- Q: Is ODF working with other state agencies and local and state governments to contemplate, predict, and plan for greater adoption of mass timber technology in the future?
  - A: ODF is planning for the next 70 years and is seeking to provide certainty for the species and for businesses. ODF recognizes the need to produce materials and products that meets demand. ODF is managing for timber products outside of HCAs and is working with mill partners.
- Comment: The Oregon Housing Stability Council looks at the impact on the local economy. It was suggested that ODF collaborate with Oregon housing and community services to support Oregon housing development, to provide geographical equity for housing, and to support rural communities in Oregon.



- Q: Flow constraints could create uncertainty for mills and the contractor base. Was flow constraint removed and if so, what variance are you looking for year to year with harvest levels?
  - A: Yes, flow constraint has been removed. There will be a change by 1% variance every year for ten years. Services are not permitting a harvest level; the intent is to evaluate the effects on species as harvest level changes overtime. The HCP will describes acres harvested not volume harvested.
  - Response: It was suggested that ODF consider even flows within a 10% bound.

### **Economic Viability:**

- Q: It would be helpful to see the total acres of land outside of HCAs that can be used for harvest. When can we see the total acres and locations of these areas? There is concern about the percentage of operable lands and harvestable areas in the permit area.
  - A: The total acres and locations of operable lands will be available in September after the modeling is refined. It is likely that the harvesting area of the landscape is less than 50%. This information will be presented to the BOF in October as they make their decision.
- Comment: It is important that the HCP focuses on economic activities and supports a vibrant forest industry in Oregon within non-HCA areas. The conservation certainty of the HCP has been addressed and is important; however, operational and economic certainty is important as well. There should be certainty in the ability to harvest within non-HCA areas.
  - Response: Non-HCA areas will be focused on production and harvest. ODF is currently looking at the non-HCA landscape, distribution, harvest patterns, harvest levels, and where harvest would take place.
- Q: Concern that the projected harvest is too low and not in line with Greatest Permanent Value. Having less than half the forest available for harvest will result in hurting the social fabric of our rural communities. It is important that the HCP addresses the social aspects of rural Oregon. The timber industry was in support of the 70/30 approach as it would achieve higher harvest volumes and would enhance conservation outcomes. Additionally, there are underproductive acres on the landscape that have been for later generations to deal with and there is little funding to restore these areas. How will ODF achieve financial viability and convert unproductive areas under these HCP harvest volumes?
  - A: ODF is currently working through the configurations of the HCAs and understands the importance of a financially viable HCP. An effects analysis is also being developed. The specific effects on the communities is not explicitly analyzed in the HCP; however, it is built into the overall process as the HCP will need to meet both GPV and Forest Goals and Objectives (FGOs). Additionally, the NEPA process will specifically analyze the socioeconomic aspects of the HCP and will include local communities.
  - It was clarified that ODF has not finalized any numbers or promised a certain amount of volume. ODF is currently developing the conservation strategies and

shared with the public what we are seeing so far in regards to the strategies and modeling. The next step is to look at the implementation of the conservation strategies and operations and to assess if the HCP is economically viable and meets the needs for agency and the counties.

- Financial viability is important, and revenue is needed for management needs. ODF is continuing to make interactions to the timber harvest modeling over the next few weeks.
- Q: Does the NEPA process distinguish the cost to individual counties? It would be more trust inspiring to provide data showing the cost to individual counties to explain the financial impacts
  - A: The NEPA process may distinguish costs for individual counties, but that is unknown at this stage.
- Q: The harvest levels estimated in the business case analysis that was presented to the BOF over a year ago as a rationalization to move forward with the HCP are very different than the harvest levels shown today. What accounts for this change in harvest volumes?
  - A: The business case analysis was based on assumptions and was meant to be a broad comparison to decide whether to move forward with an HCP. Today, there is more data, research, and modeling that has been completed, and this real data is the basis of the HCP.
  - The business case analysis and comparative analysis will be revisited. The HCP is still in development and doesn't yet include the FMP overlay or harvest objectives. In October, ODF will present a comparative analysis and will speak to the differences between what is shown in the HCP and the initial business case analysis
- Q: Early ODF presentations showed graphs that explained what the department needed to be financially viable. Will these graphs be presented to the BOF?
  - A: In the comparative analysis, ODF will use similar graphs that will look at financial viability over the long term. ODF is evaluating business and species certainty from a policy perspective.
- Comment: A member expressed concern about the financial viability of the HCP and recommended increasing the amount of harvestable areas. It is important not to increase the urban rural divide as this will have social implications on rural communities.
- Comment: I am concerned with comments that imply timber volume is synonymous to rural counties interests. Harvest has played a role in decreasing salmon populations, which effects fisherman who are part of rural communities. There also has been a lot more information about the impacts of logging and roads on fish, streams, and water quality. Rural communities feel these impacts the most and ODF's work shows this.

## Summary and Next Steps

Troy summarized next steps and the work in progress to develop the HCP. ODF is working with the ST on the HCP technical elements and is continuing to develop the HCP under the advice and policy guidance of the SC. Next steps include policy-level management modeling, the effects analysis, changes in terrestrial species habitat quality, evaluating the balance between habitat removed and gained, refining conservation actions, and discussing monitoring, adaptive management, and implementation.

Brett Brownscombe, Oregon Consensus, presented on public and county engagement. He explained ODF and the HCP project team continue to engage County Commissioners and the Forest Trust Land Advisory Committee (FTLAC). He also reviewed upcoming stakeholder engagement opportunities and announced the following upcoming meetings:

- Joint stakeholder meeting in early August.
- Meeting Open to the Public on September 16 from 1-4pm.
- Joint stakeholder meeting in late September.

Deb concluded the meeting and thanked participants for their feedback and engagement. Deb reminded people that the meeting materials, the PowerPoint presentation, and the meeting summary will be posted on the ODF website. Additionally, a recording of the webinar will be posted to the ODF YouTube channel.

Deb encouraged participants to reach out to ODF or the project team with additional questions, comments, or any topics they would like to discuss at the next meeting open to the public.

Liz closed the meeting and expressed appreciation for the collaboration with federal and state agencies, the attendance of the BOF members, County Commissioners, and tribal representatives, and the progress made to date. She thanked stakeholders and members of the public for their participation, engagement, and questions.

Liz noted that this is a historic moment in Oregon as there are currently three large scale HCPs in development: The Western Oregon HCP, the Elliott State Forest HCP, and the Private Forest Lands HCP. These efforts are happening together but have different goals, missions, agencies, landowners, governing bodies, stakeholders, etc. This means that these HCPs will look different and will serve different purposes.

She added that ODF has gained substantial political, economic, and environmental knowledge about the land base which has informed ODF's management of state forest lands. The goal of the Western Oregon HCP is to achieve long term certainty for conservation and management, while also supporting all Oregonians, local communities, and species.

The next BOF meeting is on July 22 and ODF will share the same information that was presented during today's meeting. There will be an opportunity to submit written comments to BOF at this time.