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Forest Service

Pacific Northwest Region

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Mt. Hood National Forest

Implementing the Strategic Stewardship Plan

A Perspective from the Fisheries Program 2005-2007



Restoring access to nearly 100 miles of natural-flowing rivers and streams that provide salmon habitat in the Sandy River Basin.

Cover: Marmot Dam, located along the Sandy River, was decommissioned in 2007 by Portland General Electric (PGE). The 47-foot tall dam, located just downstream of the Mt. Hood National Forest boundary, is the tallest ever removed in Oregon. PGE removed it due to the estimated high cost for bringing it up to current standards for several species of salmon listed under the Endangered Species Act. Restoring the river to a natural, free-flowing condition now provides unobstructed fish passage to almost 100 miles of habitat in the upper basin, most of which occurs on the Mt. Hood National Forest. PGE will remove a smaller dam on the Little Sandy River in 2008 which has blocked access for anadromous fish to another seven miles of river for nearly 100 years. Once decommissioning and restoration activities are complete, PGE will donate 1,500 acres of land towards a 9,000 acre conservation and recreation area along 15 miles of river. Visit <u>http://www.marmotdam.com/</u> or see the Oregon Public Broadcasting documentary at <u>http://www.opb.org/programs/ofg/videos/view/73-Marmot-Dam</u>



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Congratulations to the Clackamas Stewardship Partners (CSP), honored in January 2008 with the Two Chiefs' Partnership Award. This award was given by U.S. Forest Service Chief Gail Kimbell and Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Arlen Lancaster for their "outstanding partnerships in forest conservation work." Members include Clackamas County Soil & Water Conservation District, Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners, Portland State University, Clackamas River Basin Council, NW Oregon Resource Conservation and Development Council, Bark, Gifford Pinchot Task Force, Northwest Forest Conservancy, Oregon Wild, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. See page 11 for more information on the CSP and their efforts to improve fish habitat in the Clackamas River Basin.

Introduction

On Earth Day 2006, I signed the forward introducing the Mt. Hood National Forest Strategic Stewardship Plan. The Strategic Stewardship Plan declares that the way we redeem our stewardship responsibility for natural resources on the Mt. Hood National Forest (Forest) is through partnership with citizens, groups, and other federal, tribal, state, and local agencies. Over two million people live in the greater Portland/Vancouver metro area, and the Forest is a primary recreation destination for many residents. The Strategic Stewardship Plan embraces the concept that stewardship of the Forest is a shared civic responsibility. In addition, the Strategic Stewardship Plan addresses Forest Service National Strategic Goals and Pacific Northwest Emphasis Items.

This report, Mt. Hood National Forest Strategic Stewardship Plan *A Perspective from the Fisheries Program 2005-2007*, features components of the fisheries program that implement the Strategic Stewardship Plan. Traditionally, programs in the Forest Service are broken in functional areas, such as recreation, timber and wildlife. The Strategic Stewardship Plan integrates these diverse natural resource programs and describes them as five challenges on the Forest. In this report, we tell how the fisheries program addresses these challenges on the Forest.

I am proud of the work and accomplishments of the fisheries program. It is therefore important that the fisheries program focuses its work to help meet the goals of the Strategic Stewardship Plan. I think as you read this document you will find, as I do, the fisheries program has risen to that challenge. Viable and robust fisheries in the Pacific Northwest are particularly valued by its citizens and can thus serve as a gateway for citizen engagement in broader natural resource issues.

Gary Larsen Forest Supervisor Mt. Hood National Forest

Stewardship Challenges

The Mt. Hood National Forest Strategic Stewardship Plan identifies five challenges for the Forest:

- Restore public and private lands stream habitat, which is critical to the recovery of aquatic species.
- Ensure that public lands and the goods, services, amenities and environmental values provided are relevant and important to an increasingly diverse society.
- Manage the National Forest sustainably, in a way that fosters forest health and provides forest products for our use.
- Work together with public, private, and civic interests to foster sustainable regional recreation, which is essential to our spirits and our economy.
- Protect communities from wildfire using fuels treatments on public lands, working in cooperation with local and state fire fighting agencies. Fuel treatments need to be accomplished in the wildland urban interface, municipal watersheds, and other strategic locations on the Forest.

The following sections highlight activities, grouped by Stewardship Challenge, implemented over the past three years. The Forest is a complex ecosystem, and the fisheries program is a part of a larger picture of natural resource management.

The fisheries program plays an important role addressing these challenges. In some challenge areas, such as restoring public and private lands stream habitat, the fisheries program leads our collective efforts. In others, such as protecting communities from wildlife, the fisheries program plays a lesser, supporting role.

This report summarizes work accomplished in 2005-2007, specifically addressing the challenges identified in the Strategic Stewardship Plan. In addition, many other work items have been accomplished. More information regarding additional program accomplishments can be obtained by contacting fish biologists at the local ranger districts listed on page 15.



Stewardship Challenge: Restore public and private lands stream habitat, which is critical to the recovery of aquatic species.

Defining Restoration Strategies in Priority River Basins

Staff on the Forest, working in collaboration with key stakeholders, recently completed two restoration strategies – one in the Sandy River Basin and one in the Hood River Basin. These strategies focus on improving watershed processes, aquatic habitat, and water quality. Development of a third restoration strategy, for the Fifteenmile Creek Basin, was initiated and is expected to be completed by summer 2008.

Each strategy addresses restoration needs and opportunities at the basin-level across all ownerships. Key stakeholders, including representatives from county, state, federal, and tribal governments as well as non-governmental organizations, irrigation districts, and watershed councils participated in the development of each strategy. The primary goal of each strategy is to:

Identify and prioritize watershed and aquatic habitat restoration needs for anadromous and resident fish species (many which are ESA-listed), while also addressing the needs for streamflow and water quality improvements.



Above: Map of geographic priorities for restoration in the Sandy River Basin.

Each strategy identifies priority areas, largely at the 6th field watershed-scale, to focus future investments in watershed and aquatic habitat restoration projects. This geographic focus within each river basin will help ensure long term species persistence and recovery. These strategies will help focus future investments of staff time, money, and resources so restoration needs in priority areas are met and whole watershed restoration is completed.

Technical experts identified a full suite of high priority restoration actions within each 6th field watershed. Rough cost estimates were developed for all of the restoration activities. Some examples of high priority restoration actions include:

- Restoring fish species connectivity to historic habitat;
- Reconnecting side channels and floodplains in river valley bottoms;
- Improving road surfaces, drainage, and stability for high use roads;
- Decommissioning legacy roads that have low use levels, adverse impacts to hydrologic function, and pose moderate or high risk to aquatic resources;
- Riparian planting and thinning;
- Securing additional instream flows through piping of irrigation ditches;
- Distributing salmon carcasses in streams to enhance levels of marine derived nutrients; and,
- Restoring large wood in rivers and streams for immediate improvements in spawning and rearing habitat for fish.

For copies of the two completed restoration strategies, go to:



Above: Map of geographic priorities for restoration in the Hood River Basin.

Sandy River Basin – <u>www.sandyriverpartners.org</u> Hood River Basin – <u>http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mthood/publications/</u>

Watershed and aquatic habitat restoration planning and implementation are also in full swing in the Clackamas River Basin, largely through efforts and opportunities provided by the *Clackamas Stewardship Partners* and Forest Service stewardship contracting authorities. These efforts are described on page 11.

Restoration in Action

Sandy River Basin – Reconnecting side channels and floodplains along the Salmon River

The Salmon River is a major tributary to the Sandy River, accounts for a large proportion of salmon and steelhead production in the basin, and rates as the highest priority watershed under the Basin Restoration Strategy. Historically, many side channels occurred along the mainstem Salmon River. Side channels provide protected, slow-water habitat during winter storms. They provide important nursery habitat for juvenile salmon and often contain significantly higher densities of rearing juvenile fish than main channel habitats.

Following the devastating flood of 1964 many historic side channels along the Salmon River became disconnected from the river's main channel and no longer functioned. The river underwent extensive large wood cleanout, rip-rapping, channel straightening, and dyke construction. For decades the river was disconnected from its former floodplain and many side channels dried up.

From 2005 to 2007, Mt. Hood National Forest fish biologists; in partnership with Oregon Trout, Bureau of Land Management, Sandy River Basin Watershed Council, and other Sandy River Basin Partners, inventoried historic side channels along the lower seven miles of the Salmon River downstream from the Forest boundary.



Above: This side channel on the Salmon River provides important salmon habitat.

Side channels were evaluated by a team of fish biologists and experts. Twenty-three relic and partially functioning side channels (totaling approximately 4.5 miles of potential habitat) were inventoried along the lower seven miles of the Salmon River. The inventories and evaluation have set the stage for an aggressive multi-year side channel restoration campaign beginning in 2008. The projects will mirror restoration efforts completed on the Forest in the last four years, some of which are pictured and described below.



Photo above left: Workers direct placement of logs and boulders to restore habitat elements in a side channel.

Photo below left: The completed project. When flows increase during winter storms, the large wood provides shelter and refuge for young salmon.

From 2004 to 2007, restoration projects were completed on five side channels on or near Forest Service lands, recapturing 1.5 miles of restored, high value side channel habitat. Heavy equipment was used to construct large wood complexes (over 200 logs and root wads) within the side channels to improve conditions and rearing habitat complexity for juvenile salmon. In addition, the Sandy River Basin Watershed Council, Wilderness Volunteers, and volunteers from the National Forest Foundation implemented riparian planting and erosion control projects after heavy equipment work was completed.

<u>Sandy River Basin</u> – *Restoring fish passage on Wee Burn Creek (Welches Road)*

In partnership with Clackamas County Department of Transportation & Development and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), fish biologists from the Forest worked with the owner of The Resort at the Mountain to restore anadromous fish passage on Wee Burn Creek, an historically productive coho salmon tributary to the lower Salmon River. Culverts on Welches Road were undersized and impeded fish access to habitat in Wee Burn Creek as it flows through the golf course on The Resort at the Mountain.

In 2005, Pacific Bridge & Construction, Inc., a local Sandy-area business, constructed a patented, unique modular bridge design to improve fish passage impediments. This design provided greater site flexibility during construction and was efficient to install with a substantial cost savings compared to a traditional open-bottom arch culvert design. Pacific Bridge & Construction, Inc. was awarded the Regional Fisheries Program "New Innovations" award in 2006 for this project.



Photos above: Wee Burn Creek before and after installation of the Welches Road Bridge.

<u>Sandy River Basin</u> – *Restoring riparian areas; taking action against invasive plants*

The increase of invasive plants (plants not a part of the native ecosystem) is of great concern on the Forest. In aquatic ecosystems, invasive plants such as Japanese knotweed displace the native riparian vegetation, eventually eliminating plants that are sources of food and provide habitat for aquatic species.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a leader in the attack to control and eliminate invasive plants in the Sandy River Basin. From 2005 to 2007, staff from the Forest, TNC, and cooperating partners implemented the challenge cost share project Eradicate Invasive Weeds Now! The project couples treatment of invasive plant species with community-based outreach programs on a watershed scale, from the Sandy River Delta to the headwaters on the Forest. Ultimately, the project's goal is to restore and protect the function of the riparian corridor by maintaining a native, fully restored vegetative matrix. Over the past five years, TNC has provided free knotweed treatments to willing landowners in the basin. Currently, over 600 private land tracts and many public lands are included in the knotweed eradication and control program. TNC, in partnership with the Sandy River Basin Watershed Council, has an extensive education and outreach program to assist private landowners.

TNC updated inventories of Forest Service lands in the Sandy River Basin during 2006 and 2007. This information will be used to plan and prioritize eradication treatments on Forest Service lands beginning in 2008.

<u>Hood River Basin</u> – *Restoring riparian conditions* and instream habitat conditions in Lake Branch and the West Fork Hood River

Large wood in streams provides habitat for aquatic species. Lands adjacent to streams (riparian areas) are the source of instream wood, and many were



Above: Knotweed is the large-leafed plant in this photo taken along Still Creek, a tributary to the Sandy River.

logged in earlier decades. Restoration projects that thin younger and middle-aged trees increase growth rates of coniferous trees and provide long-term riparian benefit. This was the goal of a 2006 riparian thinning project implemented along 0.5 miles of the Lake Branch of West Fork Hood River.

Thinned trees were used downstream for an instream large wood placement project. Objectives of the instream project include extending suitable holding, spawning, and rearing habitat for summer steelhead and spring Chinook. Success of the project was immediate, as spring Chinook began colonizing the restored reach after only two-thirds of the logs had been placed. The salmon were using the log structures for cover and spawning.

At right: Lake Branch riparian area after the thinning project. The vegetation remaining on the forest floor protects water quality and prevents sediment transport.



Fifteenmile Creek Basin – Restoring floodplain function and instream habitat conditions

Beginning in 2001, staff on the Barlow Ranger District worked with the City of Dufur, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Forestry, and Wasco County Soil and Water District to improve the quality and quantity of the water, stream channel habitat, and riparian areas in the headwaters of the Fifteenmile Creek. Fifteenmile Creek provides important habitat for ESA-listed winter steelhead, interior redband trout and Pacific lamprey. Winter steelhead in Fifteenmile Creek belong to the eastern-most population of winter steelhead in the entire Columbia River Basin.

The Forest completed projects on 0.25 miles along Fifteenmile Creek and the adjacent floodplain area located at the Forest boundary. Improvements were also made along the upper Fifteenmile road to alleviate drainage concerns. In another project completed in 2007, the partners enhanced 0.75 miles of Fifteenmile Creek on City of Dufur land.



Above: Fifteenmile Creek after instream habitat restoration.

Stewardship Challenge: Ensure that public lands and the goods, services, amenities and environmental values provided are relevant and important to an increasingly diverse society.

Forest Service Chief Kimball stated: "Kids must understand why forests are valuable so they will grow into citizens who support conservation. Building on the Forest Service traditions of conservation education, we will work with partners to ensure that American children have the opportunity to experience the great outdoors, whether it is a remote mountain wilderness or a spot of nature in the heart of a city."

On the Forest, the fisheries program is dedicated to fostering the connection of kids to their national forests, helping ensure public lands continue to be important. The long-term conservation programs of Salmon Watch[©], Cascade Streamwatch and Catlin Gable Riparian Rangers exemplify this connection.

Salmon Watch

Salmon Watch[©] is an award-winning education program provided by Oregon Trout in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and other contributing partners and foundations. Students are taken to nearby watersheds to watch and learn about wild spawning salmon (photo by Oregon Trout).

Cascade Streamwatch

A combination of classroom visits and field trips results in a long-term appreciation of the applied science and basic ecological concepts.



Catlin Gabel Riparian Rangers

For 18 years students from Catlin Gabel School in Portland have participated in field trips to the Forest. Field trips involve a combination of resource conservation projects and hands-on learning outdoors. Hundreds of students have

Above: Students are taken to nearby watersheds to watch and learn about wild spawning salmon (photo by Oregon Trout).



Above: Students measure streamflow during a Cascade Streamwatch field trip.

participated in the program, creating pride and ownership of their local national forest.

Above: Students are constructing a buck-and-rail riparian enclosure fence.

Stewardship Challenge: Manage the National Forest sustainably, in a way that fosters forest health and provides forest products for our use.

Clackamas Stewardship Partners

Clean, clear water and healthy forests are foundations of healthy ecosystems. A new tool used to manage forests while implementing ecosystem restoration projects at the same time is the Forest Service stewardship end-result contracting authority. The Clackamas Stewardship Partners (CSP) is chartered under this authority. CSP is a group of diverse stakeholders dedicated to restoring the ecological function of the Clackamas River Basin while benefiting local economies. Using Forest Service stewardship contracting authorities, CSP identifies and prioritizes restoration projects to recommend for implementation on the Clackamas River Ranger District.

By the end of 2007, seven stewardship contracts were awarded to commercially thin 1,350 acres. Thinning has paid for over \$1,200,000 of restorative services. In addition, \$650,000 of receipts has been retained to fund restoration projects recommended by the CSP. These restoration projects include 4,000 acres of pre-commercial thinning, road closure and maintenance, road repair, snag and down wood creation, culvert replacement, side channel enhancements, and repair of damage done by off-highway vehicles.



Photos at left, before and after: An outstanding example of a restoration project funded by the CSP. This side channel project occurred along Highway 224 paralleling the Clackamas River. The relic side channel is now reconnected to the mainstem Clackamas River, and provides valuable over-wintering habitat for juvenile salmon.

Friends of the Forest

Friends of the Forest (pictured on the right, after a day of work on the Zigzag Ranger District) are sponsored by the National Forest Foundation. Friends of the Forest exemplify the goals of the Strategic Stewardship Plan as they work to find local, common solutions to the issues affecting the places we love



on the Forest. In 2007, about sixty volunteers and staff planted about 500 trees and removed 1.5 acres of invasive weeds at The Resort at the Mountain, Wee Burn Creek, and Salmon River side channels.

Wilderness Volunteers

Wilderness Volunteers is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization created in 1997 to organize and promote volunteer service to America's public wild lands. On the Forest, participants in Wilderness Volunteers have spent part of their family summer vacations assisting with aquatic restoration projects.

In 2007, Wilderness Volunteers worked at three sites across the Forest. Wilderness Volunteers completed erosion control work on 2.5 acres, planted over 1,000 willow cuttings and 380 coniferous seedlings, and removed invasive plants from nearly one acre of land. In total, Wilderness Volunteers provided services valued at \$6,500.



At left: Wilderness Volunteers plant seedlings at The Resort at the Mountain.

Stewardship Challenge: Work together with public, private, and civic interests to foster sustainable regional recreation, which is essential to our spirits and our economy.

A visit to a national forest often includes a fishing pole and a picnic lunch. In the spirit of promoting fishing as a favored American recreational experience, the Forest annually hosts four fishing clinics. Each Ranger District sponsors a clinic held on or around National Fishing Week in conjunction with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Free Fishing Day.

Environmental education, water safety, nature art and fishing techniques are all part of a fishing clinic. Volunteers from many agencies and organizations provide a memorable experience for all who participate.



Recreational visits to the Forest occur in many ways. One way to foster appreciation of the Forest during these visits is through environmental education, exemplified by the Oxbow Salmon Festival. Fish biologists lead discussions while visitors view spawning salmon or take in educational exhibits.



At left: A successful angler displays her catch at the Barlow Ranger District Fishing Clinic.





These projects encourage long-term, sustainable recreation use, while protecting fish and other aquatic resources. Many lake restoration projects are completed by volunteers from organizations like Trout Unlimited that couple project work with club outings to fish afterwards.

At left is a lake restoration project located on the Hood River Ranger District. *Stewardship Challenge:* Protect communities from wildfire using fuels treatments on public lands, working in cooperation with local and state fire fighting agencies. Fuel treatments need to be accomplished in the wildland urban interface, municipal watersheds, and other strategic locations on the Forest.

Addressing the complex challenge of protecting communities from wildfire is led by the fire management group. The fisheries program plays a supporting role implementing fuel treatment projects. When projects are identified, fish biologists assist interdisciplinary teams to design them to meet fuel reduction goals while protecting aquatic resources. Recent examples on the eastside of the Forest include Sportsman's Park and Billy Bob fuels reduction projects.

The Catlin Gabel School, in partnership with the Forest, assists with a variety of natural resource management projects through the Catlin Gable Riparian Rangers Program. In 2006-07, a team of students constructed fireline around two 15-acre units for prescribed fire management. While working in the field, Forest Service staff spent time with the Catlin Gable students describing the goals of the prescribed burn and concepts of fire ecology.



Above: Catlin Gabel students construct fireline for an underburning project near Camp Cody.



Above: Prescribed fire and underburning reduces small diameter fuels while protecting larger trees to prevent larger-scale, catastrophic wildfires.



At left: Fire fighters and fish biologists work together to find fish-friendly water sources for fighting a wildland fire (photo from the 2006 Mt. Hood complex fire).

Staffing

Headquarters

Dan Shively, Forest Fish Biologist (503) 668-1605 Tracii Hickman, Fish Biologist, located at Walla Walla Ranger Station (509) 522-6272

Clackamas River Ranger District

Tom Horning, *District Fish Biologist (503) 630-8798* Bob Bergamini, *Assistant District Fish Biologist*

Hood River and Barlow Ranger Districts

Gary Asbridge, Zone District Fish Biologist (541) 352-6002 Darcy Morgan, Assistant District Fish Biologist – Hood River Chris Rossel, Assistant District Fish Biologist – Barlow

Zigzag Ranger District

Duane Bishop, District Fish Biologist (503) 622-3191 David Saiget, Assistant District Fish Biologist

Stream Survey Program

Katie Serres, Program Coordinator (503) 630-8784



Pictured at left is the 2006 stream survey crew. All crew members were from the Student Conservation Association (SCA). The Forest brought on five SCA interns (front row left to right) Justin Park (Virginia) and Annie Sugiura (California), (back row left to right) Mike Nartker (Ohio), Calvin Maginel (Missouri), and Alexis Ramirez (Texas) to survey rivers and streams in the Lower Columbia River Province (Mt. Hood National Forest, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area).

Funding

Congressionally appropriated funds from the NFWF budget line item (BLI) provide the primary source of funding for the fisheries program on the Forest. The total budget (primarily NFWF) for the forest-wide fisheries program in fiscal year 2007 was \$867,650 (not including overhead), which also included funding for Level II stream surveys from the NFIM BLI. The figure below shows the investment by program component (i.e., operations, aquatic restoration, conservation education, monitoring, etc.). In addition, other congressionally appropriated BLIs contributed towards aquatic restoration projects (\$ 134,900 from NFVW, PSRS, and SPS5) and conservation education projects (\$ 24,000 from NFVW). External partner contributions provided a tremendous amount of additional financial and in-kind support for implementing both aquatic restoration projects (\$ 1,428,786) and conservation education projects (\$ 741,791). The total fisheries program funding expended (NFWF only) compared with the external partner contribution represented a 1:2 cost leverage ratio.



Recognizing our Many Partners in the Fisheries Program

Conservation Organizations

- Association of Northwest Steelheaders
- Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission
- Native Fish Society
- Oregon Trout
- The Nature Conservancy
- Trout Unlimited Tualatin Valley and Clackamas River Chapters
- Western Rivers Conservancy

Youth and Education

- Boy Scouts of America, Columbia Pacific Council Camp Baldwin
- Catlin Gabel School
- Estacada High School
- Mt. Hood Community College
- Mt. Hood Kiwanis
- Portland State University
- University of Portland
- Wolftree, Inc.

Citizen Organizations

- Arrah Wanna Home Owners Association
- EcoTrust
- National Forest Foundation
- Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism
- Wilderness Volunteers

Watershed Councils

- Clackamas River Basin Council
- Fifteenmile Watershed Council
- Hood River Watershed Group
- Sandy River Basin Watershed Council
- White River Watershed Council

City and Local Governments

- City of Dufur
- Clackamas County
- Four-County Weed Cooperative
- Metro Regional Government
- Multnomah County
- Portland Water Bureau
- The Dalles Water Bureau

Tribal Governments

- Columbia Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

Irrigation and Conservation Districts

- Clackamas County Soil & Water Conservation
 District
- East Fork Irrigation District
- East Multnomah County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Farmers Irrigation District
- Hood River County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Middle Fork Irrigation District
- Northwest Oregon Resource Conservation and Development Council
- Wasco County Soil & Water Conservation
 District
- Wolf Run Irrigation District

Businesses

- Eugene Water and Electric Board
- Longview Fibre
- Pacific Bridge & Construction, Inc.
- Portland General Electric
- Resort at the Mountain

Federal and State Agencies

- Bonneville Power Administration
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Oregon Department of Forestry
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- Sandy River Hatchery (ODFW)
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station
- USDC National Marine Fisheries Service
- USDI Bureau of Land Management
- USDI Fish and Wildlife Service

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