

# News Release



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## **Revised Habitat Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement Released For Oregon’s Elliott State Forest – Comment Period Open Until November 20, 2008**

The State of Oregon’s management of the 93,000-acre Elliott State Forest is the subject of a draft Environmental Impact Statement covering a 50-year habitat conservation plan released today by the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and Oregon’s Department of Forestry. The habitat conservation plan is a revision of a 1995 habitat conservation plan, and is required for Oregon to receive a permit that acknowledges there may be times when forest management and timber harvest disturb or harm protected forest species. The draft environmental impact statement, which discusses the environmental effects of forest management on the Elliott State Forest, is being released for public review and comment along with the permit application and habitat conservation plan.

The three documents address northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets and Oregon Coast coho salmon, all listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, as well as 15 species which are not listed.

“Habitat conservation planning is an important part of our collaborative stewardship approach to recovering listed species,” said Ren Lohofener, director of the Pacific Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “We’re working with the State of Oregon and the National Marine Fisheries Service in planning, outreach and environmental assessment work in support of this important conservation action.”

The habitat conservation plan is a necessary component of the state’s application for the federal incidental-take permit; “take” being the legal term for disturbing, harming or killing individuals of the species. This permit can allow forest management even when there is a possibility of harming some listed species, so long as the harm is incidental to otherwise legal activities such as those associated with mechanized timber harvest, fire suppression, aquatic habitat restoration, and other management practices. The proposed plan provides mitigation and minimization measures for potential adverse effects of these activities.

Both the existing and the proposed habitat conservation plans include conservation areas for spotted owls and marbled murrelets where little or no harvest would occur, and both plans include specific harvest prescriptions for riparian areas. These are typical of the kinds of measures that can be included in a habitat conservation plan to maintain, enhance and protect a habitat type needed by an endangered or threatened species.

The agencies are seeking comments from the public on the draft plan, the permit application and the draft environmental impact statement during a 90-day comment period which begins August 22, 2008. Comments and information must be received by November 20, 2008.

The proposed plan covers state forest land in Coos and Douglas counties. The original incidental take permit for the Elliott State Forest, issued in 1995, involved take of northern spotted owls for a period of 60 years, and take of marbled murrelets for only 6 years. The revised plan addresses the issue of take for both species for the next 50 years, and will extend coverage to the Oregon Coast coho salmon which became a listed species after the original habitat conservation plan was established. Under the proposed revision, new forest management activities will be based on forest structure, rather than the age-based, harvest rotation strategies employed in the past.

The incidental take application also addresses the potential for harm to 15 species not currently listed, and would apply if any of these species become listed during the 50-year duration of the plan. These species are: bald eagle, northern goshawk, olive-sided flycatcher, western bluebird, Chinook salmon, chum salmon, steelhead, coastal cutthroat trout, Pacific lamprey, river lamprey, western brook lamprey, fisher, red-legged frog, southern torrent salamander and tailed frog.

The draft habitat conservation plan, permit application and draft environmental impact statement are available on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's website at: <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/ToolsForLandowners/HabitatConservationPlans/>. A notice of their availability is expected to publish in the *Federal Register* on Friday, August 22, 2008. Copies may also be obtained by calling 503-231-6179 or by writing to: Lee Folliard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2600 SE 98<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 100, Portland, OR 97266.

Written comments on the habitat conservation plan, the permit application or the draft environmental impact statement may be sent to: Lee Folliard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2600 SE 98<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 100, Portland, OR, 97266, facsimile: (503) 231-6195; or Chuck Wheeler, National Marine Fisheries Service, 2900 NW Stewart Parkway, Roseburg, OR, 97470-1274, facsimile: (541) 957-3386. Comments may also be submitted by e-mail to [ElliottHCP@fws.gov](mailto:ElliottHCP@fws.gov) or [ElliottStateForest.nwr@noaa.gov](mailto:ElliottStateForest.nwr@noaa.gov). Comments must be received by November 20, 2008.

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