



PLAN REVISIONS NEWS

NEWSLETTER ISSUE NO. 4

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Summary of Public Review Proposed Planning Criteria and State Director Guidance

The "Proposed Planning Criteria and State Director Guidance" document was available for public review and comment through March 17, 2006. The purpose of the document is to guide development of the plan revisions (particularly the alternatives and analysis of their effects), ensure the analysis is tailored to the issues, and focus data collection.

Phil Hall, BLM's Interdisciplinary Team Leader, addresses public meeting in Grants Pass, March 9, 2006

Members of the planning team traveled to each of the six districts in the planning areas to host public meetings during early March. The purpose of the meetings was to help interested citizens understand the range of alternatives proposed for analysis and answer the question: "Can you find your preferred management concepts somewhere within the range of alternatives listed so that the BLM will analyze those concepts in the environmental impact statement?" The meetings also offered the opportunity for concerned citizens to talk directly with BLM planners. The BLM received many letters and e-mail messages offering many suggestions during the comment period.

continued on Page 2

Welcome... to the fourth issue of the Bureau of Land Management's Western Oregon Plan Revisions Newsletter. In this issue you'll find a summary of what we heard from the public during the February and March review period of the document called "Proposed Planning Criteria and State Director Guidance," and a discussion of how the most current science is being used in the plan revisions process. We've also provided information about future opportunities for public involvement.

State-of-the-Science Workshop – June 15

Register Now! You're invited to participate in the western Oregon BLM's State-of-the-Science review to be held on June 15 on the campus of Oregon State University in Corvallis. The workshop is co-sponsored by the U.S. Geological Service and the BLM through the Cooperative Forest Ecosystem Research program (CFER). It's designed to bring together scientists, forest managers, interested citizens, interest groups, and plan cooperators to discuss a series of state-of-the-science reviews prepared for the BLM to address critical information needs. The agenda and registration information is posted on the CFER website <<http://www.fsl.orst.edu/cfer/StateOfScience/SOS>>, or interested parties can call the CFER Program Office (541-737-6593) by May 17, 2006. Registration is required, but the workshop is free!



continued from page 1

Input Received in Writing or at the Public

Meetings: BLM received many opinions about the management of the public lands within the planning area. These opinions included everything from “cut no more trees” to “manage these lands like corn – when it’s ripe, harvest it.”

“BLM is required to analyze a reasonable range of alternatives and all of the alternatives must meet all the laws BLM operates under,” said Dick Prather, Project Manager. He stressed that BLM will not analyze the impacts of alternatives that are in violation of a federal law. For example, “growing the forest like a crop of corn” will not be considered because that would violate the Endangered Species Act and “not cutting any trees at all” will not be considered because that would violate the O&C Act of 1937.

“Between those extremes, we have a wide range of alternatives to address forest management issues,” he said.

At the public meetings, the BLM planners stressed that all alternatives analyzed in the EIS will have to meet all existing laws including the O&C Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and others.

They also emphasized that it is still early in the planning process and we’re not ready yet to have a meaningful discussion about which alternative is best. After the analysis of effects is completed in the environmental impact statement (about a year from now) we’ll have the information available to talk in an informed way about what would be the best plan for future management of these lands.

What About Considering Other Planning

Alternatives? Some parties suggested BLM analyze additional alternatives such as the “Community Conservation Alternative” or the “Natural Selection Alternative” submitted by individual groups. The BLM looked closely at these alternatives and many of the elements of these alternatives are incorporated into the current range of alternatives and will be analyzed and their effects displayed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

For example, some of the suggested alternatives wanted to keep the BLM plans based on the Northwest Forest Plan and the existing reserves. The ‘No Action’ alternative continues current management and one of the action alternatives is

based on current management under the Northwest Forest Plan and keeps the existing Late Successional Reserve system.

Others urged BLM to stop the logging of old-growth timber or suggested that the BLM cease clear cutting. These actions will be analyzed under two of the proposed alternatives.

Still others expressed a desire to increase the economic return from public lands through increased timber harvest. At least one of the alternatives should do that as it minimizes reserves to only those necessary to meet existing laws.

Recreation Opportunities: Many of the public meeting participants, and those who offered comments in writing, expressed concerns that the proposed alternatives were silent on the need to improve recreation opportunities and/or management. The use of off-highway-vehicles (OHVs) on BLM-administered lands was an issue for

many. Some were hoping for more opportunities, others were concerned about impacts of this use on other values. The planning team is discussing how best to deal with these concerns within the plan revision process.

The O&C Act of 1937: Many took issue with the BLM’s reliance on the 9th Circuit Court’s interpretation of this

act. This will undoubtedly continue to be an issue through this plan revision process. As with other issues, concerns varied widely. Some felt that the interpretation of the Act was too narrow and timber production should not be the “dominant use” of O&C lands because of more recent legislation. Others felt the interpretation was too broad when in fact the Act directs BLM to maximize timber production on the O&C lands to support local economies.

Neighborhood Issues: Our public review process provided the opportunity for many of BLM’s neighboring landowners to voice their concerns about future management. We heard concerns about public trespass on private land, the flammable condition of BLM-administered lands in the neighborhood, concerns about domestic water supplies originating on public lands, maintaining forest vistas, the need to thin and better-manage public lands, etc. Although many of these very site-specific issues can’t be addressed in a land management plan revision at this scale, it’s important for neighbors to stay engaged in the process and let BLM know how land use decisions proposed next year in the draft management plan would affect them.

For a detailed description of the various planning alternatives, see pages 21-25 of the “Proposed Planning Criteria and State Director Guidance” document on the web at: http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr/files/planning_criteria.htm

Using Science in the Plan Revisions

The BLM is taking action to create a sustained dialog among scientists and managers throughout the RMP revision process. Involvement of scientists in the RMP revision process is intended to:

- Provide the BLM with an understanding of current scientific knowledge
- Provide assurance that the analytical process is founded on credible assumptions and uses appropriate methodologies
- Provide specialized sources of expertise not otherwise available
- Provide innovative scientific perspectives concerning management approaches to meet Resource Management Plan objectives
- Help ensure that relevant science is considered, reasonably interpreted, and accurately presented; and that uncertainties and risks are acknowledged and documented
- Share relevant information and knowledge with interested citizens, interest groups, cooperators, and media

State-of-the-Science Reviews

The BLM has established cooperative agreements with scientists who have recognized expertise in the relevant field to conduct a “state-of-the-science” review for selected major issues and questions. The purpose of these reviews is to assess the state of the knowledge and identify areas of agreement and areas of uncertainty for complex issues central to the Resource Management Plan (RMP) revisions. These reviews include a survey and synthesis of the existing literature, identify questions that are the subject of ongoing scientific investigations, and suggest a range of reasonable assumptions and interpretations relevant for RMP revisions. Reports will be prepared in a format suitable for review and use by the RMP planning team, and may be further developed for publication. These reports will help focus and support the analysis of planning team specialists, and identify potential tools to help conduct resource analyses.

Topics of the state-of-the-science review are wildlife use of dead wood, forest management effects on peak stream flows, aquatic habitat management strategies, socio-economic community resiliency, young stand management, application of landscape dynamics concepts, and the role of BLM lands in multi-ownership landscapes. This review will be the subject of a full-day workshop at OSU open to the public. The event, co-sponsored by the U. S. Geologic Survey and the BLM through the Cooperative Forest Ecosystem Research program, will be held on June 15, 2006. There is no charge for the workshop, but pre-registration is required. More

information is available from the BLM project office or at: <<http://www.fsl.orst.edu/cfer/StateOfScience/SOS>>.

Informal Science Consultations

BLM planning team members face significant challenges analyzing the effects of alternatives. Informal consultations and small group meetings have been organized among team members and scientists to provide early and rapid feedback regarding proposed analysis methods. Draft descriptions of proposed analytical methods were shared with scientists, and the scientists responded with suggestions to improve methods. The following planning topics have been addressed through informal consultations with scientists:

- Climate change
- Fish habitat
- Hydrology
- Landscape ecology
- Social and economic effects
- Soils
- Timber harvest systems
- Timber growth and yield modeling
- Wildlife

Science Team

A Science Team has been formed to enhance the quality and credibility of Resource Management Plan revision analyses. The primary purpose of the Science Team is to provide advice to the BLM that improves the quality of the plan revisions and environmental impact statement.

The Science Team members are:

- Sarah Crim - U.S.D.A Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region - Timber modeling
- Doug Drake - Oregon Department of Environmental Quality - Water quality, monitoring
- Joan Hagar - U.S. Geologic Survey, Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center - Wildlife ecology
- Chris Jordan - NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center - Fish biology, monitoring
- Tom Spies – U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station - Forest ecology, landscape ecology
- Fred Swanson - U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station - Geology, landscape ecology, watershed processes
- John Cissel - BLM - Team coordination

More information about the roles and responsibilities of the Science Team can be found on the project web site <<http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr/files/science.htm>>.

Future Opportunities for Public Involvement

The next few months will be a busy time for the BLM planning team. This is when the effects analysis for each of the proposed alternatives will be done. The alternatives will be refined using input from the public, BLM specialists, and involved scientists. Data will be gathered, organized and prepared for each alternative. Environmental, social and economic effects will be described for each alternative.

This extensive effort will become visible to the public with the issuance of the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in early 2007. The EIS will include BLM's "Preferred Alternative" as required by BLM's planning regulations. However, this "Preferred Alternative" is not the final decision; rather it is the alternative which the BLM believes best meet all of the laws considering the environmental, economic and social impacts displayed in the EIS.

As we work through the required three-month public involvement process we will gather input to help write the "Proposed Resource Management Plan" and final EIS.

The BLM will be working with a private consultant over the next few months to design a public process for review

and discussion of the Draft Resource Management plan. We are well aware that some of these issues are highly polarized and the final decisions will never make everyone happy. But we are hearing from many of the key players that there are opportunities to reach some common ground within the legal constraints that guide our actions. We're hopeful that we can develop a process to move us in that direction.

If all proceeds as planned, the Proposed Resource Management Plan will become the "Final Resource Management Plan" in 2008 with six individuals "Records of Decisions", one for each of the five western Oregon districts and the Klamath Falls Resource Area.

Stay Involved!

If you are receiving this newsletter in the mail or are receiving an e-mail message that it's available on our web site, you are on our mailing list. We will continue to post current information on the web site and issue future newsletters as appropriate. If you are not on our postal or electronic mailing lists, let us know and we'd be glad to add you. Phone: 503-808-6629; e-mail: orwopr@or.blm.gov or mail: Western Oregon Plan Revisions, P. O. Box 2965, Portland, OR 97208.



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