



PLAN REVISIONS NEWS

WESTERN OREGON
NEWSLETTER ISSUE NO. 5

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What's New?

In the last issue of this newsletter (April 2006) we provided a summary of comments received in response to the proposed alternatives that we provided for public review. In this issue, we'll describe how those alternatives have changed in response to comments received from the public and from our cooperating agencies.

We'll also share information about future opportunities for public involvement and answer questions we've received.



A Summary of the Western Oregon Plan Revisions

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for the management of over 2.5 million acres of federal forest lands scattered across western Oregon. These lands are some of the most scenic and productive forest lands in the Pacific Northwest. Most of these lands are managed under the provisions of the O&C Act of 1937. That Act specifies that these lands be managed for permanent forest production. A map of these lands can be viewed at http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr/files/wopr_map.htm.



For the last eleven years, management of these lands has been directed by six resource management plans (RMPs) that were developed using the standards of the federal Northwest Forest Plan. Implementation of parts of these resource management plans has been very successful, but other parts have not been successful – particularly in meeting the goals of the O&C Act to provide a revenue source for local counties and produce timber for local industries.

The purpose for revising these six resource management plans is to find a better way to meet the O&C Act's requirement of managing O&C lands for permanent forest production while complying with other applicable laws, such as the Endangered Species Act.

The plan revision process started officially in September of 2005. The public was asked to help identify issues to be addressed and review potential management alternatives to be analyzed in an environmental impact statement (EIS). The BLM expects to issue a draft resource management plan and EIS for public review in the spring of 2007 and have revised plans ready to implement in March 2008.



Welcome... to the fifth issue of the Bureau of Land Management's Western Oregon Plan Revisions Newsletter. If you're new to the plan revision project, you may want to view previous issues of this newsletter on our web site at <http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr> or stop by any BLM office in western Oregon for information.



What Is An Alternative and What Are They Used For?

By regulation (40 CFR 1502.14), the BLM must “rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives” that meet the purpose and need before making key decisions in a resource management plan. Each alternative identified is one method or strategy for future land management. In the plan revisions process, the BLM must look at the expected environmental, economic, and social impacts of a range of alternatives and choose one alternative, or a combination of the alternatives, as the basis of the new plans.

Each specific alternative is designed to address issues raised during the first phase of the plan revision process and to meet the expressed purpose and need for revising the current plans. The purpose and need for revising the BLM’s resource management plans is to achieve the O&C Act’s requirement of managing O&C lands for permanent forest production by selling, cutting and removing timber in conformance with the principles of sustained yield while complying with other applicable laws, such as the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Federal Land Policy Management Act, and others.

The BLM has identified four alternatives that will be analyzed in detail through an environmental impact statement (EIS). These will include an alternative to maintain the current plans (a no action alternative) and three action alternatives that explore different ways to meet the purpose and need of the plan revisions. When the environmental and social impacts of each alternative are identified, a preferred alternative and an environmentally preferred alternative will be chosen. The draft resource management plan and EIS will be released to the public in March 2007 for a 90-day public review and comment period. Each of the alternatives will be described fully in the draft document. A summary of each alternative is provided in this newsletter.

Variations of Alternatives

In addition to the four alternatives described, several variations of those alternatives will also be analyzed. Variations of alternatives are known as sub-alternatives. These sub-alternatives are designed to help with decision-making by answering specific questions. Such questions might be what would happen if we stopped harvesting timber stands over 200 years old, or what would happen if we changed the widths of the riparian management areas.

The management actions specified in some of these sub-alternatives are outside of the purpose and need for the plan revisions and would therefore not be appropriate as final decisions, but the analysis would be helpful in decision-making. For example, analyzing what would happen if we eliminated all logging might be important information helpful to decision-making even though that action would clearly violate the O&C Act of 1937.

What Are the Issues That the Alternatives Seek to Resolve?

Through a formal evaluation of the existing plans and with the help of public input, several broad issues have been identified. The plan alternatives will provide different ways to address these issues.

- **Vegetation** - How can the BLM provide a sustainable supply of wood and other forest products as mandated by the O&C Lands Act while also meeting applicable laws and regulations?
- **Habitat for Species Listed Under the Endangered Species Act** - How can the BLM manage federal lands in a way that contributes to the conservation of species in a manner that is consistent with the Endangered Species Act?
- **Watershed Management and Water Quality** - How can the BLM manage federal lands in a way that contributes to the goals of the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act?
- **Wildland Fire and Fuels** - How can the BLM manage federal lands in a way that reduces the risk of wildfires and integrates fire back into the ecosystem?

How Have the Alternatives Changed?

In a nutshell, here's how the alternatives have changed in response to review by staff, the public, and cooperating agencies. There may be additional changes as the draft resource management plan and EIS is completed. The current changes in the proposed alternatives are outlined below:

Alternatives as described in detail in the Proposed Planning Criteria and State Director Guidance document	Revised Alternatives currently being analyzed in the draft EIS
<p><u>No Action Alternative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the decisions in the existing resource management plans 	<p><u>No Action Alternative</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the decisions in the existing resource management plans
<p><u>Revised Northwest Forest Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain the current land use allocations with modifications of the riparian reserves 	<p><u>Alternative 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create late-successional management areas to match large late-successional reserves in No Action alternative Apply new criteria for designating the width of riparian management areas Intensive forest management on other areas
<p><u>Traditional Static Reserve Land Allocations based on Meeting Legal Requirements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reserves limited to only the habitat currently suitable for northern spotted owls within "Critical Habitat" as currently designated by USFWS Other areas subject to intensive forest management to produce high timber yields 	<p><u>Alternative 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate late successional management areas to match the currently designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet Apply new criteria for designating the width of riparian management areas Prioritize forest management in areas outside of critical habitat and riparian management areas.
<p><u>Minimize Land Use Allocations and Manage Under Extended Rotation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage entire land base for timber production under a long rotation Maintain late-successional habitat across the landscape through long rotations Seek to maintain 50% of the federal landscape in older forests at all times 	<p><u>Alternative 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage most of the land base for timber production under long rotations Maintain late-successional habitat across the landscape through long rotations Seek to maintain 50% of the federal landscape in older forests at all times Practice uneven-aged management in fire-prone ecosystems
<p><u>Situational Management Under Constant Change Theory</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vary management by watershed and percent Federal/State ownership 	<p><u>No Alternative 4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate the situational management as a complete alternative, but some concepts have been incorporated into a variation of Alternative 3

Description of the Alternatives Being Analyzed

The following are brief summaries of the alternatives that will be analyzed in detail in the draft resource management plan and environmental impact statement (EIS) to be released early in 2007.

Maintain Current Management – The No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative (required by the National Environmental Policy Act) will analyze the effects of continuing to implement the decisions made in the six existing resource management plans. Because the existing plans were based on the Northwest Forest Plan, the no action alternative incorporates the goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines of the Northwest Forest Plan, including the presence of large late-successional reserves and riparian reserves. This alternative includes all approved changes (amendments and maintenance) made to the six original 1994 resource management plans.

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 would establish three land use allocations to guide future management.

Late-Successional Management Areas - Alternative 1 would establish late-successional management areas based on the large blocks of late-successional reserves in the current plans. The objective of these late-successional management areas is to promote the development of old-growth characteristics such as large mature trees, multi-layered forest canopies and structurally complex forests. Harvesting or forest treatments would occur for the purpose of moving forest stands toward old-growth characteristics. If trees were killed through natural forces, such as insects, fire, and wind, no salvage would be permitted in late-successional management areas except for safety or operational considerations (including the clearing of roads to allow access.)

Riparian Management Areas - This alternative would establish riparian management areas along perennial and fish-bearing streams. In general, the riparian management areas under this alternative are one-half the width of the current riparian reserves. The management objectives of these riparian management areas is to protect streams by providing stream shade, sediment filtering, stream bank stabilization, and a source of large wood for streams. Some trees could be harvested from these areas to promote the development of structurally complex stands.

Timber Management Areas - Timber management areas would be designated outside of late-successional and riparian management areas and other areas such as wild and scenic rivers and developed recreation sites. The management objective of these areas would be to achieve a high level of continuous timber production that could be sustained in perpetuity through a balance of tree growth and harvest. Intensive forest management practices would occur to achieve this objective. This intensive management could include regeneration harvest in most areas, but uneven-aged management would be applied in the eastern portion of the Klamath Falls Resource Area. Salvage in the timber management areas would be permitted for economic reasons.

Variations to Alternative 1

Several variations will be analyzed with this alternative.

Many comments received during the scoping process asked the BLM to stop clear-cutting. One variation of this alternative will analyze the effects of not allowing regeneration harvests of older stands until all appropriate thinning of younger stands has been accomplished.

Another common suggestion from the public was to stop cutting old-growth forests. The term "old-growth" has many definitions. In addition to having old trees, old-growth forests have a complex structure with several layers of vegetation and a significant component of dead wood. A set of variations of Alternative 1 will examine the effects of not harvesting older forests. For the purposes of modeling, this set of variations will examine the effects not harvesting stands over 80 years old and over 200 years old.

A third variation of Alternative 1 will analyze changing the fixed boundaries of the late-successional management areas from those defined by the current late-successional reserves to areas defined by the boundaries of the Designated Conservation Areas outlined in the 1992 Draft Spotted Owl Recovery Plan prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Alternative 2

Like Alternative 1, Alternative 2 establishes late-successional, riparian, and timber management areas on the landscape.

Late-successional management areas will align with critical habitat currently designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. The management objective of these areas is to maintain the existing suitable habitat for these species, and to foster the development of this habitat in stands that do not currently meet suitable habitat criteria.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently considering a revision in critical habitat designations for these species. If new designations are made in a timely manner, Alternative 2 may be modified before the draft EIS is issued.

Some timber harvest (such as thinning of dense stands) would occur in non-suitable northern spotted owl habitat to enhance the stand's development toward more suitable habitat. When stands in late-successional management areas are damaged by natural forces such as insects, fire, and wind, salvage would be permitted to recover economic value.

Riparian management areas would be established on perennial and intermittent streams to provide stream shade, sediment filtering, stream bank stabilization, and a source of large wood for streams. Perennial and fish-bearing streams would receive protection with a 25-foot no-cut zone on either side of the stream. Beyond 25 feet, partial shade (80 percent) would be maintained out to 60 feet. From 60 feet to 100 feet, 50 percent crown closure would be maintained after harvest. Along intermittent streams, trees can be harvested, but care would be taken to preserve all non-commercial vegetation within 25 feet of the channel.

Recent studies have shown that many of the logs in perennial streams come from up-stream areas along intermittent streams as the result of debris flows. Therefore, intermittent streams that have the potential to deliver debris to perennial streams would receive a 25-foot no-cut zone on either side of the stream and a 25- to 100-foot zone would be managed for mature, multi-canopied, and structurally complex forests. No salvage would be permitted in riparian management areas except for safety or operational considerations.

Timber management areas would be established outside of late-successional and riparian management areas or lands otherwise reserved. The goal in these timber management areas would be to achieve a high level of continuous timber production that could be sustained in perpetuity through a balance of tree growth and harvest. Intensive forest management practices, including regeneration harvest could occur to achieve this objective. Uneven-aged management would be applied in the eastern part of the Klamath Falls Resource Area. Salvage in the timber management area would be conducted to recover economic value.

Variations to Alternative 2

Many comments received in the scoping process urged the BLM to find ways to increase timber production. A variation of Alternative 2 will be analyzed to answer the question what would happen if the management objective in late successional management areas was only to protect existing habitat for threatened species, but do little to move currently non-suitable habitat to a suitable condition.

Another variation analyzed would include only existing suitable northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat in the late-successional management areas.



Alternative 3

Alternative 3 attempts to meet wildlife habitat and timber production needs. It would manage for both simultaneously across the landscape without compartmentalizing the federal land into traditional land use allocations such as reserves or intensive management areas. Habitat conditions required for late-successional species would be created by using a variety of timber harvest methods to emulate the natural role that fire and catastrophic events historically played on the landscape. Because the planning area covers a wide geographic region and the historic role of fire varies in different areas, the management prescriptions will vary from north to south.

Research has shown that large, stand-replacing fires occurred infrequently, about every 360 years in the northern districts and about every 240 years in the Medford District. Also, occasional mixed-severity fires moved through stands every 20 to 120 years killing only some of the trees. To emulate these historic conditions, mature stands would not be regenerated until they approach the age of 360 years in the north and 240 years in the south. Partial harvests would be applied based on the 20 to 120 year average return interval of mixed-severity fires. No regeneration harvests that emulate a stand replacement event would occur in the southern portions of the Medford District, as well as the western portion of the Klamath Falls Resource Area, in order to reduce fire hazard created by even-aged forest stands. Dense even-aged stands would be thinned to hasten the development of structurally complex stands.

Because most of the federal forests are not now in the mature age classes, no regeneration harvest would occur until at least 50 percent of the BLM-managed forest stands are older than 100 years in the Coast Range and west Cascades provinces or older than 140 years in the Klamath and east Cascades provinces. Also, harvesting of stands in northern spotted owl activity centers, consisting of 215 acres in size, would be deferred until these targets are met.

Under Alternative 3, riparian management areas would be established on perennial and intermittent streams to provide stream shade, sediment filtering, stream bank stabilization, and a source of large wood for streams. Perennial and fish-bearing streams would receive protection with a 25-foot no-cut zone on either side of the stream. Beyond 25 feet, partial shade (80 percent) would be maintained out to 60 feet. From 60 feet to 100 feet, 50 percent crown closure would be maintained after harvest. Along intermittent streams, a 25-foot no-cut zone would be established on either side of the stream. When wildfires, insect infestations, disease, or wind storms do occur, salvage of damaged timber would be allowed when economically feasible. Salvage operations would be designed to emulate a partial harvest or a stand replacement harvest depending on the nature and extent of the disturbance.

Also under this alternative, a land use allocation would be established consisting of BLM-managed lands adjacent to or near the Coquille Tribal Forest in Coos County. On these lands, management would comply with the Coquille Tribal Cooperative Management Area Plan of July 2006.

Variations to Alternative 3

One of the proposed alternatives listed in the *Proposed Planning Criteria and State Director Guidance* document, prepared in February 2006, was tied to the BLM's checkerboard ownership pattern. This proposed alternative provided that management of late-successional (old-growth) characteristics would occur only in areas where state and federal land ownership exceeded 50 percent of the local area. Timber management would be emphasized in areas where state and federal ownership was less than 50 percent of the total. It was assumed that areas with combined state and federal ownership greater than 50 percent of the landscape provide the best opportunity for developing sufficient-sized areas of habitat for late-successional forest related species. This proposed alternative was eliminated from analysis due to feedback from the public and cooperating agencies, but the concept will be analyzed as a variation to Alternative 3. Under this variation, the BLM will analyze the effects of deferring the harvest of older stands only in areas where state and federal ownership exceeds 50 percent of the landscape and in areas of concern for northern spotted owls.

Another variation of this alternative could be analyzed if it appears that postponing stand replacement harvest until 50 percent of the management area is in older forests results in a timber harvest schedule that varies excessively year to year. If this is the case, a variation would be analyzed that would allow harvesting of older stands when 30 percent of the area is in suitable habitat for late-successional forest-related species.

Management Common to All Action Alternatives

Many management actions, as summarized below, will be common to all action alternatives. This is only a partial list of common management actions. A complete listing will be available in the draft resource management plan and EIS.

Congressionally Reserved Area Land Use Allocations

Congressionally reserved areas, such as wild and scenic rivers and wilderness areas, would be retained and managed for the purposes for which they were established.



Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Within each action alternative, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) would be designated to maintain or restore important and relevant values. On O&C lands, the designation must be consistent with the requirements of the O&C Act for permanent forest production. This stipulation is based on the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, which authorized ACECs, and specifically states that if the act conflicts with the O&C Act in regards to timber management or distribution of funds, the O&C Act will prevail.

Research Natural Areas (a type of ACEC) may be appropriate on O&C Lands if the results of the research could benefit timber production in the long run. Descriptions of potential designations will be listed with each alternative in the draft resource management plan and EIS.

Energy and Minerals

The BLM would maintain existing opportunities and develop new opportunities for exploration and development of locatable, leasable, saleable energy and mineral resources, and for casual mineral prospecting. Areas would be available for energy and mineral resource exploration and development consistent with other resource management plan objectives.

Biomass would be available from harvesting actions, silvicultural treatments, and forest health and fuels treatments, where economically and operationally practical.

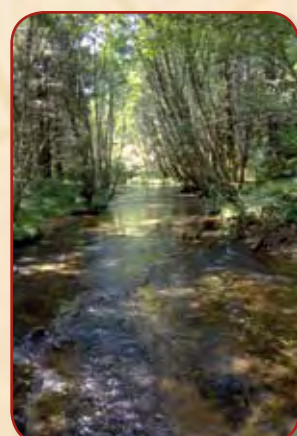
Existing quarry and pit sites would be used to provide economical sources of rock and aggregate. Quarry expansion and new quarry development would be consistent with other resource management plan objectives.

Fire and Fuels Management

Within each alternative, the BLM would take actions to reduce the fire hazard within the wildland urban interface to protect communities at risk in fire-prone areas. Efforts will be made to decrease the risk of large wildfires and reduce the cost and associated hazard of fire suppression through fuel treatments (mechanical and prescribed fire) and silvicultural prescriptions.

Prescribed fire would be used to emulate, where possible, natural fire occurrence and process. Ecosystems with the highest risk of uncharacteristic wildfire would have the highest priority for fuels treatments. Silvicultural prescriptions would be applied, consistent with other resource management plan objectives, to reduce crown fire potential.

Immediate action to control and suppress all wildfires would be taken in the checkerboard ownership and especially near communities identified as at risk. Aggressive initial attack and direct control procedures would be employed in these areas consistent with public and firefighters' safety.



Fish

Under all of the alternatives, the primary goals for the management of aquatic habitat will be to maintain and restore natural stream complexity and to restore access to stream channels for all life stages of fish species.

Improving habitat for species listed under the Endangered Species Act is key. Priority for restoration activities would be given to projects in streams with high intrinsic fish potential and high priority fish populations, as defined in recovery plans.

Where livestock grazing occurs near streams with listed salmonid species, livestock would not be released into riparian areas until 30 days following the emergence of salmonids from spawning beds.



Recreation

The objective under each of the alternatives will be to provide a diversity of developed and dispersed outdoor recreation opportunities that contribute to meeting recreational demand and quality recreational experiences. The draft resource management plan and environmental impact statement will contain lists of district-specific recreation management areas, sites, trails, facilities, backcountry byways, and visitor service programs that would be carried forward in the resource management plan revision.

All BLM lands would be designated as open, limited, or closed to off-highway-vehicle (OHV) use. The redesignation of some OHV emphasis areas from the current plans is proposed to improve OHV management. OHV emphasis areas are designated areas where OHV use is more concentrated and intensively managed. These proposed changes would be the same under all alternatives.

However, within the Medford District, the designation of OHV emphasis areas will vary by alternative. Due to local controversy regarding previous OHV designations (made in the 1995 Medford District Resource Management Plan) and substantial increases in OHV activity on the Medford District, the Western Oregon Plan Revision will consider a range of designated OHV emphasis areas. This range will include redesignating some of the current OHV emphasis areas, as well as considering new designations. Decisions from on-going site-specific OHV management plans (such as the Timber Mountain/Johns Peak management planning process) will conform to OHV management decisions made in the Western Oregon Plan Revisions.

Wildlife

The primary objective under all of the alternatives will be to contribute to the recovery of species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. Management would be consistent with approved recovery plans and designated critical habitat, including the protection and restoration of habitat, and other actions designed to recover populations of species.

Under all alternatives, the BLM would assist the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to meet big game management goals on Public Domain lands and on O&C lands where consistent with the O&C Act.

What's Next in the Planning Process?

Over the next several months, the BLM planning team will be involved in a detailed analysis using existing data, information, and sophisticated models to determine environmental, economic, and social effects. Some changes and adjustments to the alternatives are expected when the analysis is completed. There will be no formal opportunities for public input until after the analysis is completed and the draft resource management plan and EIS are published. However, the BLM will be working closely with formal plan cooperators, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the State of Oregon (10 agencies), and the cooperating western Oregon counties.

Periodic updates on the process will be published in the plan revision newsletter and on the Internet web page at <http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr>.

When the draft resource management plan and EIS is released for the 90-day public review and comment period in 2007, there will be numerous opportunities for public input. The BLM maintains an extensive plan revision mailing list (both postal and electronic). This fall, individuals and groups on the mailing list will be asked how they would like to review the documents. Materials will be available in printed format, on CDs, or over the Internet. A summary document will also be available for review.

The current planning schedule calls for the 90-day review of the draft resource management plan and EIS in the spring of 2007. After public comments have been considered, a Proposed RMP and Final EIS will be issued in the fall of 2007. A record of decision for each district will be issued by March 2008.

How Can I Stay Involved in the Planning Process?

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. Either call us at 503-808-6629, e-mail us at orwopr@or.blm.gov, or write us at Western Oregon Plan Revisions, P.O. Box 2965, Portland, OR 97208.

Although we're not formally taking public input at this time, your thoughts and suggestions are always considered. If you would like to communicate with the planning team, contact us at the postal or e-mail address given. As time permits, BLM staff members are available to provide presentations and/or meet with interested groups and organizations about the plan revision process.

And, of course, you can always find the most up-to-date public information on our web site at <http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr>.



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WESTERN OREGON
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OCTOBER 2006

BLM
Salem, Eugene, Roseburg, Coos Bay, Medford, and Klamath Falls Offices

Questions and Answers About the Planning Alternatives

Is the BLM proposing that old-growth stands be eliminated from O&C lands?

No. The BLM is not proposing that old-growth stands be eliminated from O&C lands. The O&C Act of 1937 directs the BLM to manage O&C lands for permanent forest production. Also, the Endangered Species Act of 1973 requires that BLM protect habitat for threatened and endangered species. The stated purpose and need of this plan revision effort directs that the BLM meet all applicable federal laws. Therefore, each of the alternatives analyzed in the draft resource management plan and EIS will look at alternative ways to assure the continued presence of mature and structurally complex forest stands (old-growth stands) to contribute to the recovery of the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet, as well as producing a sustainable flow of timber.



Under Alternatives 1 and 2, how much of the planning area would be placed in reserves or late-successional or riparian management status and how will this designation change the current allowable timber sale quantity?

It's too early to have definitive answers to this question. As written, Alternative 1 would have essentially the same amount of late-successional management areas and less area in riparian reserves and northern spotted owl activity centers than the current plans.

Alternative 2 would establish late-successional management areas based on designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. Under current critical habitat designations, the acreage is similar to existing late-successional reserves. However, designation of critical habitat is currently being updated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If these new designations are completed in time, they will be incorporated into the draft resource management plan. If not, there will be some adjustments between the draft and final resource management plans.

Alternative 3 would take a very different approach to land management. It will not rely on the concept of reserves to meet habitat needs for listed species but would set up a management plan that would provide for habitat across the landscape at all times.

The effects on allowable timber sale quantity (the annually declared sustained yield of forest products) from any of the alternatives are unknown at this time. The analysis of effects will estimate these figures using scientific models. These estimates will be available in the draft resource management plan and EIS.



If the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is in the process of recovery planning for the northern spotted owl and redesignating critical habitat for the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet at the same time as the BLM's Western Oregon Plan Revisions, how will those new USFWS decisions be factored into the BLM's planning alternatives?

The BLM and the USFWS are working closely together on these parallel processes. The USFWS is a formal cooperater with the BLM on the BLM's plan revisions. The BLM has a member on the recovery team participating in the Fish and Wildlife Service northern spotted owl recovery planning process. The BLM also has staff assisting the USFWS in determining critical habitat.



As mentioned in the previous question, timing will determine if the revised critical habitat figures are factored into the draft resource management plan or not. If not, adjustments will be made between the draft and final documents.

Information about the USFWS's recovery planning process can be found at <http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr/files/start.htm>.

How will the preferred alternative be chosen for the draft resource management plan and EIS?

The BLM's planning regulations require that the BLM identify a preferred alternative in a new or revised plan. Over the next few months, as the effects of each alternative become more apparent, the BLM will identify the preferred alternative by weighing how each alternative meets the purpose and need in light of the associated environmental, social, and economic consequences of the alternatives.

Will there also be an environmentally preferred alternative identified in the draft resource management plan and EIS?

Yes. Once the environmental effects are known, the BLM will identify one or more of the alternatives as environmentally preferred. This will be the alternative that would cause the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protect, preserve, and enhance historic, cultural, and natural resources.

How will the preferred alternative and the environmentally preferred alternative be used to make final decisions?

The preferred alternative and environmentally preferred alternative identified in the draft resource management plan (see previous questions) will be used as discussion starters when the BLM, the cooperating agencies, and the public join in a 90-day dialogue during the formal public comment period. The goals of the public dialogue will be to consider the impacts of these alternatives, the degree to which they meet the purpose and need, and then develop a proposed course of action that will be the focus of the final resource management plan and EIS to be published early in 2008.

What happened to the fourth alternative listed in the Proposed Planning Criteria and State Director Guidance document released in February 2006? Was it eliminated?

In February there was an alternative proposed that would vary management based on the amount of government ownership in the vicinity. Under this alternative, areas with 50 percent or greater state and federal ownership would be managed primarily to develop habitat for species related to late-successional forest species and areas with less than 50 percent would be managed for timber production. The primary rationale for developing this alternative was that these areas with 50 percent or greater government ownership have the most existing late-successional forest habitat and would provide the opportunity for creating large blocks of unfragmented habitat in the future.

This concept was eliminated as a distinct alternative, but elements have been incorporated in Alternative 3 as a variation to be analyzed.

What happened to the "Citizen's Conservation Alternative" submitted by conservation groups? Why isn't it listed as one of the alternatives?

This suggested alternative would protect mature and old-growth stands and would harvest only small diameter trees. It would focus on restoration, reduce fuels, and maintain the protections of the Northwest Forest Plan. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because it would not meet the defined purpose and need for the plan revisions. The purpose and need states that the plan revisions must meet all applicable laws, including the O&C Act's requirement to manage lands classified as timberlands "for permanent forest production and the timber thereon shall be sold, cut, and removed in conformity with the principal of sustained yield."

However, many elements of this alternative can be found in variations of the alternatives analyzed in detail. Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 all provide for restoration, reduction of fuels, and the protection or development of forested stands with mature and complex structure. A variation of Alternative 1 will explore not harvesting stands of trees over 80 years or 200 years old.

What happened to the “Natural Selection Alternative” submitted and supported by some members of the public?

This suggested alternative would remove only “naturally selected dead and dying trees, conditioned upon meeting the needs of other species.” Timber harvesting would be accomplished with small equipment from a network of narrow roads.

This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because it would not meet the purpose and need. The purpose and need states that the plan revisions must meet all applicable laws. This alternative would not meet the portion of the O&C Act that states, “The annual productive capacity for such lands shall be determined and declared . . . timber from said lands . . . not less than the annual sustained yield capacity . . . shall be sold annually . . .”

What Do You Mean by That Term?

What is “Sustained Yield” as referenced in the O&C Act of 1937?

In simplest terms, sustained yield can be defined as the practice of forest management that yields desirable forest products forever. “Sustained yield” is mentioned specifically in the O&C Act of 1937:

. . . timberlands, and power-site lands valuable for timber, shall be managed, . . . for permanent forest production, and the timber thereon shall be sold, cut, and removed in conformity with the principal [sic] of sustained yield for the purpose of providing a permanent source of timber supply, protecting watersheds, regulating stream flow, and contributing to the economic stability of local communities and industries, and providing recreational facilities: . . .

In the 1930s, sustained yield was seen as a way to manage forests that could provide a continuous and predictable flow of timber to local mills. Its goal was to prevent the boom and bust logging economies experienced in other parts of the country. The amount of annual growth for a given area was estimated, and the timber harvest was planned to balance growth with yield. As stated in the O&C Act, the practice of sustained yield would not only assure a permanent source of timber, but would also enhance watershed values and recreation opportunities.

The O&C Act also provides for a stable flow of timber sale revenue to the counties. Money generated from the sale of O&C timber in all eighteen O&C counties is pooled, and then distributed annually to the counties. The distribution between the counties is based on a formula prescribed in the act.

Old Growth—What is it?

The use of the term “old-growth” will be avoided in the resource management plan and EIS because the term means different things to different people. Most generally agree that old-growth stands have persisted for centuries without stand-replacing disturbances. These stands typically have old trees, multiple layers of trees and vegetation, a variety of plant and animal species, and an abundance of dead wood on the ground.

In general, most scientists agree that today’s older, multi-layered, multi-specied, complex forests evolved over time after stand-replacing events such as fire, insect damage, wind damage, or other disturbance.

How much old-growth forest is there on BLM-managed lands? Perhaps a more definitive question might be how much older forests are there on BLM-managed lands. In the last planning process for BLM lands in western Oregon, some forest age information was compiled:

- In 1992, it was estimated that there were 357,000 acres of forest stands 200 years and older, which is about 15% of BLM-managed lands in western Oregon.
- In 1992, it was estimated that there were 1,061,000 acres in forest stands over 80 years old, which is about 44% of BLM-managed lands in western Oregon.

These figures are currently being updated as new data is compiled.

What’s the future of mature and structurally complex stands on the BLM-managed lands? The O&C Act of 1937 directs the BLM to manage O&C lands for permanent forest production, while the Endangered Species Act of 1973 requires that the BLM protect habitat for threatened and endangered species. The BLM’s proposed plan must be consistent with all legal mandates. Each of

