

**Western Oregon Plan Revisions
Questions and Answers
July 16, 2009**

What is the decision that's being announced today?

Secretary Salazar announced that Records of Decisions for the Western Oregon Plan Revisions have been withdrawn because the administrative record does not adequately document compliance with the Endangered Species Act and implementing regulations. It was determined that the record could not withstand legal challenges under the Endangered Species Act.

The Secretary has also announced that he will ask the District Court to vacate the 2008 Northern Spotted Owl Critical Habitat Rule. He has directed that the Fish and Wildlife Service do a review of the Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan.

Why is the decision being made now?

From the beginning of the development of the Western Oregon Plan Revision, the Bureau of Land Management understood the high level of controversy surrounding the issues that needed to be addressed. But specifically, late last year, the previous Administration decided that it would not complete consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act before finalizing a plan for the management of forests in western Oregon.

It has been determined that the decision not to complete consultation on the plan's possible effects on species like the spotted owl was based on a legally indefensible process. In the end, it was decided that this legal deficiency required the withdrawal of this plan.

Now that the Records of Decision have been withdrawn what will happen to the management of BLM forest lands in western Oregon?

Withdrawal of the Western Oregon Plan Revision Records of Decisions means that the BLM will now operate under the Resource Management Plans for western Oregon that were based on the Northwest Forest Plan. While FWS revises its Recovery Plan, the BLM will also explore the development of local collaborative planning processes in areas where timber harvest is particularly important – and often controversial – such as in the Roseburg and Medford Districts. These collaborative efforts could serve as the starting point for the eventual development of new Resource Management plans for Western Oregon.

Additionally, the Secretary has directed the BLM and FWS to work closely together to identify ecologically sound timber sales under the Northwest Forest Plan that can get wood to the mills right away. As the BLM works to identify these projects, the bureau will engage local stakeholders, counties, the Coquille tribe, elected officials, and the State of Oregon to help put affected projects online as fast as possible. The Department of the Interior believes that similar

sales volumes can be achieved as those that have occurred in recent years. *The following are specific examples of the types of projects that the BLM is currently working on:*

Commercial Thinning Projects

River Camp: In August, the Eugene District plans to offer a restoration thinning sale, called the River Camp timber sale. This project would improve habitat for the spotted owl and other species dependent on older forest characteristics by increasing stand diversity and developing multiple canopy layers. In addition, the 290 acres of commercial thinning would result in approximately 3.8 million board feet of timber for local forest product facilities. This sale would provide approximately 38 to 76 jobs while underway.

Yamaha: Also in August, the Salem District intends to offer another forest enhancement project. The Yamaha project would thin trees on 159 acres and produce 3.8 million board feet of timber. It would also enhance characteristics of older forests and restore large conifers within the Riparian Reserves. Following harvest operations, approximately 1.2 miles of existing road would be decommissioned. In addition to the environmental benefits of this project, there would be social and economic benefits as well. The project could help create or maintain approximately 38 to 76 jobs.

Seeley Creek South: In September, the Eugene District plans to offer the Seeley Creek South timber sale, a thinning project intended to provide economic benefits for local communities under the Northwest Forest Plan. The purpose of this project is to maintain healthy levels of stand density while increasing vigor of the thinned forest stands. The Riparian Reserves area contained within the sale would also be thinned to develop large wood structural components within these riparian areas, enhancing fish habitat for the long term. This sale would thin approximately 379 acres of previously managed young stands, and provide 5.8 million board feet of timber for local forest product facilities. This project could help create or maintain approximately 58 to 116 jobs.

Planned Sustained-Yield Regeneration Harvest

The Roseburg District is working on three regeneration harvest timber sales in the South Umpqua and Myrtle Creek watersheds west of Roseburg that could provide approximately 8.7 million board feet (mmbf) of timber to support the local economy, especially Douglas County, Oregon, which has experienced severe unemployment. The sales include "**Class of 98**" at 3.7 mmbf, "**Major Glasco**" at 4.7 mmbf, and "**Sweet Pea**" at 0.3 mmbf. These timber sales would replace more mature slower growing stands with more rapidly growing young trees, a sustained-yield forest management practice. The sales are in areas designated for sustained yield harvest under the Northwest Forest Plan. These three sales could create or maintain approximately 87 to 174 jobs. In addition to providing much needed employment in the local communities, these sales would provide early-successional habitat for plants and animals while maintaining structural components such as down logs, snags, and large trees.

Current Biomass Projects

North Stewardship Project: This is a current Medford District project designed to fit within the Southwest Oregon Utilization Strategy. This 10-year project began in FY08 and includes vegetative treatments of up to 4,500 acres. Treatments are designed to improve stand vigor; improve road conditions by thinning and removing hazard trees; improve and maintain a recreation trail; and treat invasive weed species. Expected commercial products derived from this treatment are biomass, corral poles, firewood and a limited amount of sawlogs. So far, treatment of almost 400 acres has resulted in the utilization of 300 tons of biomass on O&C Lands.

Gerber Stewardship: The Lakeview District has steadily increased woody biomass utilization on O&C lands through the Gerber Stewardship contract, timber sales and service contracts. Biomass utilization efforts, primarily through stewardship contracts on O&C lands, have resulted in reduced burning of slash piles, as well as the creation of employment opportunities in Klamath County. Under the Gerber Stewardship contract alone, the District has subsidized removal of over 30,000 tons of biomass from O&C lands that would have otherwise been burned.

ARRA Funding for Future Biomass Projects

South and Two Bit: The BLM Medford District received American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding to increase the amount of woody biomass use for energy production. The existing South and Two Bit projects would treat approximately 3,800 acres, use biomass for local energy production and create more than 50 new jobs. Additionally, the projects would reduce hazardous fuels and provide defensible space along roads and selected adjoining areas to offer maximum fire protection to private property.

Ranch: A third Medford District stewardship project, Ranch, is located near Butte Falls, Oregon. The project objectives are to protect the local communities from catastrophic fire, enhance forest condition, maintain water quality and restore forest health by promoting a more natural fire regime. The work will be conducted over a five-year period and will include thinning, meadow restoration, road decommissioning, fence removal, and use of biomass. There are over 5,000 acres of pine plantations in the Butte Falls area within the watershed that could contribute to a higher degree of catastrophic fire if tree density is not reduced. The project is expected to produce 9,000 tons of biomass while supporting over 45 jobs.