Federal Forest Advisory Committee - Potential Solutions

1.0 Background

The Federal Forest Advisory Committee (FFAC) was directed by the Board of Forestry (BOF) and the Governor to develop a set of recommendations to create a unified vision of how federal lands should contribute to sustainability and to make that vision action oriented and comprehensive, following through to the last step including implementation. The Governor has asked the Board to be bold, be open, and keep your eye on the big picture.

Goal: Identify legal/policy changes and new initiatives that could be used to implement the suggestions from the committee toward achieving the FFAC vision.

Problem: If the Guidance Document contains platitudes, not action items, it will sit on the shelf and the recommended changes will not be implemented.

1.1 FFAC Vision Statement

Federal forestlands in Oregon are a legacy, a refuge and a resource, loved and celebrated by our citizens, inhabited by healthy populations of fish and wildlife, managed with humility, wisdom and innovation to sustain the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of our rural and urban communities.

1.2 Goal Statements (taken from earlier FFAC document)

Ecosystem

1. Forest and rangeland ecosystems are protected, restored, and managed for a full range of sustainable benefits, including wood, water quality and quantity, wildlife, fish, recreation, wilderness, grazing, human health, and aesthetic values. Protection of soil and water resources provides a foundation to sustain the land's capacity to absorb, store, and distribute quality water and soil productivity. Diverse native forest and rangeland types are maintained, in the absence of non-native and invasive species, to provide for healthy populations of native fish and wildlife species.

2. Active, sustainable management is employed to provide a healthy, diverse and resilient forest ecosystem that can accommodate disturbances from human activities and natural agents such as fire and insects. The success and failure of management activities are actively monitored, measured, and reported. Management activities are modified as needed based on monitoring and other relevant information.

3. New and better science is actively used to measure, anticipate, and mitigate the effects of climate changes on the management of forests. Adaptive management is

used to mitigate the potential effects of climate change on ecosystems and the values they provide.

4. Wildland fire management, prescribed fire, and a range of mechanical treatments are used in a coordinated, cost-effective and prioritized system to improve forest health, provide healthy, diverse ecosystems, and protect public health and property.

Social

5. While national in scope, federal forestlands will respond, to the extent possible, to site specific variations and community based management principles taking into consideration both urban and rural needs and priorities. Management will provide opportunities for people to realize their material, spiritual and recreational values and relationships with the forest.

Economic

6. Federal forestlands provide a predictable, sustainable supply of the full suite of forest products now and into the future. Federal forest policy contributes to the creation of stable jobs and economic well-being for communities across the State. Local counties are able to share the revenues from economic outputs over the long-term.

2.0 Problem Statements/Potential Solutions

2.1 Natural Processes:

Natural processes have been disrupted in Oregon forests. Problems are most extreme in the dry forest types where unprecedented landscape scale forest health problems are resulting in the loss of key ecological components. Hydrologic regimes have been altered and conditions may not protect beneficial uses like water quantity and quality. Climate change is and will continue to tax the resiliency of federal forestlands and identifying the impacts is challenging. An integrated approach to forest restoration and fuels management that considers historic conditions, natural hydrology and adequate streamflows, fish and wildlife conservation, natural fire intervals, and silvicultural techniques is necessary to achieve long term management goals.

(The following problems and potential solutions were identified at the FFAC meeting on September 7, 2007.)

2.11.

Issue/ impediment – Public perception and understanding about natural resource management

Cause of the issue – Lack of leadership (Question: which entity – is it the Governor, state or federal agencies, or all?)

Background Information –

- Who should provide the leadership? How?

- What kind of forum can be created to increase the public discourse and build trust? At what scale (i.e., state, ecoregion, forest)? (e.g., IAC, RAC's and PAC's)
- How should we coordinate with WGA, other states, etc.?

Desired outcome –

Solution to address the issue – Other efforts (e.g., WGA sustainability) lineup with . Look at reports from other areas (e.g. Colorado, NRC)

- Public perception and understanding about natural resource management
  - Public discourse about state of forests (builds trust)
  - Cultivate broader public trust
  - Lawsuits – reduce numbers without jeopardizing rights to participate
    - Look at issues being litigated to understand problems
  - Cleanup – agency missions and cultures

Commission a study to review the litigation against the federal agencies. Determine which issues are driving the litigation and whether there is a pattern to the court rulings against the agencies.

How the solution will lead to desired outcome –

Who should implement –

Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –

2.12

Issue/ impediment – Create and act on learning opportunities

Cause of the issue –

Background Information -

Many forest issues contain a degree of uncertainty and risk associated with taking any course of action. These risks often lead to disagreements about how the land should be managed and can generate conflicts resulting in appeals and lawsuits. "Options forestry" is a systematic approach that includes a strict experimental design to develop multiple treatments and test competing ideas about how to achieve a single goal. Over time the treatments are assessed to determine how well they have performed and whether there are unintended consequences. Examples of issues where this technique would be of benefit include post-fire management and old-growth management.

Desired outcome – Uncertainty and risk should be systematically addressed in major decisions. Greater use of "Options forestry"[1] should be employed to expand the range of alternatives selected in controversial EIS's.

Solution to address the issue –

[1] Bormann, B.T.; Kiester, A.R. 2004. *Options forestry: acting on uncertainty.* Journal of Forestry.

- Expand range of alternatives considered
- Five Rivers Project as an example
- Be realistic about analysis of effects (Question: What's the definition of realistic? There is much litigation about the analysis of effects.)

How the solution will lead to desired outcome –

Who should implement –

Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –

2.13

Issue/ impediment – Active management

Cause of the issue –

- What are the barriers to active management?
- What can we do to change them?

Background Information –

- When providing policy recommendations, make sure to consider the past forest management and their continued impact (Fred Swanson)
- When managing forest land, it is important to plan and provide a range of management options for future decision makers (Fred Swanson). The broader the range of structure and age classes, the more options for future management choices.
- Hazardous fuels treatments are focused on the wildlland urban interface, which is inadequately described (too limiting). Recognize that fire can and does move rapidly across large areas when vegetation and weather conditions favor such movement. A watershed/landscape approach is needed, which may also help deal with perceived disparate treatment between affluent developments and small rural communities.
- Hazardous fuels treatments may be "too light" because of political expediency.
- Too much money is spent reactively on fire suppression – need more focus on proactive pre-treatment.

Desired outcome –

- Green thinning for multiple-layering stands (Question: Is this a one size fits all approach? Multiple layering may be important for spotted owls westside, but is it appropriate for pine forests eastside?)
- Scale – to return to range of natural variability
- Do something on the ground
- Maintain institutional capacity to manage land

Solution to address the issue –

How the solution will lead to desired outcome –

Who should implement –

Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –

2.14

Issue/ impediment – Watershed scale planning – desired future conditions addressing 3 areas (of sustainability)

Cause of the issue –

Background Information –

- Sufficient current reserves and/or restorable area must exist in a given watershed for a flexible standard to apply (Gordie Reeves).
- Harvests must be concentrated in one area within the watershed (such as a single subwatershed) (Gordie Reeves).
- Rotation lengths must approximate natural fire return intervals to allow ecosystem and water quality (WQ) recovery (Gordie Reeves).
- Guarantees must be in place that harvested and replanted subwatersheds would be consistently meeting WQS and beneficial use requirements before any other subwatersheds within that same watershed could be extensively impacted (Gordie Reeves).
- Current guidance focuses on protection of the status quo as compared to recognition that our ecosystems are adapted to disturbance. Need recognition that systems are not static and that big events shape the aquatic landscape (increase productivity) for years to come.

Desired outcome –

- Manage based on what landscape can do (Coho example) – match ecological ability of land to expectations
- Eliminate admin boundaries for land management – match to landscape and forest types
- Water storage (where?)
- Water management to enhance snow pack (consistent with fuels reduction)
- Actions taken at a scale which address current depletion of surface and ground water due to amount of vegetation exceeding natural range of variation

Solution to address the issue –

Federal land management agencies need to better integrate into existing collaborative processes for landscape-scale watershed assessments and innovative approaches to forest management across land uses and ownerships.

- Identify, evaluate and participate in current collaborative processes, policy frameworks and scientific processes related to landscape management;
- Development of IMAP methodology should be a priority.
- Apply watershed assessment protocols consistent with watershed assessment protocols developed by OWEB
- Identify research needs, regulatory and non-regulatory policies, and technical methods to support landscape-scale approaches; and
- Improve cooperative approaches and partnerships among local, state and federal governments, and private landowners.

- Strengthen involvement in "Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds" support for basin and watershed-scale assessment, collaboration, and restoration by linking federal actions to basin and watershed priorities established by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB).
- Use these processes to assess opportunities for water storage and enhanced water management.
- The federal agencies should become strong partners in the Watersheds Research Cooperative paired watershed studies to establish cause and affect relationships among physical and biological parameters.

How the solution will lead to desired outcome –

Who should implement –

Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –

2.15

Issue/ impediment – New research (pilot projects) with CWA exemptions to look for new solutions

Cause of the issue –

Background Information –

A "static perspective" dominates the existing policy frameworks under which "protection" is applied under federal regulatory and land management programs. This needs to be changed to a "dynamic ecosystem" perspective that avoids disturbance prevention and utilizes the inevitable disturbance as a basis for management and as an opportunity to become more effective and efficient.

Desired outcome –

- Change standards without changing laws
  - Admin rules and procedures – if problem let's say so
- Manage for disturbance and recognize variability (riparian buffers in right place for resiliency and positive recovery)

Solution to address the issue –

- EPA should change its regional temperature guidance to reflect knowledge of dynamic ecosystem processes.
- DEQ should create standards that reflects knowledge of dynamic ecosystem processes and that are applied based upon disturbance and resultant variability of conditions across the landscape. (See discussion of "options forestry.")

How the solution will lead to desired outcome –

Who should implement –

Measures of success/ on the ground or administrative benchmarks –

(Issues/Problems to be discussed at future FFAC Meetings.)

2.2 Reduced Timber Harvest

Reduced timber harvest from federal forestlands has resulted in diminished forest industry infrastructure with unintended economic and social losses to rural communities.

2.3 Older Forests

The desired amount of older forests on federal forestlands needs to be established and protected as a component of sustainable forest management. Habitat types should provide for wildlife diversity. A well-balanced program of forest management activities is necessary to maintain the mix of successional stages and vegetation conditions that provides for the full diversity of habitats and species

2.4 Lack of Effective Processes

Federal, state, local, and tribal governments lack an effective process to coordinate policy decisions and achieve landscape scale objectives.

2.5 Lack of Adequate Funding

Funding is not adequate or appropriately allocated to achieve land management objectives on federal lands. A stable funding source is necessary to achieve long-term management goals.