

MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS

1. Maintain plant and animal populations (biodiversity)

- a. Conservation system does not provide for all terrestrial and freshwater biological diversity. Desirable characteristics include:
 - i. Habitat for older forest species – old growth
 - ii. Multiple age class distributions across federal forests.
 - iii. Adapt to changing conditions – e.g., loss of spotted owl habitat due to catastrophic wildfire and the invasion of the Barred Owl
 - iv. Provide certainty and maintains future options
 - v. Reflect diversity in natural range of variability including habitat structure and function
 - vi. Provide endangered species habitat
 - vii. Declining forage for deer and elk on federal lands
 1. Populations of blacktail deer and Roosevelt elk are declining because of lack of forage
 2. Forage reductions for deer and elk populations on federal lands force animals to seek forage on managed private lands in higher concentrations resulting in damage conflicts
- b. Land ownership patterns, especially in the checkerboard, may hinder conservation and resource management goals.
- c. Poor condition of some types of habitat - restoration
 - i. Lack of diversity in dense young plantations on the Westside
 - ii. Lack of vegetation diversity and dead wood
- d. Forest Fragmentation - Too few roadless areas being maintained

2. Productive Capacity – Economic values

- a. Reduction in federal timber harvests causing forest conversion to non-forest cover and land uses
- b. Lack of a consistent federal timber sale program - harvest goals in forest plans not achieved

3. Maintain the health of forest ecosystems

- a. Loss of landscape resiliency – disruption of natural processes
 - i. Overstocked forests - increased forest fuels
 1. Wildfire threatens timber investments on private lands
 2. Wildland-urban interface at risk
 3. Need strategic placement of fuel treatments to change fire behavior
 4. Unable to make biomass pay for itself - out of the woods and into energy (electricity or biofuels).
 5. Public health impacts due to smoke from wildfires and prescribed burning
 - ii. Invasive species degrading wildlife habitats and changing fire regimes
- b. Lack of Active Management on federal lands
 - i. Growth exceeds removals on federal lands causing build up of fiber and biomass concentrations across the landscape
 - ii. High mortality and fuels creating conditions for catastrophic wildfires

4. Maintain soil, air, and water quality

- a. Poor aquatic and watershed conditions
 - i. Thinning treatments are not prioritized to protect freshwater ecosystems, increase effectiveness and reduce cost and controversy.
 - ii. Thinning, slash burning and associated activities can pose risks to watershed health
- b. Water quality in some areas is insufficient to protect beneficial uses, such as drinking water, fish and aquatic life, recreation, and irrigation.
 - i. Problems include temperature, sedimentation and turbidity, and toxics.
 - 1. Riparian vegetation, important for many functions, is in poor condition in some areas
 - 2. Salmon and other aquatic life are especially vulnerable to temperature, sedimentation and toxic pollutants. Federal forest lands provide key refugia for at-risk fish stocks.
 - ii. Protection of public drinking water sources - Many municipal water sources are from federal lands - primary concerns include sedimentation/turbidity and pesticides
 - iii. Poorly constructed and maintained forest roads can cause land slides and other water quality problems.
 - 1. Backlog in road maintenance and road closures increasing sediment production
 - 2. Road systems connected to hydrologic features can cause changes in peak flows
 - iv. Water quality can be impacted by grazing, mining, and recreation. - Grazing patterns and practices on federal forests can contribute to water quality problems in wet meadows and riparian areas.
- c. Availability of sustainable water supplies for future beneficial uses – water quantity
 - i. Restricted ability to construct reservoirs on forest lands
 - ii. Lack an open dialogue with water users whose water sources are on forest lands and whose conveyance systems cross forest lands

5. Enhance carbon storage – climate change

- a. Increased carbon storage beneficial to reduce climate change
- b. Climate change may affect forest conditions
 - i. Forest type shifts/changes - forest loss
 - ii. Habitat changes increase risks of species loss/extinctions

6. Maintain socio-economic benefits

- a. Lack of understanding by elected Federal, State and local officials of the cause and effect of management limitations causing reduced payments to counties per statute and the resulting deterioration of ecosystem health and long term sustainability of these Federal properties.
- b. Losing the local capacity (workforce and facilities) and markets needed to support a viable industry and forest protection and restoration efforts.
 - i. Sawmills in western Oregon are being supported by unsustainable supply of sawlogs imported from Washington State and DNR

- ii. Eastern Oregon industry in rapid decline – close to losing infrastructure completely
- c. Loss of forest industry jobs negatively affecting local communities
- d. Lack of diversity in local economies
 - i. Few recreation based jobs
 - ii. Few restoration jobs – including fuels work, prescribed fire, weed control, road removal, erosion control, instream habitat improvements
- e. Little recognition of the non-commodity value of forests to attracting diverse jobs.

7. Legal/Institutional Framework needed to support sustainable forests

- a. Clarity of purpose is lacking for federal forestlands. Federal forestlands are managed under a complex set of statutes (ESA, NFMA, FLPMA, CWA, etc.) that sometimes have conflicting goals. For example, NFMA requires the FS to manage for timber, wildlife, water, and recreation; however, no instructions are provided for addressing trade-offs when conflicts exist, and no direction is provided on how much of each resource to produce.
 - i. Direction on how to balance the production of multiple resources is lacking.
 - ii. The conversion of forest and grazing lands to single uses at the exclusion of other sustainable benefits.
 - iii. The stalemate affecting the public land managing agencies, particularly the USDA Forest Service, i.e., the inability to fully implement the management of the National Forests as envisioned by the enabling statutes and other laws and regulations governing actions.
 - iv. Lacking a shared vision of desired forest conditions across all ownerships to meet biodiversity needs, improve resilience, and sustain ecosystem services and products.
 - v. Lack of public understanding of the land's natural resource role.
 - vi. Lack strategies for addressing barriers to change
 - vii. Current statutes and rules lack mechanisms to balance the need for environmental services (habitat for listed species, clean air and water, open space) with commodity output.
 - viii. The "Social Contract" between the federal government and Rural Oregon is not being fulfilled.
 - 1. provide jobs and the infrastructure and community stability – manage the forests in a sustainable manner
 - 2. Provided revenue in the form of timber receipts – local services for access
 - ix. The "outsourcing" of forest raw materials with the accompanying environmental degradation to foreign providers. No recognition in goals of the consequences of importing wood products and exporting environmental damage.
- b. Laws and regulations need to be reviewed, evaluated, coordinated and streamlined to clarify intent, empower implementation, and reduce redundancy.

- i. The current rules create a system of overlapping constraints that are difficult to implement without violating (e.g., diameter size limits for harvesting, deferred management of certain species or forest types, dedicated riparian strips, and set-asides for single interests). Focusing on desired conditions may facilitate implementation.
 - ii. Conflicting laws increase paperwork, staff time, drain resources, and create barriers.
 - iii. Conflicting laws cause public frustration.
 - iv. Current laws and rules do not require analyzing the “Balance of Harms” that will occur if a project is not implemented. i.e., analyze the impacts of an action vs. no action.
 - c. Tools in many laws designed to facilitate implementing projects are underutilized.
 - i. Healthy Forest Restoration Act
 - ii. Stewardship contracting
 - iii. Categorical Exclusions
 - d. Lack of funding for the managing agencies to provide basic stewardship of the land and its resources and the sustainable offering of the full range of environmental, economic, social and cultural benefits.
 - i. Increase in fire suppression funding at the expense of preparedness and fuel reduction. Suppression costs have grown from 13% to 45% of budget since 1991, while fuels continue to increase.
 - ii. Loss of institutional knowledge (agency and contractors) needed for management
 - iii. Increased funding is needed for environmental assessment and monitoring of aquatic ecosystems
 - iv. Reduced funds needed for facilities and access maintenance, road maintenance and decommissioning
 - v. Lack of ability to retain or recruit trained personnel in some areas - Need capacity to restore habitats, address threats, implement sound adaptive management, and enforce regulations.
 - e. Lack of coordination with State and local governments
 - i. The damaging effect of local authorities "permitting" of human development forcing abandonment of natural resource priorities in fire and safety situations.
 - ii. Fire suppression preparedness is not complementary with adjacent state protection levels.
 - iii. Need for improved coordination and streamlining due to shrinking local, state and federal agency budgets and overlapping federal regulations that guide land management decisions.
 - f. Lack of meaningful opportunities for diverse groups of stake-holders to help design projects
 - i. The alternative selected for implementation does not represent the full range of options proposed by all interest groups.
 - ii. Lack of variety in treatments tested independently across the landscape.

- iii. Lack of trust.
- g. Lack of public recognition of the incongruence of unlimited consumption of natural resources while severely limiting reliance on our own resources.
- h. Lack of sound and trusted science from all sectors (agencies, universities, industry and NGO's). Additional information desired:
 - i. impacts of forest management on conservation of biological diversity,
 - ii. best practices for forest restoration,
 - iii. technologies for making best use out of forest products
 - iv. understanding the effects of climate change on forest composition, structure, fire regimes, forest insect populations, and water supply,
 - v. understanding key natural processes our systems have for adapting to change
 - vi. Need an integrated model that attempts to understand what the triple bottom line (environmental, economic and social) would look like 'on the ground'
 - vii. Few cooperative water data collection projects