

NEWS Release BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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Final BLM Western Oregon EIS Released

Portland, OR – The BLM has completed its revision of the land use plans that will guide the management of 2.6 million acres in western Oregon. The plans were prepared to provide timber for harvest and habitat for the conservation of Federally-listed species.

Overall, the plans increase the timber harvest from current levels, meet the conservation needs of the northern spotted owl, increase habitat for marbled murrelet, maintain water quality, and improve habitat for Federally-listed fish.

“I can proudly say that this document represents the most comprehensive and state-of-the-art management plan ever developed for BLM-managed lands in western Oregon. In the Western Oregon Plan Revisions, we approached sustainability with three essential goals in mind: sustainable harvest, sustainable habitat, and sustainable communities,” said Ed Shepard, BLM State Director in Oregon. “This plan will help us continue to manage the public land in a way that promotes both important wildlife habitat and timber revenues to local communities,” continued Shepard.

The BLM plan would also defer from harvest nearly all older and more structurally-complex forests for 15 years, which would provide additional habitat for the northern spotted owl while a strategy to deal with invading barred owls is being developed.

The revised plan projects an increase in mature forest habitat over the long-term. By applying sophisticated growth models not used in the development of the Northwest Forest Plan, the forest stands in the new plan’s Late Successional Management Areas would result in more mature habitat, and at a faster pace, than the Late Successional Reserves under Northwest Forest Plan.

The plan’s Riparian Management Areas are designed to maintain stream temperatures to the same extent as the Riparian Reserves of the Northwest Forest Plan, while allowing more area for timber production.

Throughout this planning effort, the State of Oregon, 17 western Oregon counties, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Forest Service have been cooperators.

The plan guides future management directions generally and, in itself, does not approve any specific on-the-ground action. Therefore, under the Endangered Species Act, the plan itself has no effect on listed species. The BLM will consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service as the plan is implemented and specific projects are proposed.

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“Throughout this process, the BLM has been a cooperator with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the development of recovery plans for listed species in the same way we have cooperated in the development of the Western Oregon Plan Revisions,” said Ren Lohofener, Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Region. “All along, we’ve worked with the BLM to ensure that their plan is consistent with our final recovery plans for the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet.”

Adjustments between the draft and final EIS were made to achieve consistency with the recently released Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan and Critical Habitat Rule, prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Late Successional Management Areas in BLM’s revised plan coincide with the Managed Owl Conservation Areas in the Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan and designated Critical Habitat. Consistent with the Marbled Murrelet Recovery Plan, the BLM’s revised plan would increase habitat for the marbled murrelet.

The BLM is required by the O&C Lands Act of 1937 to produce a sustained yield of timber – to harvest no more than the forest can grow. The O&C lands are capable of sustainably producing 1.2 billion board feet per year. The harvest anticipated under the plan is 502 million board feet per year, or less than half of what these lands produce annually.

The O&C Lands Act has long been responsible for a truly unique relationship between the BLM and the 18 counties in western Oregon that rely on a sustainable flow of timber and the sharing of timber-related receipts. Fifty percent of timber receipts from lands under the O&C Lands Act go directly to the 18 western Oregon counties to be used as discretionary funds for services such as libraries, law enforcement, public health services, and roads.

Under the plan, the receipts generated from BLM timber harvests are estimated to equal 85 percent of the average BLM county payments for the last 20 years.

The document released today was developed using substantially more detailed and more accurate information than was available when the six resource management plans were revised in 1995 as part of the Northwest Forest Plan.

A copy of the final plan is available online at: <http://www.blm.gov/or/index.php>

About the plan:

The plan would make approximately 994,000 acres, or 45 percent of the planning area, available for future timber harvest. Consistent with the recovery plans for the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet, the plan will designate 566,000 acres as Late-Successional Management Areas to be managed for older forest characteristics. In addition, BLM will defer from harvest, for 15 years, nearly 178,000 acres of older more structurally-complex forests while a strategy is developed to address the threat of barred owls to northern spotted owls. The plan’s direction includes provisions to protect approximately 242,000 acres of habitat along rivers and streams to maintain water quality and support conservation of aquatic species. BLM will use uneven-aged management forestry techniques on approximately 157,000 acres of drier, fire-prone forests in southern Oregon to improve fire resiliency.

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