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Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources
Peter Goldmark - Commissioner of Public Lands

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Port Blakely Tree Farms, Federal and State Agencies Sign Agreements to Protect Owl and Murrelet Habitat

TUMWATER, Wash. July 7, 2009: More than 45,000 acres of private timberland in eastern Lewis and Skamania Counties will be managed to create, maintain and enhance habitat for two federally listed species. The habitat enhancement will take place under recent agreements between a local timber producer, and state and federal natural resource agencies.

Habitat for the federally listed threatened northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet will be managed under a Federal Safe Harbor Agreement signed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as well as under separate State Landowner Option Plan and Cooperative Habitat Enhancement Agreements between Port Blakely Tree Farms, LP, (Port Blakely), the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

“Port Blakely has set a high bar for themselves as a commercial forest landowner,” said Peter Goldmark Commissioner of Public Lands. “They are showing how responsible long-term forest practices that enhance habitat also meet sound business goals. I look forward to working with them and the other agencies as Port Blakely moves forward with their plan.”

The concurrent agreements are the product of more than two years of collaborative work between Port Blakely and the agencies, resulting in a forest management plan that focuses on providing owl and murrelet habitat improvements. The forest management activities are expected to support the dispersal (movement from one area of nesting or foraging habitat to another) of juvenile northern spotted owls, as well as provide nesting habitat for marbled murrelets. Activities include retaining more, older trees, expanding commercial thinning and creating additional snags to create a more complex forest structure that will attract prey species for the northern spotted owl, and provide nesting habitat for marbled murrelets.

“Port Blakely is the first Washington forest landowner to develop a state-based landscape habitat plan for both the spotted owl and marbled murrelet, as well as the first landowner to develop one plan that simultaneously meets federal and state requirements,” said Phil Anderson, interim director of WDFW. “They deserve a great deal of credit, because this cooperative agreement will help promote creation, enhancement and conservation of important habitat for these species.”

The 60-year agreements will allow Port Blakely to conduct forest management activities in a predictable manner and will protect the company from future restrictions and “incidental take” penalties in exchange for voluntary habitat enhancement activities on Port Blakely lands that will provide a conservation benefit to the threatened species.

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Peter Goldman, director of the Washington Forest Law Center commented, "In the past, I have challenged companies to protect spotted owls and marbled murrelets but now we have a family-owned timber company that wants to grow habitat for these threatened birds and a federal program that gives them an incentive to do it. I hope more follow in Port Blakely's footsteps."

The land covered in the agreements is within a region identified by the state and federal agencies as significant to the recovery of spotted owls. Currently, there are no known northern spotted owl or marbled murrelet nest sites on the lands covered by the agreements.

"We commend Port Blakely for its initiative and perseverance in cooperating with us to create these landscape management plans," said Robyn Thorson, director of the USFWS Pacific Region. "These are the types of voluntary forest practices that will help recover the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet, and we are very pleased to provide assurances to Port Blakely with a Safe Harbor Agreement."

The state and federal agreements will be implemented July 2009.

Port Blakely Tree Farms, LP has been family owned since 1864 and is dedicated to growing sustainable forests, marketing sustainable forest products and developing environmentally sensitive communities to benefit current and future generations. For more information about the company, please visit www.portblakely.com.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

For more information about Safe Harbor Agreements visit:
<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/pdfs/harborqa.pdf>

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is dedicated to preserving, protecting and perpetuating the state's fish and wildlife resources. The department operates under a dual mandate from the Washington State Legislature to protect and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats, and provide sustainable, fish- and wildlife-related recreational and commercial opportunities. For more information, visit <http://wdfw.wa.gov/>.

Along with land management roles, Washington's Department of Natural Resources administers the state Forest Practices rules on private and state-owned forest lands, under which this agreement has been developed. In addition, WDNR regulates surface mining reclamation and forest debris burning, and provides wildfire protection on 12.7 million acres of tribal, private and state-owned forests. WDNR offers technical assistance and education on a range of subjects, including forest stewardship and rare plant species and ecosystems. WDNR is administered by Peter Goldmark, the state's 13th Commissioner of Public Lands since statehood in 1889, and the first from Eastern Washington. www.dnr.wa.gov

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