

Regional Interagency Executive Committee

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Memorandum

Date: June 6, 2011

To: Regional Interagency Executive Committee (see distribution list)

From: Chair, Regional Interagency Executive Committee /s/ Edward W. Shepard

Subject: Management Land Use Plan Revisions and Amendments (Western Oregon, Western Washington, and Northern California)

Background: This memorandum transmits the “Framework to Guide Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Land Use Plan Revisions and Amendments (Western Oregon, Western Washington, and Northern California)” dated April 11, 2011, to the Regional Interagency Executive Committee (RIEC) for further distribution. The framework was developed collaboratively by senior managers from RIEC agencies, and it reflects interagency discussions. As noted in the document itself, the framework identifies general concepts that the RIEC executives agreed are relevant to plan revisions.

Follow-up Requested: During the conference call on February 23, 2011, the RIEC agreed that individual member agencies would distribute the framework to their field units to ensure that appropriate managers and staff are aware of the RIEC’s commitment to these concepts. Please ensure the framework is distributed timely within your agency.

For Further Information: If you have questions regarding the framework, please contact Becky Gravenmier (503-808-2851) or any member of the interagency Senior Managers Group (SMG).

Enclosure:

Framework to Guide Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Land Use Plan Revisions and Amendments (Western Oregon, Western Washington, and Northern California) dated April 11, 2011

cc:

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2324/ bg,mh,dp

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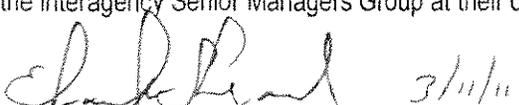
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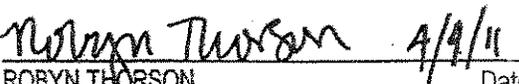
Introduction to the Framework

The Regional Interagency Executive Committee (RIEC) is committed to the general concepts presented in the attached framework. The agencies agree that these concepts are relevant to plan revisions, while recognizing that variation exists among agency missions and that not all framework concepts fall within the responsibilities and line authorities of individual agencies. The framework does not constitute standards and guidelines or agency direction, nor does it establish new planning requirements. Rather, the framework identifies general concepts for consideration as appropriate in land and resource management plan revisions and amendments. This working document may be revised by the interagency Senior Managers Group at their discretion.

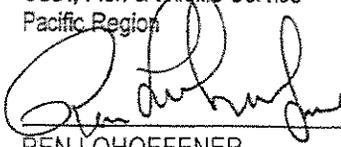
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District Commander

 3/11/11
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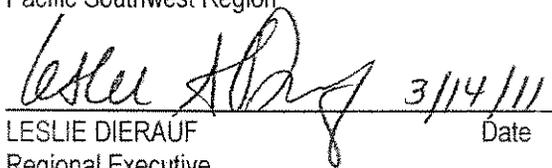
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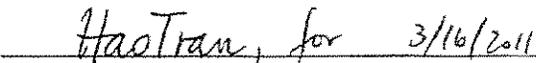
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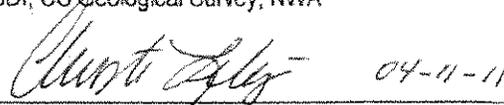
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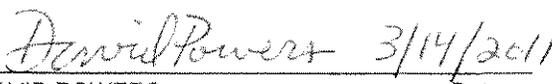
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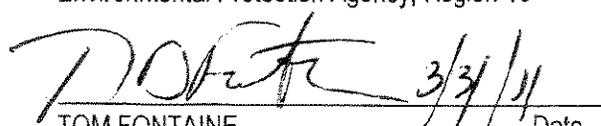
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Framework to Guide
Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management
Land Use Plan Revisions and Amendments
(Western Oregon, Western Washington, and Northern California)

April 11, 2011

Framework to Guide Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Land Use Plan Amendments and Revisions

This framework identifies general concepts that the Regional Interagency Executive Committee (RIEC) executives agreed are relevant to plan revisions. Its purpose is to summarize concepts that may be used to help frame land and resource management plan revision or amendment efforts of the USDA Forest Service (FS) and USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This framework was developed collaboratively and is intended to identify concepts supported by Federal land managers and regulatory executives within the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) area. These concepts may also have applicability to lands managed by other Federal land managers as they consider their land management planning needs. This paper is not intended to be comprehensive. For example, process guidance of the NWFP was purposefully not addressed. Individual plan revision efforts will need to address process, communication, and related issues as appropriate locally.

The concepts (strategies) of common agreement include:

- Management approaches that produce self-sustaining, resilient ecological systems that can supply a variety of ecosystem services (including both forest habitat and forest products) at a rate that will not impede future generations from deriving the same benefits.
- Management approaches that will maintain and restore (where necessary) an appropriate mixture of forest habitat types and seral stages to provide for the conservation and reproduction of the full complement of flora and fauna native to this region.
- Conservation principles to provide adequate habitat to aid in the recovery of listed species, protection of aquatic and terrestrial habitat, water quality, and established connectors between patches of forest habitat through a network of connected riparian and late-successional reserves or management areas are reflective of current science.
- Management strategies will take into account the likely ecological implications of climate change and aim to provide a variety of habitats to maximize the potential for adaptation of organisms to a shifting climate over space and time.
- Management strategies would recognize the importance of an all Federal lands approach, with identification of broad objectives common across Federal land ownerships, also reflecting land ownership specific direction related to authorizing legislation (e.g., the requirements of managing the Oregon & California Railroad grant lands for BLM).
- Management strategies will include the objective of providing for biological diversity while contributing to economic and social goals including compliance with law.
- Management strategies would recognize the influence of geographical variability on vegetation (species composition and structure, including density) and manage landscapes within their capabilities and capacities.
- The initial or fundamental geographic unit for assessing and planning for sustainability and resilience is a large watershed or landscape.
- Forest plans should recognize the importance of providing ecosystem services including but not limited to clean water, clean air, fish and wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and carbon sequestration as well as timber and non-timber products.

- Land management planning and implementation provides an opportunity to assess the impacts of land management actions upon ecological, economic, and social systems, and to propose adaptive approaches to forest land management. For example, management strategies will take into account the likely implications of climate change.

This framework includes concept papers on the following topics of common interest to the NWFP Federal agencies involved in land and resource management planning:

1. Aquatic and Riparian Management
2. Late- Successional Habitat Management
3. Rare and Uncommon Species Management (on hold pending lawsuit settlement outcome)
4. Recovery Plans and Critical Habitat
5. Adaptive Management
6. Climate Change
7. Dry Forest Management (including the Klamath Basin)
8. Timber Management and Production
9. Social and Economic Issues
10. Monitoring

Aquatic and Riparian Management

Federal forest lands contain the vast majority of the quality aquatic habitat in the NWFP area. These lands also provide much of the municipal water for local communities. The 1994 NWFP decision established a common framework for managing streams, riparian areas, and watersheds on Federal forests. The goals of that framework were to maintain healthy watersheds and streams and to restore degraded ones. Monitoring since implementation of that framework has shown steady improvement in watershed condition. Retaining the common goals of aquatic and riparian management as reflected in the bullets below is essential in continuing the progress.

Plan revisions should reflect the following:

- The health of watersheds and aquatic and riparian (A/R) ecosystems is maintained or restored within the context of broad ownership patterns and in collaboration with partners.
- National Forest System lands and lands managed by the BLM contribute to a network of properly functioning watersheds supporting A/R-dependent species at the landscape scale.
- Results of landscape analysis(es) and plans for recovery of Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed A/R dependent species and impaired waterbodies are considered and, where relevant, incorporated.
- Riparian reserves or management/conservation areas are designated and include sensitive areas that contribute to ensuring high quality water, substrate, woody debris, nutrients, and A/R habitats.
- The primary management emphasis for riparian reserves or management/conservation areas is protection and restoration of A/R habitats, water quality, and drinking water.
- Treatments designed to meet A/R objectives balance short term ecological impacts against long term gains for the enhancement of aquatic and riparian resources and, where consistent with A/R objectives, may provide economic and social benefits.
- Treatments in riparian reserves or management/conservation areas within dry, fire-prone vegetation types are designed to improve stand resiliency and structure and are targeted within wildland urban interface (WUI) areas, or where current species composition, stand density, or stand structure are not ecologically sustainable.
- Watersheds providing refugia for ESA listed fish and other A/R dependent species, or with the greatest restoration potential for providing refugia, are high priority for protection and restoration.
- Protection is provided for population strongholds for listed or proposed A/R dependent species and narrow endemics.
- Stream access for all life stages of aquatic species is maintained and restored except where preventing or reducing movement of nonnative or invasive species is desired.
- Elimination, reduction, and mitigation for adverse effects from roads on A/R resources, and provision for the restoration and closure of unneeded roads.
- New information regarding climate change, fire prone ecosystems, A/R dependent species recovery, and water quality protection/restoration is periodically incorporated into A/R plan components.
- Aquatic and Riparian monitoring components and, where feasible, elements to support broader scale A/R monitoring are included.

Late-Successional Habitat Management

Late-successional forests are those forest seral stages that include mature and old-growth age classes. Definitions of late-successional forest differ depending forest type and geographic area. In the Northwest Forest Plan area, Federal lands contain the vast majority of late-successional forest. Management of habitat related to late-successional and old-growth forest is one of the goals of forest management on Federal lands in this area.

Plan revisions should reflect the following:

- Plans are designed to restore, maintain, and enhance appropriate levels of late-successional and old-growth forests to provide for the conservation of late-successional and old-growth dependent species and provide for a well-distributed, functional, interacting forest ecosystem on Federal lands.
- Plans are designed to make late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems resilient to impacts from loss due to large-scale fire, insect, and disease epidemics while maintaining natural ecological processes and functions. Natural range of variation and climate change are considered in developing strategies for sustaining late-successional habitat.
- Plans are designed to maintain late-successional and old-growth forests to best sustain these ecosystems in the landscape and to develop young stands into late-successional habitat consistent with agency authorizing legislation and land use plan objectives.
- Plans are designed to provide connectivity among late-successional and old-growth forests on Federal lands.
- Land management plan revisions take into consideration US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service recovery plans, critical habitat designations, and agency guidelines for management of candidate, rare, and sensitive species.
- Plans include monitoring and adaptive management provisions, including mechanisms for periodic revisions/amendments to incorporate new science.
- Plans recognize that different management approaches may be necessary among physiographic provinces to provide for a functional, interacting late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystem on Federal lands.
- Agencies, through plans or other mechanisms, provide for step-down landscape analyses at appropriate scales to inform project planning, as needed.
- Plans use the best available science to guide management in late-successional and old-growth forests, in particular as related to climate, riparian thinning, and restoration actions.

Rare and Uncommon Species Management

Note: This section is on hold pending lawsuit settlement outcome.

Recovery Plans and Critical Habitat

Endangered Species Act (ESA) recovery is the process by which listed species and their ecosystems are restored and their future secured to the point that protection under the ESA is no longer needed. Recovery plans describe specific management actions; establish objective, measurable criteria for delisting; and estimate the time and cost to carry out measures needed to achieve recovery.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) designate critical habitat consistent with law and regulation for any species it lists under the ESA. Critical habitat is defined as: (1) specific areas within the geographical area occupied by the species at the time of listing, if they contain physical or biological features essential to conservation, and those features may require special management considerations or protection; and (2) specific areas outside the geographical area occupied by the species if the Secretary determines that such areas are essential for the conservation of the species. Critical habitat is designated using the best available scientific information, in an open public process, within specific timeframes. Before designating critical habitat, careful consideration is given to economic impacts, impacts on national security, and other relevant impacts.

Plan revisions should reflect the following:

- Federal land management plan revisions take into consideration FWS and NMFS recovery plans and critical habitat designations.
- Land management plan components related to species and ecosystem recovery should be grounded in existing conservation efforts underway throughout the planning area.
- Land management plans include provisions to maintain and restore functional critical habitat.
- Land management plans consider recovery plan recommendations.
- Landscape analyses at appropriate scales inform recovery plan and critical habitat elements in land management plan revisions.
- Land management plans strive to achieve habitat conditions suitable to maintain viable populations well distributed on Federal lands within the capability of lands in the planning area.
- During land management planning, regulatory and management agencies work collaboratively, within the limits of their authorities, to define listed species recovery objectives and actions that consider multiple objectives, while recognizing temporal changes to the landscape.
- During recovery plan development, regulatory and management agencies work collaboratively, within the limits of their authorities, to consider the role of land management plans and activities when developing recovery objectives and actions.

Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is the process of continually adjusting management in response to new information, knowledge, or technologies. The adaptive management process recognizes that unknowns and uncertainties exist in the course of achieving resource management objectives as identified in land use plans. Adaptive management involves taking an experimental approach to a complex task, making assumptions clear, and periodically evaluating them in light of new information. Adaptive management works best when performance, data collection, and evaluation methods are designed to provide the information managers need to make sound decisions.

Plan revisions should reflect the following:

- The planning process will encourage active learning and adaptation as land management plans are implemented, including transfer of what is learned in a project to other projects in different locations and at different scales.
- To the degree practical, plans will be designed to encourage the development and testing of new management approaches to integrate and achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives.
- Plans will be written to the extent practical to allow for the application of new information or technology including the results of new research and the findings from plan monitoring.

Climate Change

The Nation's forests, grasslands, and sage steppe ecosystems contain vital components of biodiversity, an essential part of America's national heritage. Ecosystem services provide most of the water Americans use for drinking, agriculture, and industry. They furnish fiber for paper, lumber, and other wood products. They provide clean air, livestock feed, and recreation opportunities; and they provide habitat for myriad plant and wildlife species. The Nation's forests and rangelands play an important role in the provision of renewable energy.

Climate change affects all Federal and private lands across the Pacific Northwest. Plan revisions will give the BLM and FS an opportunity to establish adaptation and mitigation goals and objectives to maximize the resiliency of our landscapes where possible.

Plan revisions should reflect the following:

- Sustaining ecosystem services should be a goal of developing resilient forests, grasslands, and communities achieved by successfully adapting to changing climate.
- Planning should consider greenhouse gas emissions and sinks, including carbon storage, to understand potential impacts of management actions and develop potential alternatives.
- Planning should use new scientific information, tools, and technology where it can increase Federal and public understanding of the predicted shifts in weather patterns and projected climate change impacts, adaptation and mitigation options, and to understand risks and uncertainties associated with both action and inaction. To the extent possible, use information, tools, and technology that have been developed collaboratively with other Federal agencies and partners.
- Plans should include plan components providing for adaptation to reduce the negative impacts of climate change on ecological, economic, and social systems.

Dry Forest Management (including the Klamath Basin)

The management of dry forest types presents significant challenge due to increasing fuel loads, increasing fire frequency, concerns over wildlife habitat, and the management of water resources, particularly given the likely changes in climate projected over the next 50 to 100 years. In thinking about how to manage dry forests in the future, it is important to remember that 20th century forest management activities produced landscape patterns of structure, composition, and fuels different from the historical condition. Today those landscapes are prone to uncharacteristically large and frequent wildfires, insect outbreaks, and pathogen epidemics. To restore the functions of dry forest, it will be necessary both to learn from the past and adapt to anticipated changes of the future.

Several principles to consider in the future management of dry forests have emerged through research, science application, and innovative management approaches. Plan revisions should reflect the following:

- Set restoration goals, and identify restoration priorities using a combination of ecological need, efficacy of treatments, and public support.
- Consider the current and potential growth of the wildland urban interface (WUI) and potential avenues to mitigate the impact of increasing population.
- Recognize that managing for ecosystems that occurred 150 to 200 years ago may not be possible. Nevertheless, the historical range of variation can still serve as a useful approximation of sustainable conditions, and help shape restoration goals. As more information is gained on future ranges of variation, we can begin using them to guide our objectives.
- Emphasize the restoration of landscapes resilient to the effects of uncharacteristic wildfires, insect outbreaks, and climate change as the best way to maintain habitats in the face of climate change. Resilience requires restoring and maintaining sustainable structure, function, and composition of ecosystems at multiple scales.
- Recognize that current landscape conditions generated by human-made disturbances (logging, agriculture, development, etc.) may make it necessary to employ treatments that result in short-term habitat loss in order to work toward sustainable long-term landscapes.
- Use a risk management strategy to deal with uncertainty, including uncertainty in future climate. To do so, identify a range of possible future scenarios and spread risk by implementing different levels and types of management that address the different scenarios. In developing management options, assess the landscape drivers (topography, pattern, etc.) of disturbance.
- Characterize risk based on a combination of historical regimes, recent trends, current conditions, fire behavior models, and potential future range of variability in climate. Risk will differ for different values and system components; thus land managers will need to consider tradeoffs among different values (e.g., spotted owl habitat and large pines).
- Protect biological refugia – they are critical to maintaining ecosystem function. Native species and related life-supporting processes at province to individual tree scales have been adversely affected by past management. This has influenced food web, population, and habitat dynamics of many native terrestrial and aquatic species. Restoration of process and function depends on refugia.

Timber Management and Production

For more than 60 years, Federal forests in the Pacific Northwest have been an important source of raw materials for the timber industry. Although the contribution of wood fiber from Federal forests today is a fraction of its peak in the 1980s, it is still important, particularly in small rural communities. Many of these communities have residents who work in the timber industry as loggers, mill workers, secondary wood products manufacturers, and transporters of wood and wood products. Authorizing legislation for both the Forest Service and the BLM recognizes the importance of providing a continuing supply of wood fiber to continue to support economic stability. The existence of a forest products industry is essential to conducting forest restoration, much of which is dependent on Federal agencies' ability to modify and remove excess forest fuels. Timber production also contributes receipts to the Federal treasury, counties, and rural schools and roads.

Land use plans result in the determination of land use allocations, including identifying lands for planned and scheduled timber harvest. Plan revisions should reflect the following:

- Engage in early collaboration with land users, neighbors, governments, tribes, and the public with mutual recognition of legislative mandates, obligations, and responsibilities.
- Manage forests to achieve continuous timber production that can be sustained through a balance of growth and harvest.
- Manage forests to provide a predictable and sustainable level of timber sales based on land use allocations.
- Manage forests to enhance the health, vigor, growth, and economic value of forest stands.
- Manage forests for the efficient production of wood fiber to help satisfy national needs and benefit local and regional economies consistent with multiple resource objectives.
- Dependent upon the underlying land use objective, forest management may include a variety of management prescriptions including pre-commercial thinning, commercial thinning, density management, and regeneration harvest. Regeneration may be accomplished using both even and uneven age systems.
- Salvage of commercial material and restoration after disturbance events is an appropriate management consideration.
- Commercial harvest will consider the need for retention of biological legacy – such as live old trees, dead trees and large woody debris – over time.
- Recognize and articulate how lands managed for timber production can provide habitat support over time.
- Timber management will consider effects to threatened, endangered, sensitive, and special status species when implementing activities.
- Federal agencies will use the opportunity to jointly develop strategies and alternatives to achieve the array of goals that are outlined in Federal laws, policies, recovery plans, and critical habitat designations.
- Lands will be managed without unduly favoring present beneficiaries over future beneficiaries.
- The agencies will support applied research to identify, monitor, and evaluate appropriate management activities, test current practices, and, where appropriate, initiate process change based upon generally accepted scientific principles.

Social and Economic Issues

The NWFP area is endowed with vast forest resources. Federal lands are an important part of the forest resource base and contribute to socioeconomic well-being by providing a variety of commodities, uses, and services. These lands provide forest resources that support consumptive, non-consumptive, commercial, and noncommercial uses, as well as an array of employment opportunities.

Plan revisions should reflect the following:

- Contribute to socioeconomic systems that produce steady supplies of goods and services at a predictable rate that will not impede future generations from deriving the same benefits.
- Recognize the various attributes of socioeconomic systems and contribute to their current and future capabilities and capacities.
- Consider trends in socioeconomic resiliency in identifying strategies and in developing desired conditions for forest land management plans.
- Consider the best available science and include provisions to adapt to new opportunities such as changes in market supply and demand.
- Identify key socioeconomic elements pertinent to sustainable systems and develop monitoring strategies for these elements.
- Ensure that opportunities are provided for collaboration on developing, amending, and revising plans to improve the quality of decision making and increase public trust and confidence in Federal agency land management decisions. Responsible officials will engage representatives of other Federal agencies as well as members of the public throughout the planning process.
- Planning efforts will identify Tribal resources that would be affected and identify potential conflicts between proposed Federal action and treaty rights or tribal trust responsibilities. Consultation with the recognized tribal governments with jurisdiction will be conducted early in the planning process.
- Consider the estimated value, either qualitative or quantitative, for both the market and nonmarket components of ecosystem services.

Monitoring

Monitoring is a critical component of adaptive management and an important activity for ecosystem management. It is also necessary to ensure that management actions are consistent with forest and management direction and that they comply with applicable laws and policies. Monitoring provides information to determine whether management direction is being followed, whether desired results are being achieved, and whether underlying assumptions are valid. Monitoring plans must be realistic in terms of anticipated budget levels and availability of staff. The focus of regional monitoring is effectiveness monitoring, whereas the focus at the unit level monitoring is on implementation monitoring and monitoring plan objectives and goals.

Monitoring at the BLM district and national forest scale should take into account the following:

- Plan revisions should include monitoring to address questions relevant to land managers at the planning unit scale. Typically these questions involve elements of land management plans direction where there is:
 - Greatest scientific uncertainty
 - Less operational experience
 - Greatest ecological sensitivity
 - High risk of social or ecological change or the direction of change is uncertain.
- Results of implementation monitoring should be reported periodically.
- Monitoring should include not only the collection of data, but also its evaluation and the application of results learned to adjust plan components.
- Monitoring at the BLM district and national forest scale may contribute to regional-scale monitoring.

Monitoring at the regional scale, while not generally part of the decision for a specific plan, is important and should take into account the following:

- Monitoring strategies should be evaluated periodically to determine if questions and protocols are still relevant and if changes are needed.
- Interagency collaborations should be emphasized to improve consistency, enable the sharing of methods, and reduce redundancy and cost.
- Watershed condition and trend on Federal lands will be monitored.
- Condition and trend of late-successional Federal forests will be monitored.
- As habitat models become more reliable for prediction, agencies should investigate opportunities for emphasizing habitat monitoring and de-emphasizing population monitoring.
- Continue evaluating new science and technology to update monitoring strategies to improve quality and efficiency.