

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT OR-07-29

For release: August 9, 2007

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## **BLM Proposes New Management Approach for Western Oregon**

**PORTLAND** –The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today released for public review and comment a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for future management of 2.5 million acres of public lands in Western Oregon.

“The BLM is revising the six resource management plans that help guide our decision-making in western Oregon in order to meet our dual goals of timber output and continuing to provide for habitat and conservation of federally listed species,” said Ed Shepard, BLM State Director in Oregon. “This effort is one of the most significant planning undertakings in western Oregon. The draft EIS examines the effects from an ecological, social and economic standpoint,” Shepard continued.

The majority of these lands fall under the direction of the Oregon & California (O&C) Lands Act of 1937 that requires the BLM to manage these western Oregon lands for permanent forest production while providing economic benefit to local communities and ensuring watershed health. This Act has long been responsible for a truly unique relationship between the BLM and the 18 counties in western Oregon that have come to 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 provide a steady source of revenue to support the economy of western Oregon. The counties use this money for public services including roads, law enforcement, health services and libraries.

This planning effort contains a range of alternatives for public review. All alternatives comply with applicable Federal laws including the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The BLM will continue to move forward with its commitments made as a part of the Special Status Species Program, the Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan, and the Critical Habitat Rule. All of the alternatives analyzed in the draft will produce more mature and structurally complex forests on BLM-managed lands in the future than what currently exists.

Under the draft plan, no less than 46 percent of the forested BLM lands would be dedicated to the development of mature and structurally complex forest. The remaining 54 percent of BLM lands, dedicated to timber production, would also provide substantial amounts of mature and structurally complex forest. The planning area, 2.5 million acres of BLM-managed lands, comprises 10 percent of the total federal acreage within the Northwest Forest Plan.

The draft document released today was developed using 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. More than 10 years of evaluation and research have led to a better recognition of what is needed to manage resources in a sustainable manner.

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The BLM's draft EIS was completed with participation from the public, the State of Oregon, the 18 western Oregon Counties, and several Federal agencies. At the outset of the process, the BLM signed an agreement with cooperating State and Federal agencies and the affected western Oregon counties. Throughout the planning process, more than 130 meetings have been held with a variety of groups, organizations, and public officials. As the draft is circulated for review by the public, approximately 25 public events will be held to provide information and receive comments.

The outcome of the plan revision process is very important to county governments in western Oregon. Doug Robertson, Douglas County Commissioner said, "The counties of western Oregon have had a long-time partnership with the BLM in the management of these lands. By law, these lands are to be managed in permanent forest production to provide revenue to counties on lands that cannot be taxed. This plan shows that you can provide for a predictable and sustainable flow of timber while at the same time providing wildlife habitat."

Today's release of BLM's draft plan revisions coincides with preparations of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Draft Recovery Plan for the Northern Spotted Owl and the critical habitat designation for the owl and the marbled murrelet, both protected as threatened species. Reviewing all three proposals will give interested persons a better understanding of the relationship among these efforts.

"The Fish and Wildlife Service has worked closely with members of the BLM planning team and the BLM was part of the Recovery Team that wrote the draft recovery plan for the northern spotted owl," said Ren Lohofener, Regional Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "We appreciate that BLM's plans support recovery efforts for the owl and we'll be working together to implement those efforts."

A unique proposal in the draft EIS document provides for a special management area around the Coquille Tribal Forest, managed by the Coquille Indian Tribe. By law, the management of the Coquille Tribal Forest must be consistent with the management of the adjacent BLM-managed lands. "We've worked very closely with the BLM planning team," said Tim Vredenburg, tribal forest manager, "to develop a joint management plan that makes sense for tribal needs and meets the laws and policy that the BLM must follow." The special management area around the Coquille Tribal Forest amounts to about one-half of one percent of the BLM-managed lands within the planning area.

The release of the draft EIS document starts a 90-day public comment period. Comments and suggestions from the public along with ideas from cooperating agencies will be used by the BLM to craft proposed resource management plans that will be analyzed in a Final Environmental Impact Statement next year. Copies of the document can be reviewed in many libraries and BLM offices in western Oregon. A limited number of paper documents and electronic documents on Compact Disk are available from the BLM as well. The complete document and background information is also available on the web at <http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr>. Comments must be received or postmarked before November 10, 2007. Comments can be submitted electronically from the web site or mailed to:

Western Oregon Plan Revisions  
P.O. BOX 2965  
Portland, OR 97208

The BLM manages more land – 258 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western States, including Alaska. The BLM, with a budget of about \$1.8 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation.

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