

## Forestry Pilot Projects Summary October 2012

In December 2010, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar set in motion a plan to apply the principles of ecological restoration, as suggested by Drs. Norm Johnson and Jerry Franklin, on BLM lands within the Coos Bay, Roseburg, and Medford Districts. The BLM, along with Drs. Norm Johnson and Jerry Franklin, held a series of public meetings, workshops, and field trips to discuss the pilot projects and learn more about the principles of ecological forestry as applied by Drs. Johnson and Franklin.

Since that meeting, the Professors have worked with the three Districts to implement these ecological restoration pilot projects. The Medford Pilot, Pilot Joe timber sale, was sold and awarded in 2011 and has been accomplishing treatments on 900 acres, 250 acres of which are receiving commercial treatment.

The Coos Bay Wagon Road Pilot timber sale, a 127 acre Variable Retention Harvest, was sold in 2012 and the district is currently working through the administrative remedy process dealing with a protest and appeal from Umpqua Watersheds, Oregon Wild, and Cascadia Wildlands. The district is awaiting a response from the Interior Board of Land Appeals before awarding.

The Roseburg Pilot produced two timber sales, Buck Rising (78 acres) and White Castle (187 acres). The Buck Rising sale received 3 protests which resulted in one appeal that the district is awaiting an IBLA response before awarding. White Castle has received two protests which are currently being addressed by the district. Both timber sales are Variable Retention Harvests.

Drs. Franklin and Johnson believe that an active management program is needed on federal lands in the Pacific Northwest to restore ecological values and contribute to sustainable local communities. They state that new policies are needed that focus on:

- Restoring more functional and sustainable ecological conditions in federal forests;
- Conserving old-growth forests and trees;
- Recovering threatened species, such as the NSO;
- Sustaining local communities; and
- Maintaining a highly skilled workforce and milling infrastructure needed for restoration activities.

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## Key Findings from Drs. Johnson and Franklin October 2011 Report:

Professors Johnson and Franklin focused on aspects of the strategy that are important to conservation and management of BLM Western Oregon forests, such as regeneration harvest in Moist Forests and density reduction in Dry Forests, but that are now limited in application due to social controversies. One fundamental goal of the Northwest Forest Plan -- that of dividing the landscape between ecological reserves and areas where timber production is allowed -- has not been achieved. Some of the other findings from Drs. Johnson and Franklin's report include:

- BLM's current risk-adverse strategy of thinning Moist Forest plantations (stands created through past clear-cutting and reforestation) is, at best, a short-term activity that can provide some timber volume for perhaps a decade or two but relatively little revenue.
- The NWFP harvest projections assumed that the stands currently over 80 years of age in the Moist Forest Matrix would be subject to regeneration harvests over time, especially during the first 30 years of the Plan. Such harvesting has generally not occurred.
- Reinstating regeneration harvests in Moist Forests using variable retention regeneration harvest prescriptions could contribute to both ecological and economic goals in western Oregon.
- The sustained yield timber harvest level and revenue to counties from the BLM Western Oregon Forests will largely be determined by what happens in Moist Forests. Creating a stable land base for timber production, while maintaining a commitment to conservation of species and ecosystems, will require a variety of efforts.
- Dry Forests in southwest Oregon, including older forests there, require active management to sustain them in the face of risks from wildfire and insect outbreaks associated with drought, both of which are likely to increase under climate changes.

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