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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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To: All DMs, DSDs, and Staff Chiefs

From: Deputy State Director for Resource Planning, Use and Protection

Subject: Resource Management Plan Evaluation Component of the Preliminary Strategy For Land Use Planning Under the Western Oregon Litigation Settlement Agreement

The proposed settlement agreement to the American Forest Resource Council vs. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) litigation involves several terms that require action by BLM. Contingent on obtaining funding, the BLM is directed to revise land use or Resource Management Plans (RMPs) in western Oregon by December, 2008. RMP revisions require careful preparatory efforts to ensure that the process is designed to:

1. meet statutory, regulatory, and litigation expectations,
2. be efficient and effective at collecting and using data and analyses to address issues,
3. provide for appropriate public and intergovernmental coordination and participation,
4. provide for environmental impact analyses at the appropriate scale for the immediate decisions and anticipated implementation or activity projects and programs, and
5. result in clear management direction and allocations that will provide a basis for plan implementation over a period of 10-20 years.

In response to recommendations made at the July 23 and August 13, 2003, meetings with District Managers, the first step in this process for western Oregon will be to conduct and document periodic RMP evaluations, as prescribed in 43 CFR 1610.4-9 and the BLM Planning Handbook at H-1601-1, sections V and VI. As noted in the handbook, the evaluations will document those programs and allocations that are functioning as planned and are not in need of amendment or revision, versus various opportunities to clarify, improve, or add analyses and land use allocations and management direction in response to new information, new issues, and other requirements. We had already made a commitment to evaluate the western Oregon RMPs in FY 2004 since it will have been five years since the close of the last evaluation period. The Western Oregon Resource Management Planning 6350 subactivity directives for the FY 2004 Program Target Allocation indicate our intent to complete these evaluations by December 31, 2003. Assuming the Court approves the settlement agreement, the evaluations will also provide the basis for developing a preplan or planning process contract for the anticipated plan revisions.

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We are now in the preliminary stages of preparing to conduct the evaluations and prepare for preplanning. There will be many organizational challenges and numerous questions as the process evolves, but the evaluations are expected to be an effective tool to determine what resource programs and associated management direction may require reconsideration in any RMP revisions. Since the emphasis will be on the land use planning process, it is assumed that the District planners will be the primary points of contact for the evaluations and preplanning. Formal Information Bulletins (IBs) and Instruction Memoranda (IMs) will be utilized as necessary, but the need for a fast and streamlined process will require strong reliance on key staff and less formal communications to arrange team membership and evaluation logistics.

In order to facilitate a rapid start to the initial planning process steps, I have appointed Eric Stone, Program Analyst of Planning and Environmental Coordination, as the Acting Project Manager for four months. He will coordinate the evaluations and first steps of preplanning until a formal advertisement and selection of a Project Manager can be made for the duration of the project. For your information, Eric started his career as a Forester in the Salem District and has been on the Oregon State Office (OSO) planning staff for 23 years. During that time he was involved in the early 1980s series of timber management plans and Environmental Impact Statements, the current RMPs, all plan amendments, and every land use plan evaluation ever completed in Oregon or Washington. The western Oregon evaluations will use the national level guidance and be based on the five evaluations completed under Eric's leadership in eastern Oregon within the last year. Eric will also initiate the preplanning process, with additional guidance and information to be developed this fall.

The evaluation will be based in large measure on the FY 2002 and earlier Annual Program Summaries (APSs), together with available information from FY 2003 end-of-year reports. The evaluation team final report will be approved by the Deputy State Director for Resource Planning, Use and Protection and become an official part of the District planning records. See IB No. OR-2002-220 for an example of evaluation formats and schedules. See IM No. 2001-038 for guidance on Development/Approval of Preparation Plans for New Planning Starts.

Our tentative schedule for the evaluations (based on about 14-20 hours of staff meetings each) is as follows:

1. Klamath Falls, October 28-30, 2003 (travel by air)
2. Salem, November 3-4, 2003
3. Eugene, November 6-7, 2003
4. Medford, November 12-14, 2003 (travel by air)
5. Roseburg, November 17-19, 2003 (split days)
6. Coos Bay, November 19-21, 2003 (split days)

Key staff support for the evaluations and preplanning will be essential to ensure the process is timely, efficient, effective, and objective. At this time, we do not plan to have any large multi-District meetings, such as the biological resources assessment effort that met in the OSO for several days to address "third year" evaluation issues. Instead, field office reviews will be conducted over two-to-three day periods, as shown above. Since this effort will be considered a priority assignment, applicable staff should be advised to keep these dates clear for participation in the evaluation. Key OSO resource or program leaders are currently expected to include George Buckner, Wildlife Biologist; Duane Dippon, ARD/GIS Specialist; Larry Larsen, Forester; Craig MacKinnon, Rangeland Management Specialist (for Medford and Klamath Falls); and Ron Price, Off-Highway-Vehicle Coordinator.

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Other staff may be added to the evaluation team, based on Branch Chief recommendations. Each field evaluation will also require the participation of a District Planner from an adjacent or nearby District. Field office participation will include all Field Managers and District Planners. Field office program leaders will be expected to have prepared summaries in advance of the OSO team arrival based on the APSs and model summaries, to be provided.

The next Information Bulletin on *Western Oregon Resource Management Plans and Environmental Analysis; Documentation of Periodic Reviews and Evaluations* has been drafted and will be sent under separate cover to District Managers and Planners for a one-week review, prior to issuance. It will provide the final list of OSO team members, confirm the evaluation dates and include a sample evaluation agenda, as well as excerpts from the Planning Handbook sections that guide RMP evaluations.

Districts with Unions are reminded to notify their unions of this IB and satisfy any bargaining obligations before implementation. Your Servicing Personnel Office or Labor Relations Specialist can provide you assistance in this matter.

Signed by
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(Acting)

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