

OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR-STEP PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING CATEGORY C AND D NON-HIGH PRIORITY SITES

(June 2006)

General Process-

The 2001 "Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines" allows managers to identify non-high priority (NHP) sites for Category C and D species. Both categories are comprised of species considered to be "uncommon". The Standards and Guidelines (pages 10-12) contain direction to manage high priority sites for these species as follows. For:

- Category C species: pre-disturbance surveys are practical.
- Category D species: it is not practical to conduct pre-disturbance surveys or pre-disturbance surveys are no longer needed to maintain a reasonable assurance of species persistence.

To identify a Category C or D species site as a NHP site, the four-step process listed in the 2001 Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines, page 10 (see below), is to be followed and documented in the project NEPA determination. The NHP site document (described in Step 3) is intended to be a concise and complete record of the process used by the originating Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or Forest Service (FS) administrative unit and should be no more than 5-7 pages in length. The document provides the rationale and scientific evidence for designating sites as NHP. This guidance applies, on a case-by-case basis, to activities at the project level.

"Manage High-Priority Sites: High-priority sites will be managed according to the Management Recommendations for the species. Professional judgment, Appendix J2 in the Northwest Forest Plan Final SEIS, and appropriate literature will be used to guide individual site management for those species that do not have Management Recommendations. Until a Management Recommendation is written addressing high-priority sites, either assume all sites are high priority, or local determination (and project NEPA documentation) of non-high priority sites may be made on a case-by-case basis with:

- Guidance from the Technical Contact:
 - Oregon BLM/Region 6: Rob Huff (503.808.6479)
 - California BLM: Jeanne McFarland (707.825.2332) or
 - Region 5: Quentin Youngblood (707.441.3630)
- Local interagency concurrence (BLM, FS, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS));
- Documented consideration of the condition of the species on other administrative units as identified by the Technical Contact - typically adjacent units as well as others in the species range within the province; and
- Identification in the respective agencies species database.

The Technical Contact will involve appropriate taxa specialists."

Step 1. Guidance from the Technical Contacts

The first step in the process consists of the BLM Field Manager/FS Line Officer (Originating Manager) originating the proposal notifying the Technical Contact of their intent to make a determination of a NHP sites. The Technical Contact will assign a taxa specialist who will provide technical assistance to the originating office throughout the process.

The originating office takes the lead in completing all four steps of the process. The Originating Manager is responsible for confirming that all steps of this process have been completed and will make the final determination of whether to proceed with the NHP site designation before signing the NEPA record and concluding the process.

Step 2. Local interagency concurrence (BLM, FS, USFWS)

The Originating Manager will request written concurrence on the proposed NHP site designations from other BLM Field Managers, FS Line Officers, and USFWS Field Office Managers in the local area that may potentially be affected (see Attachment 1 for the list of USFWS contacts). The tribes, National Park Service, and USFWS Refuges may also be contacted since they may have additional data useful in the analysis. If local concurrence cannot be reached, all supporting documentation, including responses from adjacent land managers, should be forwarded to the Technical Contact for review and assistance in gaining resolution. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved with the Technical Contact's assistance, a memo to that effect will be included in the administrative record and the Originating Manager will modify or withdraw the NHP site proposal.

Step 3. Document consideration of the condition of the species on other administrative units as identified by the Technical Contact - typically adjacent units as well as others in the species range within the province.

Using the format below, the originating administrative office staff is responsible for documenting the condition of the species by preparing an analysis on a local scale. The taxa specialist will provide technical assistance to the originating office in preparation of the analysis.

Introduction (1/2 to 1 page)

Briefly explain the purpose for the NHP site proposal.

Analysis (3 to 5 pages)

Using the most recent scientific information available (from all verified sources, including the appropriate agency's species database and Annual Species Review) consider the condition of the species. Briefly discuss the species' life history, ecology, number and distribution of known sites, and the general habitat condition on the originating administrative unit and adjacent

units within the province or other logical analysis unit that more appropriately addresses the species distribution. Describe the proposed NHP sites and explain how this proposal will comply with species persistence objectives and persistence criteria on the originating administrative unit and adjacent units within the province or other logical analysis unit that more appropriately addresses the species distribution. Base the analysis on the following where most of these criteria must be met:

Criteria Indicating Little or No Concern for Persistence (S&Gs, page 5)

- Moderate-to-high number of likely extant sites/records.
- High proportion of sites and habitat in reserve land allocations; or limited number of sites within reserves, but the proportion or amount of potential habitat within reserves is high and there is a high probability that the habitat is occupied.
- Sites are relatively well distributed within the species range.
- Matrix Standards and Guidelines or other elements of the Northwest Forest Plan provide a reasonable assurance of species persistence.

The originating administrative office sends the completed analysis and supporting documentation to the Technical Contact and the taxa specialist. This becomes part of the administrative record.

Maps

- Prepare maps at two different scales to show distribution of proposed NHP sites in relation to: (1) All known sites in the field unit, and (2) All known sites in the province or other logical analysis unit that more appropriately addresses the species distribution. Until further notice, these maps may be generated in ArcGIS using the GeoBOB landscape-wide snapshot plus the merged regional dataset of NRIS Fauna. These data can be found at <http://www.or.blm.gov/geobob/data/default.asp>. Currently NRIS TES Plants data is not available as a regional snapshot. At a later date (anticipated to be around the first of the calendar year), snapshots of NRIS TES Plants data will be available. This will provide the data needed to complete the analysis process.
- Delineate clearly the administrative unit boundary, project area boundary, and all reserves and matrix land allocations on these maps. Copies of these maps will be included in the administrative record maintained by the field unit.

Preparers

Identify preparers in the file documents.

Step 4. Identification of NHP sites in the Appropriate Agency Species Database

Once a site has been determined to be a “non-high priority” site, designate it as such in the appropriate agency species database. To assure that Step 4 required in the Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines, page 10, has been met, the sites should be entered into and identified in the appropriate agency species database immediately prior to the signing of the NEPA decision (if the decision is not signed, the NHP site designation will need to be reversed). The NHP sites will be included in the Annual Species Review process.

Once a site has been determined to be a NHP site, the status and the date the site was identified as a non-high priority site must be entered into the appropriate agency species database exactly as identified below:

- NRIS TES Plants – Follow the direction on how to record a “revisit” as identified on page 4 of the *TES Plants Element Occurrence Field Guide*, October 2005. This field guide may be found at <http://fsweb.nris.fs.fed.us/products/TESP/v10/Documentation.shtml>. Enter “non-high priority site” into the Population Comments field in the Element Occurrence Data table. NOTE: When a query is conducted it only searches within the first 200 characters of the comment field. Thus, please ensure you include “non-high priority site” within those first 200 characters of the comment field or it will not be picked up during the query.
- NRIS Fauna – On the Add Feature data entry form within the Feature Information field, select “Use Area” for the Feature Category and enter the date the site was identified as a non-high priority site. Also on the Add Feature data entry form, enter “non-high priority site” in the Comments field. This is not meant to preclude the use of Biological features to also report habitat areas associated with the observation or survey. NOTE: When a query is conducted it only searches within the first 200 characters of the comment field. Thus, please ensure you include “non-high priority site” within those first 200 characters of the comment field or it will not be picked up during the query.
- GeoBOB – Enter “non-high priority” in the FASITE_SM_STATUS or FLSITE_SM_STATUS fields in the GS_FAUNA_SITES or the GS_FLORA_SITES tables, respectively. Also, enter the date that the site was identified as a non-high priority site in the Sites Form Comments field.