

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR WESTERN OREGON

WHAT IS A "PURPOSE AND NEED"

Purpose and Need: The Purpose and Need statement (P&N) describes why the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is revising the Resource Management Plans (RMP) in western Oregon and what outcomes the BLM intends the RMPs to achieve. The P&N defines the scope or range of alternatives that will be analyzed in the planning process.

The purposes, also known as outcomes, described in the P&N are based on the BLM's almost two decades of experience with implementing the Northwest Forest Plan, plus new scientific information and advice from Cooperating Agencies and other federal agencies.

Several of these outcomes are necessary for the BLM to be able to deliver a predictable supply of timber from BLM-administered lands on a sustained yield basis as required by the O&C Lands Act of 1937. Harvesting timber on a sustained yield basis ensures that the BLM will continue to be able to provide, over the long-term, a sustained volume of timber to give certainty to the communities in western Oregon.

It's important to keep in mind that the P&N is a *working* document that may evolve during the planning process. We are sharing this P&N at this time for information purposes; however, it is not part of a formal public comment period. The P&N will be included in documents with formal public comment periods such as the Planning Criteria and in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The P&N will guide the development of alternatives throughout the planning process.

Why Now? The BLM conducted plan evaluations in accordance with its planning regulations, which require that RMPs "shall be revised as necessary based on monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, new or revised policy and changes in circumstances affecting the entire plan or major portions of the plan," 43 CFR 1610.5-6.

These evaluations concluded that "[a] plan revision is needed to address the changed circumstances and new information that has led to a substantial, long-term departure from the timber management outcomes predicted under the 1995 RMPs." These evaluations also concluded that the management direction for most of the other resource management programs needs to be modified or updated because of changed circumstances and new information. These evaluations concluded that changes are particularly indicated for the fisheries, aquatics, recreation, off-highway vehicle, and fire and fuels programs.

Moreover, the BLM needs to revise existing plans to replace the 1995 RMPs' land use allocations and management direction because of new scientific information and policies related to the northern spotted owl. Since the 1995 RMPs were approved, there have been analyses on the effects of land management on northern spotted owl habitat, demographic studies, and analyses of the effects of barred owls on spotted owls. In addition, since that time, new policies for northern spotted owls have been put in place, including a revised Recovery Plan and a new designation of critical habitat.

BALANCING WESTERN OREGON'S PUBLIC RESOURCES



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What's the Point of All This Planning? The purpose of this proposed action is to make land use plan decisions to guide the management of BLM-administered lands as described below.

Several of the purposes of the action are necessary for the BLM to be able to deliver a predictable supply of timber from the BLM-administered lands, based on the BLM's almost two decades of experience implementing the Northwest Forest Plan, new scientific information, and the advice of other federal agencies, as discussed below.

Harvesting timber on a sustained yield basis for the O&C Act purposes is required under the O&C Act. Harvesting timber on a sustained yield basis ensures that the BLM will achieve the purposes of the O&C Act, which include continuing to be able to provide, over the long-term, a sustained volume of timber within the management direction in the RMP.

Declining populations of species now listed under the Endangered Species Act have caused the greatest reductions and instability in the BLM's supply of timber in the past. Any further population declines of listed species or new species listings would likely lead to additional reductions in timber harvest. Contributing to the conservation and recovery of listed species is essential to delivering a predictable supply of timber.

Specifically, the BLM recognizes that providing large, contiguous blocks of late-successional forest and maintaining older and more structurally complex multi-layered conifer forests are necessary components of the conservation and recovery of the northern spotted owl. Providing clean water is essential to the conservation and recovery of listed fish, and a failure to protect water quality would lead to restrictions that would further limit the BLM's ability to provide a predictable supply of timber. Furthermore, the O&C Act recognizes the importance of water quality; the purposes of sustained yield include, among others, "protecting watersheds and regulating stream flow."

Finally, in fire-prone ecosystems in southern Oregon, the BLM must manage forests to reduce the likelihood of catastrophic fires and the attendant loss of timber. These purposes require the BLM to exercise its discretion to determine how best to achieve sustained yield timber production over the long term and avoid future limitations on timber production.

In the end, the purpose of this proposed action is to make land use plan decisions:

- *provide* a sustained-yield of **timber**;
- *contribute* to the conservation and recovery of threatened and endangered **species**;
- *provide* clean water in **watersheds**;
- *restore* **fire-adapted** ecosystems;
- *provide* for **recreation** opportunities; and
- *coordinate* management of lands surrounding the **Coquille Forest** with the Coquille Tribe.

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