Lessons Learned from the 2005-2008 Western Oregon Plan Revisions and Initial Scoping Comment Themes of the 2012 Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon (as of 8/15/2012)

Overview

The following report provides a snapshot of lessons learned from the 2005-2008 Western Oregon Plan Revision, and the initial review of comments received during the Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon scoping period. The intent of this document is to identify common themes, issues, and process improvements that were identified through employee, public, task force and organization reports and interviews. Once identified, the lessons learned and common themes can be addressed and appropriate improved processes incorporated into the BLM's current planning.

The first section of the report synthesizes the common "lessons learned" from six sources; Western Oregon Task Force – Final Report to the Secretary of the Interior, BLM Forested Lands in Oregon Collaboration Inquiry, Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR) Lessons Learned, U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, Western Oregon Planning Team Members After Action Review/Lessons Learned, and BLM Western Oregon District Employee Comments.

In this section, the individual reports and interview comments were reviewed and evaluated for common themes. Not all specific comments are highlighted; however, the comments are generally aggregated in the 24 themes divided into five general areas. Please refer to the full reports for more specificity.

The second section provides an initial analysis of common issues from the more than 500 comments received during the scoping process for the current planning effort. This section does not take the place of the formal scoping report for the Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon that will be published later. Instead, the analysis provides the reader a glimpse of what the BLM will be addressing to determine scope and scale. The analysis identifies some of the gaps in information that would need to be filled.

Background

Oregon BLM is initiating a resource management plan (RMP) revision which will provide goals, objectives, and direction for the management of approximately 2.5 million acres of BLM-administered lands in western Oregon. The revisions to the existing RMPs will determine how the BLM will actively manage public lands in western Oregon to further recovery of threatened and endangered species, to provide clean water, to restore fire-adapted ecosystems, to produce a sustained yield of timber products, and provide for recreation opportunities.

The litigation settlement for the 1994 American Forest Resource Council suit against the BLM included an agreement that the BLM would revise the six 1995 BLM Western Oregon Resource Management Plans (RMPs). Over the course of WOPR planning, the BLM met with cooperators and partners 180 times and received more than 30,000 public comments. Between 2004 and 2008, the BLM went through the planning process to revise the 1995 resource management plans with six records of decision in December 2008. In 2009, Interior Secretary Salazar announced the withdrawal of the records of decision (RODs) for the six RMPs citing the decision by the acting assistant

secretary for lands and minerals that the "no effect" determination under the Endangered Species Act for the resource management plans was legally indefensible based on the record and applicable laws. The withdrawal of the RODs reinstated the management direction of the 1995 BLM Western Oregon RMPs.

In the spring of 2012, the Interior Secretary announced the BLM would be revising the 1995 Western Oregon Resource Management Plans. In order to initiate new planning, the BLM took the extra steps to review, revisit, and learn from after-action studies from the 2005-2008 planning effort.

Documents and Summaries

Engaging People in the BLM Western Oregon Plan Revisions Process (January 6, 2006)
At the request of the BLM Oregon State Office, the Public Policy Research Institute – with the assistance of RESOLVE and the Consensus Building Institute – completed the first phase of a situation assessment on the Western Oregon Plan Revisions process in October 2006. The assessment attempted to clarify what key stakeholders expect from the planning process, offered a synthesis of major opportunities and challenges facing BLM in the planning process, and finally identified that the success would rely on the extent citizens are meaningfully engaged in the planning and decision-making process.

Western Oregon Task Force – Final Report to the Secretary of the Interior (July 22, 2010)
Interior Secretary Ken Salazar asked the BLM and US Fish and Wildlife Service directors to establish a special interdisciplinary task force to take a fresh look at processes that have guided the management of BLM forests in western Oregon. The task force was instructed to make recommendations to the Interior Secretary on a process for finding a long-term strategy for forest management on Oregon and California Railroad and Coos Bay Wagon Road Grant Lands Act of 1937 lands.

BLM Forested Lands in Oregon Collaboration Inquiry (September 2011)
BLM engaged the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (the U.S. Institute), in partnership with Oregon Consensus, to conduct a neutral third-party inquiry into whether a forest management stakeholder collaboration process should be initiated. If initiated, it would define the objectives to address long-standing forest management issues in western Oregon and inform BLM planning.

Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR) Lessons Learned, U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (January 2010)
The US institute of Environmental Conflict Resolution summarizes what was learned about participation, about innovative web applications presented by the government, and about attempts to push the boundaries of public engagement. It does not address the larger issues of WOPR's assumptions, context, and approach.

Western Oregon Planning Team Members After Action Review/Lessons Learned (April 2012)
An after action review was conducted with the planning team members to provide feedback to a series of topics related to the Western Oregon Plan Revision process. The topics included; internal communications, external communications, public/cooperator involvement, data and

modeling, work flow with the core team and steering committee, what went well, and looking forward.

BLM Western Oregon District Employee Comments (June 2012)
(Salem, Eugene, Roseburg, Coos Bay, Medford, Lakeview)
Employee interviews and questionnaires were used at each of the BLM western Oregon districts to gather employee personal opinions both positive and negative regarding the 2005-2008 Western Oregon Plan Revision. The topics included; internal communications, external communications, public/cooperator Involvement, data and modeling, work flow with the core team and steering committee, what went well, and looking forward.

Abbreviations

EP	Engaging People in the BLM Western Oregon Plan Revisions Process
WOTF	Western Oregon Task Force
EC	Employee Comments
USIECR	US Institute of Environmental Conflict Resolution
WOPRTC	WOPR Team Comments
CI	Collaboration Inquiry

Common Themes and Issues from Lessons Learned Summaries

Public Involvement

1) The Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR) effort was perceived as having a narrow decision space, leaving little room for compromise. (USIECR, EC, EP)
2) The WOPR effort as a court-ordered settlement contributed to distrust within some publics, despite the considerable public involvement investment. (USIECR, EC, WOTF, EP)
3) Transparency of decision-making process and the transparent process of preparing planning documents is important. (USIECR, EC, CI, EP)
4) Recommendations were made to strengthen relationships with formal cooperators. (EP, WOPRTC)
5) Recommendations were made to validate the Analysis of the Management Situation, Planning Criteria, and State Director Guidance with formal cooperators and stakeholders. (EP)
6) Implement best practices for public participation. (EP, IECR)
7) Engage unaffiliated, general citizens in reviewing draft planning documents. (EP)

Communication

8) Decisions were not stable and were subject to reevaluation at the expense of moving forward. Decisions were perceived by employees as “top down.” (EC,WOPRTC, USIECR)
9) Interest groups tended to drive media coverage and public perceptions. (WOPRTC, EC)
10) Communication with the public and employees was not as good as it could have been as a result of inefficient feedback loops. (EC, USIECR)
11) The ability by the BLM to thin younger stands to meet economic objectives is limited, but the public’s awareness of this short timeline is not widely known. (WOTF)

12) Important to clarify and communicate BLM's evolving task made complex by the unique nature of the O&C lands, the economic and ecological values of the public lands, and the regulatory law requirements. (EP)
13) Important to engage Native American tribes on a government-to-government basis, recognizing tribal sovereignty and self-determination. (EP)
14) Important to establish good communication and relationship between BLM and the Federal and State regulatory agencies early in the planning effort. Recommendation is to develop written agreement on how RMPs will comply with ESA and other regulatory legislation. In addition, consultation at the plan level in the Pacific Northwest was problematic. Recommendations include senior managers for the land management and regulatory agencies review existing consultation procedures and the effectiveness of the Streamlined Consultation approach, and suggest improvements as appropriate. (WOPRTC, WOTF, EC)

Geographic Scale

15) Geographic scale of one environmental impact statement (EIS) can be an issue. Geographic scale can impact local participation and collaboration in the planning process. (WOTF, USIECR, EP, CI)

O&C Act

16) WOPR highlighted a public without a common vision or objectives for the management of O&C lands. Lack of decisive clarification of the O&C Act will continue to foster debate and litigation. (WOTF)
17) The socio-economic contribution of O&C lands to local communities was not resolved and was framed as a tradeoff between sustainable community economic health versus sustainable fish and wildlife habitat. (WOTF, EP)

NEPA

18) Document review (by public and employees) was inefficient. (WOPRTC, USIECR)
19) The planning schedule was not adhered to leading to missed planning timeline dates. (WOPRTC)
20) Quality of specialist reports is an important factor. (WOPRTC)
21) The use of science data that was not peer reviewed was an issue. (WOPRTC, WOTF)
22) Timber plan was emphasized within the Resource Management Plans (EC,USIECR, EP)
23) Integrity of the EIS planning process is essential in order to arrive at an implementable outcome. (EP)
24) Consider a range of alternatives, including citizen-based alternatives that meet people's substantive interests. (EP)

Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon Scoping Summary (as of 8/15/12)

Scoping is a collaborative public involvement process to identify planning issues and help define the scope of the analysis. Planning issues are disputes or controversies about existing and potential land and resource allocations, levels of resource use, production, and related management practices. Issues include resource use, development, and protection opportunities for consideration in the preparation or revision of the RMP. The public scoping period for Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon began on March 9 and ran through July 5, 2012. Results of scoping come from three sources: lists of scoping points from internal BLM meetings, brief summaries of the general discussions from the public meetings, and specific comments submitted at or after public meetings.

Scoping Process

Internal Scoping Meetings - During the scoping period the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) held internal scoping meetings at all six represented District offices. Employees were asked a series of open ended questions similar to those offered to the public. Discussion points noted by employees were collected at five of the meetings, employees were also provided a place where they could make online comments similar to what was available to the public. Refer to "Internal Scoping Summaries" tab on the SharePoint site: http://teamspace/or/sites/rmpwesternoregon/committee/Pages/Scoping.aspx for the summary documents.

Public Meetings - Eight public meetings were held in Medford, Grants Pass, Roseburg, Klamath Falls, Salem, Coos Bay, Eugene and Portland. At each of these the BLM provided a brief overview and a list of questions to prompt feedback, then opened the meeting for discussion. At the public meetings, the BLM did not take formal oral comments but encouraged the public to submit written comments through a variety of venues. BLM provided brief summaries of the meetings including the number of people attending, a list of the key topics raised by the public and the number of written comments (comment forms provided) turned in at the meetings. An abbreviated compilation of these meeting summaries is provided in the "RMPs for Western Oregon Scoping Meeting Summaries - - June 2012".

Scoping Comment submittal – The BLM solicited public comments and accepted responses via hard copy, email or FAX and even set up an on-line comment form. Despite the July 5 close of the comment period comments continued to trickle in for the next few weeks. By the end of July 507 comments had been received. The majority of comments were submitted via email. Approximately 25% were form letters (the same as another letter sent by a different person).

Results of Scoping

Nature of Comments

To date, a Content Analysis has been completed on over 450 comments. A general summarization of key points in each letter has been completed on about 50% of those. In general, the majority

(about 70%) of the individual internal comments were focused more on "process", while the majority of individual public comments (about 75%) dealt more with "content" or listing of issues to be addressed in our planning and analysis.

Process

Internal comments that focused on "process", addressed either how to improve our planning process for developing the plan or improving the process for communicating/ collaborating with the public. A few of the key issues raised by the public related to process included the need for additional outreach or collaboration with community groups, and the public's interest in participating in some form of alternative development or collaborative planning. These comments will be extracted and shared with the individual Districts for consideration of opportunities for additional scoping/public involvement at the local level. In addition, some individuals and community groups submitted "community-based alternatives". These submittals will be thoroughly reviewed for the need for further discussion between the interdisciplinary team and the proposer for potential consideration as a component of an alternative, or a stand-alone alternative to be analyzed.

Content

Although the comments covered a broad spectrum of resources that BLM should analyze, the two most common were recreation and socioeconomic conditions, collectively accumulating about 15 percent of the individual comments. Timber management, especially maintaining Old Growth/Late Successional Forests and suggesting the use of ecological forestry/restoration practices accounted for the next highest percentage of comments.

The following table lists the issues most commonly raised in order of abundance.

1. Recreation, esp. OHVs
2. Economic Situation/Employment/County Funding
3. Timber Management (high percentage of comments to retain old growth)
4. Travel Management (often related to OHVs)
5. Aquatic Species
6. Fuels Treatments/Wildfire
7. Riparian Area Management
8. Wildlife/Endangered Species
9. Botany/Special Status Species
10. Scenic Resources

Additional Input to determine the Scope of Analysis

Scoping Report - 2006

Final Summary of Substantive Public Comments by Issue – 2008

Lessons Learned and Recommendations Source Documents

1. Engaging People in the BLM Western Oregon Plan Revisions Process
2. Western Oregon Task Force
3. US Institute of Environmental Conflict Resolution
4. BLM Forested Lands in Oregon Collaboration Inquiry
5. Western Oregon Plan Revision Team Comments
6. BLM Western Oregon District Employee Comments