

## Issue Paper: ESA Consultation Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon

### ***Background:***

Before signing Record of Decisions (RODs), the BLM will formally consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service under Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In addition to their role as formal cooperators, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service have met with the BLM repeatedly throughout the process of developing the Draft RMP/EIS. The coordination and collaboration between agencies has been structured to prepare the agencies for the ESA consultation process.

### ***Key Points:***

The BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service signed an ESA Consultation Agreement, which identifies responsibilities for each agency and defines the processes, products, actions, timeframe, and expectations for the consultation process. The BLM will prepare biological assessments of the potential effects of implementing the Proposed RMP. In these biological assessments, the BLM will describe the Proposed RMP, the geographic area addressed by the RMP, and the manner in which the RMP would affect threatened, endangered, and proposed species and their designated and proposed critical habitats.

As part of this consultation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service will provide their biological opinions. These biological opinions will assess the status of the species and critical habitats involved, review the potential effects of the RMP on these species and habitats, and evaluate whether the RMP would be likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any species or destroy or adversely modify their critical habitats. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service will prepare separate biological opinions dealing with terrestrial and aquatic species under their respective ESA jurisdiction. Additional information on the biological assessments and biological opinions is available in the ESA Consultation Agreement.

As part of that work and consistent with the ESA Consultation Agreement, the BLM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have met as a Terrestrial Technical Team in April and September 2013, and January February, and March 2014, to discuss the analytical methodology for evaluating the effects of the alternatives on listed species and producing analytical information for the biological assessments. The BLM also met directly with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in April 2014 to discuss specifically the forest management approach for northern spotted owl critical habitat in Alternative D considered in the Draft RMP/EIS.

The BLM convened a group including representatives of the National Marine Fisheries Service and Environment Protection Agency in April and May 2013 to develop a strategic proposal for riparian management. The Environmental Protection Agency has participated in these meetings to provide technical expertise related to water quality. The BLM, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Environmental Protection Agency met as a Riparian Technical Team to develop that strategic proposal in detail to be included among the alternatives in the Draft RMP/EIS. DS Consulting facilitated all meetings of the Riparian Technical Team. The Riparian Technical Team met



repeatedly from August 2013 to January 2014 and presented their work to the Cooperating Agency Advisory Group on January 30, 2014.

In addition, the BLM has met directly with the National Marine Fisheries Service in March, April, and June 2014 to discuss analytical methodology for evaluating the effects of the alternatives on listed fish species, and producing analytical information for the biological assessment.

The Resource Management Plans (RMP) for Western Oregon will determine how the BLM-administered lands in western Oregon will be managed to further the recovery of threatened and endangered species, to provide for clean water, to restore fire-adapted ecosystems, to produce a sustained yield of timber products, to coordinate management of lands surrounding the Coquille Forest with the Coquille Tribe, and to provide for recreation opportunities.

For more information, please visit the BLM's Resource Management Plans of western Oregon website at <http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/rmpswesternoregon/index.php>.