

Issue Paper: Northern Spotted Owl Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon



Background:

The northern spotted owl is an iconic species in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. It holds cultural and ecological significance, and was one of the major influences on the Northwest Forest Plan. Listed under the Endangered Species Act as a threatened species by the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1990, federal and state agencies have been working together protect northern spotted owl habitat.

The BLM is just one agency managing the northern spotted owl. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, state agencies, and private land owners all play important roles in supporting the owl's recovery.

Key Points:

- Our analysis shows that the northern spotted owl population is under severe biological stress over major portions of its western Oregon range. They are already at risk of extirpation in the Coast Range, and habitat protection alone will not change that trend. While the habitat managed by the BLM for the northern spotted owl has increased since the issuance of the Northwest Forest Plan, barred owl competition with the northern spotted owl has resulted in adverse impacts to the northern spotted owl population.

- The BLM worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to developed barred owl encounter rates for the current conditions and barred owl encounter rates predicted if the agencies implemented a barred owl management program.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recognized the impacts of the barred owl and had the foresight to undertake an analysis to begin experimenting with the removal of barred owls to reduce encounter rates.
- There are no substantive differences among the alternatives to the spotted owl in terms of risks by barred owls. The BLM would contribute sufficient habitat to support self-sustaining northern spotted owl populations during the next 50 years under all alternatives. Nevertheless, if barred owl competition continues at current levels, the influence of barred owls would result in continued decline of spotted owl populations, even if the BLM were to protect all habitat.
- The BLM has worked closely with the Fish and Wildlife Service on habitat modeling, scientific analysis, and alternative development. The BLM will continue to work with the service on the conservation and recovery of all threatened and endangered species, including the marbled murrelet.
- BLM lands are essential for spotted owls to travel between the coast range and Cascades.

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>.