

Issue Paper: Preferred Alternative Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon

Background:

Consistent with the BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-7) and as part of the BLM's commitment to an open and transparent planning process, the BLM identified Alternative B as its preferred alternative at the Draft RMP/EIS stage. In identifying the BLM preferred alternative, the BLM evaluated how well each of the alternatives in the Draft RMP/EIS would respond to the purpose and need for action and the guidance for the formulation of alternatives, as well as the effects of each of the alternatives relevant to the issues identified for detailed analysis. In this evaluation, the cooperating agencies provided feedback that the BLM considered in identifying the preferred alternative.

Key Points:

- The identification of the preferred alternative does not constitute a commitment or decision. Nor does it mean that the BLM will necessarily present the preferred alternative as the Proposed RMP in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Instead, the BLM is simply identifying that Alternative B provides the most useful starting point from which to construct a Proposed RMP based on the analysis in this Draft RMP/EIS.
- The BLM has identified Alternative B as the preferred alternative because the effects analysis demonstrates that it would:
 - Create a network of large blocks of northern spotted owl habitat across the landscape
 - Provide active management with designated northern spotted owl critical habitat consistent with the recovery plan for the northern spotted owl
 - Increase marbled murrelet habitat over time
 - Create habitat for species associated with complex early successional habitat
 - Speed the redevelopment of structurally complex forest conditions after regeneration harvest
 - Protect the river values associated with the six river segments that the BLM has identified as meeting the Wild and Scenic River suitability requirements
 - Provide more sustained-yield timber harvest than the current Allowable Sale Quantity declared in the 1995 RMPs
 - Provide more payments to counties from timber harvest on BLM-administered land than the counties would receive at the current Allowable Sale Quantity declared in the 1995 RMPs
- However, Alternative B does not provide the best possible response to the purpose and need for action and the guidance for the formulation of alternatives. Recognizing this, the BLM will seek to develop a Proposed RMP that would also:

- Reduce the risk of adverse effects to listed fish and water quality
- Increase protection of unique recreation settings and increase recreation use
- Increase protection of identified lands with wilderness characteristics
- Minimize the spread of Sudden Oak Death
- In developing the Proposed RMP, the BLM may therefore make modifications to the design of Alternative B; make modifications to the design of a different alternative analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS; or develop a new alternative from within the spectrum of alternatives considered in the Draft RMP/EIS. In developing the Proposed RMP, the BLM will also consider public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS and feedback from cooperating agencies.

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>.