

# A balancing act for forests and counties

Seven weeks ago, the federal Bureau of Land Management released a draft plan that will ultimately help guide our decision-making in western Oregon in order to meet the agency's dual goals of timber output and continuing to provide for habitat and conservation of federally listed species.

The majority of the lands that the BLM is focusing on fall under the direction of the O&C Lands Act of 1937, which requires the BLM to manage its western Oregon lands for permanent forest production while providing economic benefits to local communities. The BLM's plan analyzes the potential impacts of three management alternatives that seek to better meet the agency's unique mandate under the O&C Lands Act. While the agency is only a third of the way through its public comment period, the plan revision effort is based on the most detailed and comprehensive analysis ever completed on BLM-managed lands in western Oregon. The analysis is supported by the latest biological studies, updated resource data and the most current computer modeling tools.

Whatever the final decisions may be, the revised plans will comply with all applicable federal laws, including the O&C Lands Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

The BLM's management of public forests in western Oregon is ultimately a balancing act. But I know we can meet the agency's legal obligations for sustainable timber production, while providing species habitat in the short term as well as for the future.

The Western Oregon Plan Revisions will not, as some have argued, take the

BLM back to the harvest levels of the 1980s, or for that matter the 1970s or 1960s. Even under the plan alternative with the highest harvest levels, the timber harvest would be 62 percent of the harvest in the 1980s, and well below the 1.2 billion board feet per year the land is capable of producing. Slightly less than half of the land, under this alternative, would be managed intensively for timber. That's a far cry from the "old timber days."

During the 1980s, payments to western Oregon counties from O&C timber receipts varied widely, and under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 payments have varied between \$109 million and \$117 million. However, timber receipts under the BLM's preferred alternative would get us very close to the equivalent of the agency's portion of the payments made to Oregon counties under the Secure Rural Schools Act.

While the challenges faced by many counties with the loss of their historic levels of timber receipts offer an important perspective, they alone don't direct the outcome of this planning process. How the counties develop and diversify their economies is a decision for each individual county and its citizens. While the BLM won't be achieving the same level of receipts that it did in the 1980s or even under the safety net provisions from the 1980s, our revised plans will take us a long way toward being a significant contributor to important local county services such as libraries, public health and law enforcement.

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ED SHEPARD

IN MY OPINION

# Wyden wants to cut down barriers to forest work

By JEFF BARNARD  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEMPHIS — Sen. Ron Wyden is working on legislation to overcome the gridlock in national forest logging projects designed to reduce the growing area of wildfires.

The Oregon Democrat told a committee of timber industry and conservation groups in a hearing Wednesday that the federal logging program is a mess. He wants to correct the program, and the national forest should be having a steady supply of logs for the timber industry, but that timber policy has varied wildly depending on who is in the White House.

The federal government has basically been failing while the Oregon state is making a good effort to find a way to break the gridlock.

On a related issue, Wyden said his primary goal is determining better ways to pay a separate fee for logging. He said payments to timber-dependent counties that have been hurt by cutbacks in logging on national forests.

Wyden also wants to improve the way the federal forest fee is set. He said the U.S. Forest Service lacks the funding it needs to do major thinning projects, and too many projects that charge trees to pay for thinning are being delayed by grants and lawsuits.



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# Shooting one owl to save another

Forest | A scientist says killing is a cheap, easy way to get rid of barred owls and help spotted owls

By MICHAEL MILSTEIN  
THE OREGONIAN

Biologists grappled Tuesday with the realities of shooting barred owls that invade the older forest habitat of federally protected northern spotted owls, a strategy critics say the Bush administration employs to help spotted owls while also trimming away at their preserves in an effort to open up logging.

A scientist who experimented with barred owl control in Northern California said shooting proved relatively easy, at least in limited areas of accessible forests. Removing some adult barred owls before nesting season could control the lumber population and open a window for spotted owls to come back.

The cost would be relatively minor, Lowell Diller, a biologist with Green Diamond Resource Co. in Northern California, told researchers meeting Tuesday in Portland. He cautioned he wasn't trying to make light of it, but said, "This is a redneck sport — you do it from the tail of your pickup."

The researchers are reviewing the scientific basis for a spotted owl recovery plan drafted by the U.S. Fish

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