



Oregon Department of Forestry, State Forests Division
Scientific Review Options – Background
February 7, 2010

I. Summary

The Board of Forestry would like to receive outside review on the body of science considered and/or gaps in the science considered in developing forest management plan strategies, and a review of the likelihood specific management strategies will achieve desired outcomes.

The State Land Board would like to receive outside review of the proposed and current aquatic and riparian strategies being considered for the Elliott State Forest management plan decision.

This background paper describes the areas of review and types of questions anticipated to meet both Boards' requests.

II. Define the Issue

The Northwest and Southwest Forest Management Plans provide management direction for over 600,000 acres of forestland in Oregon. Currently the Board of Forestry is examining the balance of benefits provided through forest management on these forests and is considering two changes to the existing forest management plans:

1. Replacing reliance on the Draft West Oregon Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for habitat protections and replacing it with a set of strategies to manage for species of concern and;
2. Recalibrating the structure classes in the Northwest FMP to reflect a range of 30-50% for complex structures (Layered and Older Forest Structure).

The Elliott State Forest Management Plan provides management direction for about 93,000 acres of forestland in Southern Oregon. A forest management planning process has resulted in the development of a draft Forest Management Plan (2006), and a draft Habitat Conservation Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement (both 2008). The draft HCP and DEIS were released for a 90-day public comment period in August 2008. A significant number of comments were received by the federal agencies involved in the planning process (U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the National Marine Fisheries Service). Both agencies identified a number of substantive issues from the public comments that they believed would require changes to the draft HCP. During 2009 ODF negotiated

with the federal agencies on those issues and reached agreement on the most significant issues with the USFWS but not with NMFS.

The NMFS issues focus on aquatic/riparian strategies and deal with stream temperature, in-stream wood delivery, potential sediment delivery to streams, roads management, identification and management of steep slope areas, and committing to specific watershed restoration activities as mitigation for harvest in upslope areas. ODF and NMFS have not come to agreement that the Elliott aquatic/riparian strategies would achieve the results both agencies are looking for.

The Department has done significant analysis predicting the outcomes of these forest management plans. Both Boards would like an outside, scientific review of this work, some of which may overlap.

III. Background

Past Work

Scientific review has been an important component of the Board's development of forest management plans.

Review prior to adoption of forest management plans is detailed in Appendix F of the Northwest Oregon Forest Management Plan and includes:

- 1996. Professional review and critique of the draft strategies in the Northwest Oregon State Forests Management Plan.
- 1998. Independent Scientific Review of the Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan.

Since plan adoption, additional scientific review has occurred that has relevance for these forest management decisions.

- 2004 Harvest and Habitat Model peer review
- 2005 Effects Analysis for the Draft Western Oregon State Forests Habitat Conservation Plan for Aquatic Species
- 2006 2nd Party Assessment
- Elliott State Forest Management Plan revision process including:
 - 2003 Technical review and critique of the draft strategies in the forest management plan
 - 2008 Draft Elliott State Forest Habitat Conservation Plan and associated environmental impact statement.

Finally, specific work analyzing different forest management scenarios was done for the options on the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests. These are:

- Development and evaluation of species of concern strategies
- An evaluation of the achievement of all nine performance measures for two management approaches on the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests.

Need for Review

The Board, Department, and the public have had ongoing discussions of reviews.

Board of Forestry Identified Needs:

The Board of Forestry has requested a scientific review of the revised NW and SW forest management plans. It is anticipated this review would examine the efficacy of the revised management plans, and evaluate the species of concern strategy and the SAH strategy which is planned to sunset. As important, the review would also evaluate the sufficiency to which social and economic effects of the revised management plan have been analyzed and characterized.

State Land Board Needs:

The SLB has requested a scientific review of aquatic and riparian strategies. Completion of this review is needed by September 2010 in order to allow enough time to reach understanding and agreement with the NMFS by December 2010.

Department

The Department has outlined possible steps for continual improvement, including initial thoughts on areas for possible review of the species of concern strategies, metrics, assumptions, analysis, and conclusions.

IV. Proposed Review Options

IMST could take on two of ODF's projects between now and September 2010. A next step after these two products would be to work with the Board and Department to determine how to meet remaining needs and needs that are outside the IMST Charter.

The two products IMST is prepared to concentrate on are:

1. A review of aquatic and riparian goals, strategies, and analysis from the Elliott State Forest. A review of this work will assist ODF in management of the Elliott and will inform management decisions on the NW and SW State Forests where goals and strategies are very similar or the same; this would address the efficacy of the aquatic and riparian goals to meet the forest management plan goals.
2. A review of ODF Species of Concern goals, strategies, and analysis. A review of this work will assist ODF in managing NW forests.

V. Next Steps

The Department will work with the IMST and interested parties to develop draft questions to guide these two possible IMST products and will provide an update at the March Board of Forestry meeting.

The Department of Forestry will look for further opportunities to complete the desired reviews.