




State of Washington
Department of Fish and Wildlife

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M E M O R A N D U M

To: Forest Practices Board

From: David Whipple, Forest Policy Coordinator 
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

SUBJECT: UPLAND WILDLIFE PLANNING UPDATE

Recognizing the recent election of a new Commissioner of Public Lands and subsequent changes in Department of Natural Resources administrative positions, as well as the fact there are some relatively new Forest Practices Board members, this staff report goes into more detail than usual in an attempt to increase understanding of the Forest Practices Board's Wildlife Work Plan.

The multi-caucus Wildlife Work Group oversees implementation of the Board's Wildlife Work Plan. The caucuses represented on the work group include the Washington Farm Forestry Association, the Washington Forest Protection Association, conservation groups, the Upper Columbia United Tribes, Department of Natural Resources (State Lands and Forest Practices), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an interested member of the public (and Forest Practices Board member), and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Wildlife Work Group has finalized the group's charter, based on input from all work group members. The final charter is attached, which also includes the original Forest Practices Board Wildlife Work Plan.

The Board's Wildlife Work Plan is comprised of four elements. Element 1 is an Assessment of Current Rules Intended to Protect Wildlife; Element 2 is the Landscape Level Wildlife Assessment; Element 3 is Implementation Mechanisms and Incentives for Wildlife Habitat Management, and; Element 4 is Adaptive Management.

The Wildlife Work Group has agreed to focus work in three major areas for the relative near future: 1) spotted owl conservation strategies; 2) the Landscape Level Wildlife Assessment, and; 3) investigating alternative rule assessment pathways for some wildlife species. Below is more information on these three work areas.

1) Spotted Owl Conservation Strategies

The spotted owl rules constitute the first rules to be evaluated under “Element 1” of the Board’s Wildlife Work Plan. Some members of the Board’s Wildlife Work Group are also on the recently formed Northern Spotted Owl Policy Working Group. This latter group is the result of a recent lawsuit settlement. Due to some degree of overlap between the two policy work groups, the Wildlife Work Group will remain informed of the progress of the owl policy group, and has committed in its charter to exchange information and knowledge with the policy working group that may be beneficial to either or both groups. For example, conservation strategies and implementation mechanisms developed in the Northern Spotted Owl Policy Working Group may be useful to the Wildlife Work Group in the future, as it assesses Forest Practices Rules and develops possible recommendations for Board consideration relative to other listed species.

2) Landscape Level Wildlife Assessment (LLWA)

The project is “Element 2” of the Board’s Wildlife Work Plan, and is a critical element. However, continued funding for this project is at risk. The amount needed to complete the project is estimated to be \$750,000 over the next biennium. Recognizing the current budget crisis, the Department of Natural Resources submitted a 2009-2011 budget request for half that amount (\$375,000). The Governor’s proposed budget does not contain any funding for the project. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) continues to pursue other funding options.

The LLWA project is structured such that it has a Policy Group that provides project oversight, and a Technical Group that conducts all the scientific work. While the Technical Group has discussed a range of options whereby the project may continue at varying levels of intensity depending on level of future funding, the approach outlined here assumes no additional funding. The Policy Group was briefed, and agreed on the Technical Group’s recommendation for project direction for the remainder of the fiscal year (through June 30, 2009). Therefore, in the absence of additional funding, the Technical Group will complete a report of the project’s progress and accomplishments to-date, which are expected to be:

- a) Between 20 and 30 of the original 38 literature reviews and accompanying detailed wildlife habitat models.
- b) Many of the less specific habitat relationships descriptions based on Wildlife-Habitat Relationships in Oregon and Washington (Johnson and O’Neil 2001) for species/guilds not covered by detailed wildlife habitat models
- c) Development and testing of the automation software that will take outputs summaries of forest growth models (e.g., at 10 year increments) and run the detailed Bayesian Belief Network (BBN) models as well as the less specific habitat association models for wildlife species that the user defines.
- d) An approach to characterizing the effects of human development (urbanization) on wildlife using generalized habitat relationship models.
- e) A statewide dry-run of the assessment using all completed the BBN models in addition to all “generalized habitat relationship models” on 10 plots on each of

the westside and eastside. It is important to note that these models and their results will not have been peer-reviewed and the results are for demonstration purposes only. The Technical and Policy Groups do not support using the modeling results as a decision-making tool prior to external peer-review.

If no additional funding is provided, the following critical work will not take place:

- a) Approximately 10 -20 detailed wildlife literature reviews will not occur and the associated habitat models will not be developed.
- b) The peer review of all of the detailed habitat models and the overall assessment process will not occur.
- c) A real (that is, an assessment to guide decision making) initial statewide habitat sampling scheme will not be done.
- d) A decision regarding the ability to use actual landowner data will not be available.
- e) A real initial statewide habitat assessment of habitat capability will not be completed for the wildlife species and guilds.
- f) Future projections of habitat capability for the species and guilds will not be available.
- g) The effects different forest management scenarios on habitat capability for the species and guilds will not be available.

3) Forest Practices Rules & Pathway Assessments

As briefed at the last board meeting, the Wildlife Work Group will continue to work on reviewing the list of species in the bottom three tiers of “Element 1” of the board’s original work plan. These species were listed lower on the priority list due to their limited spatial distribution, limited intersection with forest management, etc. The goal is to explore the level of detail to which the rules for these species need to be assessed, and whether those listed species without rules (mardon skipper [butterfly], upland sandpiper [bird] and fisher [in weasel family]) might warrant protection mechanisms of some kind. Basic species-specific information will continue to be collected such as species range, habitat requirements, information on population trends, intersection with non-federal forest management, risks to the species and habitat, etc. This information may also be useful in developing non-rule protection mechanisms. This work is proceeding very slowly due to current workloads of WDFW as well as the other caucuses.

As you know, “Element 3” of the Board’s work plan deals with types of landowner incentives needed to protect and conserve wildlife habitat and conduct landscape planning. Last year, the group determined additional expertise is needed to assist them in researching and understanding current and possible future forest landowner incentives. DNR submitted a budget request to provide funding for this needed expertise; however the Governor’s budget does not contain funding for this position.

I will be providing future Board updates on the Wildlife Work Plan, which will include direction on work plan elements relative to available funding.

CHARTER

WILDLIFE WORK GROUP

January 26, 2009

Introduction

The Washington Forest Practices Board (Board) adopted a Wildlife Work Plan in March 2003, in response to Forest Practices Rules requiring periodic evaluation of the Board's rules to protect wildlife resources. The Board's Wildlife Work Plan (attached below) consists of four major elements: 1) a review of current wildlife rules intended to protect wildlife; 2) a Landscape Level Wildlife Assessment (LLWA); 3) landowner incentives and wildlife protection implementation mechanisms, and; 4) adaptive management. The Board requested the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife organize the work plan process and scientific analyses with stakeholder involvement.

Membership

- Nina Carter (Audubon Washington)
- Chase Davis (Upper Columbia United Tribes)
- Carolyn Dobbs (Board member)
- Sherry Fox (Washington Farm Forestry Association & Board member)
- Pete Heide (Washington Forest Protection Association)
- Jim Hotvedt (Wash. Dept. of Natural Resources Lands Division; Landscape Level Wildlife Assessment Policy Group only)
- Jim Micheals (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Bridget Moran (Wash. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife & Board member)
- Miguel Perez-Gibson (Conservation Caucus)
- Chuck Turley (Wash. Department of Natural Resources Forest Practices Division)
- Josh Weiss (Washington Forest Protection Association)
- David Whipple (Wash. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife)

Purpose

- The overall purpose of the Wildlife Work Group is to develop the policy framework for all four elements of the Forest Practices Board's Wildlife Work Plan, and make any necessary recommendations to the Board to implement outcomes of the workplan. The work group may also be used by the members as a way of coordinating collaborative strategies relating to wildlife conservation.

Objectives

1. Describe the policy context, goals, and expectations of different forestland ownerships to provide habitat for forest-dependent wildlife across the state.
2. Provide policy guidance and project management to the LLWA Technical Work Group relative to scope and direction of the technical assessment, habitat model assumptions, etc., as well as any follow-up analyses of wildlife habitats and habitat elements.
3. Exchange information and knowledge with the current Northern Spotted Owl Working Group.

4. The group will explore possible regulatory incentive mechanisms for wildlife protection and conservation, and relative to incentive-based conservation methods, will determine how to turn the results of the LLWA into meaningful voluntary incentive programs and mechanisms for the protection of wildlife and their habitats. Examples may be carbon and ecosystem services markets, transfer of development rights, conservation easements, pilot biodiversity projects, etc.
5. Develop an adaptive management strategy for wildlife.
6. Inform the Board on larger issues related to budget, project scope and direction, etc. The group may make recommendations to the Board on issues the group believes the Board should take action on, or on issues the Board wishes to take action on.

Deliverables

- The group will make recommendations to the Board on what actions, if any, the Board should consider to implement the Wildlife Work Plan.
- The group may also make recommendations to the Board on collaborative approaches to wildlife protection and conservation from other forums (e.g. the Puget Sound Partnership, the Washington Biodiversity Council, etc.)

Group Process and Support

- Wildlife Work Group members are the primary participants and authors of the charter and findings/recommendations.
- Decisions will be made by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached on any particular topic, the nature of the disagreement will be described and recorded in reports and recommendations.
- Technical staff will participate in discussions as needed and when called upon by the work group. Individual work group members may have technical staff present at scheduled meetings, but should limit input on discussion topics to the work group members, unless the technical staff are responding to a specific work group assignment.
- Progress reports will be provided to the Forest Practices Board through staff updates at regularly scheduled or special Board meetings. The work group charter will be provided to the Board.
- The work group may need support staff to document progress and outcomes as well as possible meeting facilitation. All meetings will be scheduled in advance and will have agendas that further the group's ability to accomplish their work.

Forest Practices Board Wildlife Work Plan

(Endorsed by the FPB March 19, 2003)

Elements of the Work Plan:

1. Assessment of Current Rules Intended to Protect Wildlife

This element meets obligations established in WAC language to assess the effectiveness of existing rules to meet both statutory and Board established goals for wildlife. Assessments will analyze of how target populations and requisite habitats are faring under rule implementation. Major components of this element include an assessment of the effectiveness of the spotted owl and marbled murrelet rule packages, and habitat-based rules such as those dealing with wildlife reserve trees and snags. An assessment of wildlife resources not covered under current rules will also be conducted as well as an assessment of whether current protections are still necessary (e.g. bald eagle). As part of this assessment, existing or past voluntary measures to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat will also be evaluated.

2. Landscape-level Wildlife Assessment

This element involves a comprehensive look at how all forest practice rules, including the forest and fish package, combined with other measures such as HCPs and federal land management contribute to wildlife populations in the state. This will be a scientific assessment based on landscape ecology and population ecology, and will rely heavily on spatial analysis using GIS. The intent of this assessment is to determine to what extent forest and fish rules, and other regulatory and voluntary features on the landscape contribute to the needs of forest-dependent wildlife and to determine if there are any major gaps. The results will serve as a foundation for recommendations for landscape-level approaches to wildlife protection in a forest practices context.

3. Implementation Mechanisms and Incentives for Wildlife Habitat Management

This element shifts focus to a policy analysis of how to most effectively achieve wildlife protection while meeting the other major element of the Forest Practice statute, namely the continuation of a viable forest products industry. There are several portions of existing rules that allow for landscape-level planning. These provisions were intended to provide landowners with more flexibility in meeting rule requirements, but are not widely used. This assessment will include an analysis of why landscape planning options are not being used and how impediments to landscape planning may be removed. It will analyze the potential role for other incentive mechanisms such as tax policy, large-scale conservation easements, carbon credits, and green certification to make wildlife protection measures more affordable to landowners. The results will complement the science-based assessments as the basis for recommendations on how to make wildlife protection rules, particularly the planning options, more efficient and effective.

4. Adaptive Management

This element will examine how to build a comprehensive adaptive management program for all wildlife resource objectives of the forest practices rules. Responsibility to ensure effectiveness of wildlife rules is embodied in current WACs, however, there is no coordinated mechanism for ensuring that research and monitoring occurs, or that it leads to updates and adjustments in rule language as new information warrants. The analysis will cover institutional and funding questions as well as what a scientific framework for monitoring multi-species objectives might look like.

Timing and Process

Each element of this work plan will include an extensive stakeholder involvement process, including small and large landowners, Tribes, representatives from the environmental community and other interested parties. The entire work plan is estimated to take two to three years to accomplish although products will be provided to the Board as they are developed. Some tasks may require additional funding and institutional support to complete the analyses and facilitate the stakeholder process. (See attached chart for more specific information on timing). The Department of Fish and Wildlife has been asked to take the lead on organizing the scientific analyses with stakeholder involvement. Input from all interested stakeholders will be incorporated prior to Board presentations. The Board will direct any rule-making processes.