

Continued forest conflicts predicted by OSU

Some of the changing social values and demands to ensure “species viability” that ultimately caused the collapse of national forest management plans during the 1980s and ‘90s have been addressed, scientists say, but other topics still have similar potential for conflict.

An historical analysis by researchers at Oregon State University (OSU) at Corvallis, published in the professional journal, “Forest Policy and Economics,” concluded that many lessons have been learned by management agencies following the contentious battles of the past 20 years. During those times one U.S. Forest Service management plan after another was invalidated by courts due to inadequate measures to protect wildlife species, OSU said.

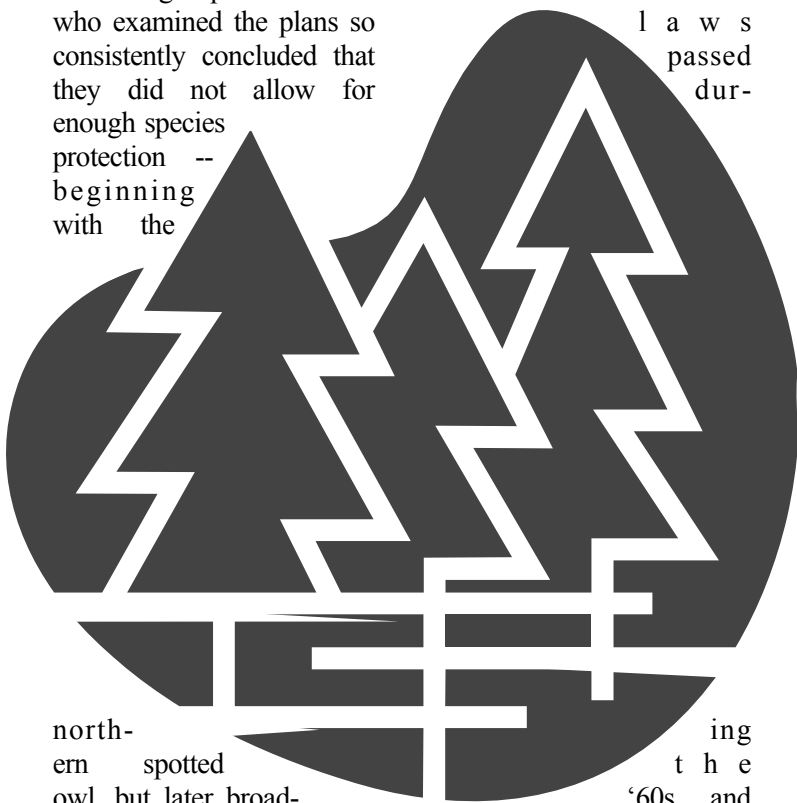
A fundamental change has taken place in management agencies. They now incorporate ecological science much more heavily into their decisions; have a greater understanding of what it takes to protect habitats and species; and have raised the bar in terms of protecting species at the expense of dramatically lower timber harvests on public lands, OSU reported.

But the heightened attention being paid to species protection, researchers say in their report, is no guarantee that other forest management controversies based on different conflicts won’t result in the same “crisis management and angry voices” that have become the undesirable norm in recent decades.

“Some lessons have been learned, and some changes made in regulations as a result of different political administrations,” said Sally Duncan, policy research director with the Institute for Natural Resources at OSU. “But substantive change is a very slow process, and there will be more crises in forest management;

you can count on that. It may just be in different areas.”

This analysis was conducted, researchers say, to help determine why forest plans developed during the ‘80s and ‘90s so regularly ended up in court, and why “ad hoc” groups of scientists who examined the plans so consistently concluded that they did not allow for enough species protection -- beginning with the



north-ern spotted owl, but later broadening to concerns much beyond that.

“The plans crafted by the forest service during the 1980s were universally deemed inadequate,” said Jonathan Thompson, an OSU doctoral candidate in the Dept. of Forest Science.

“We wanted to understand how the same basic set of laws and regulations could result in such completely different conclusions, and hopefully learn how these types of problems might be avoided in the future.”

The issues that led to forest management gridlock began with the rise of the modern environmental movement in the ‘60s, and were intertwined with the post-World War II demand for more housing, increasing urbanization, and timber production gradually giving way to a view of forests as places valuable for recreation, fish and wildlife protection, and scenery.

The forest service had become “by default a timber agency” and struggled to adapt to these social changes and ever more conflicting mandates, the report noted, and like many large bureaucratic institutions was reluctant to change.

A host of environmental laws passed during

the ‘70s added to the pressures; membership in environmental groups surged; and interest groups became adept at using court challenges to halt timber sales. As forest plans began to fail, specialized science groups were appointed to examine the types of species protection provided in these plans, and frequently found them inadequate.

“The species protection standards were very new, and the regulations were often vague, hard to interpret, sometimes almost impossible to achieve,” Thompson said.

“Management agencies,” he said, “often did not have the scientific background, ecological expertise or the latest data, all of which were available to the groups examining their plans, and the scientists and agencies often came to very different conclusions.”

Prior to the ‘80s, the researchers noted, ecologi-

cal science was often a minor part of forest plans and scientists in that field were rarely consulted. Now it has become a primary force in these plans and some scientists are being criticized for being “too involved” in policy issues and management decisions.

Another hypothesis the study explored was the level of risk to species. At first, many forest planners believed that a few, isolated old-growth reserves would take care of most species concerns, OSU said. But for the northern spotted owl, it was perceived that necessary room for protection rose from an initial estimate of 30 acres to 3,000.

By the early ‘90s, the number of species under consideration was more than 1,000. Species protection moved from a minor constraint on timber production to a driver of planning and management.

The end result of all these forces, researchers said, was a major decrease in timber production from public lands; a disruption of traditional approaches used by the forest service; a groundswell of environmental awareness and concern; and major political and court fights.

Many participants interviewed in the research, the study authors said, now feel that problems with species protection are largely in the past.

They feel that management agency approaches have changed, more science is being used in plan development, and a broad body of case law is now available to add consistency to the process -- at least so far as it relates to species viability.

But the broader controversies of recent years, the study noted, showed a process “crippled by the incremental nature of scientific understanding, institutional problems, and larger social dynamics” -- forces that have not gone away.

McLain OSP likely leader

Appointment of Acting Superintendent Tim McLain to the position of superintendent of the Dept. of Oregon State Police (OSP), pending State Senate confirmation, was announced by Gov. Kulongoski.

“Deputy Superintendent McLain answered the call in December to serve as acting superintendent, and he has carried out that duty with integrity, honor and dedication to the safety of our communities,” he said.

“His knowledge of our state and his nearly 28 years serving Oregonians as a member of OSP make him exceptionally qualified to lead Oregon’s top statewide law enforcement agency through this coming period of growth and expansion.”

Oregon law provides that the superintendent is the executive and administrative head of the department and serves a four-year term. Following the retirement of Superintendent Ronald

Ruecker, McLain was appointed as interim superintendent on Dec. 1, 2006.

McLain, 50, has been a member of OSP for more than 27 years, originally starting as a patrol trooper in Roseburg. In 1985, he joined OSP’s Criminal Services Division as a member of the Douglas County Interagency Narcotics Team.

He went on to supervise an interagency gang enforcement team and narcotics team in the Portland area. Later he was assigned to supervise criminal investigations in 17 Central and Eastern Oregon counties.

In 1998 he was assigned as commander of the Southwest Region Headquarters in Central Point, where he oversaw OSP operations in seven southern counties until moving to OSP General Headquarters in Salem in 2001. He served there as the lieutenant colonel overseeing all law enforcement operations until December ‘06.

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LUZ MOORE TO CONDUCT USDA WORKSHOP FOR LOW-INCOME AND FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS

Bret Dixon and Susan Cherry representing the Rural Development Division of the USDA will speak at a workshop to be held in the Cave Junction City Hall Council Chamber on Friday, Feb. 9, 2007, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. This workshop is open to the public. They will discuss USDA Programs available to low-income and first-time homebuyers in Josephine County. The focus of the workshop will be USDA home ownership programs that will help low-income homebuyers who would not have a chance to own a home any other way.

Three homebuyers programs will be discussed. The first of these is the Direct Home Ownership Program through which it is possible to receive financing for up to 100% of the loan value with no down payment required. Depending on the buyer's income/household size, the interest rate can be reduced to as low as 1%. The USDA will provide help with the initial process of determining a person's eligibility for this program. They will work to find options and to address any problems. A USDA representative will provide help to complete the application and conduct an orientation interview. This process would provide the applicant an eligibility certificate so that they can shop for a house.

When you have a Direct Home Loan with the USDA, there are several servicing options available for times of hardship or emergency. For instance, if you experience a reduction in income, you may receive

an additional reduction in your interest rate. Or, if you experience circumstances beyond your control that have seriously affected your standard of living, you could receive a payment moratorium for up to two years.

The other two programs to be discussed will be Loan Note Guarantees and a Home Repair Program. USDA provides a loan note guarantee with 100% financing that includes the added feature of NO MONTHLY MORTGAGE INSURANCE in the payment.

This allows the buyer to qualify for and afford more. The Home Repair Program is for very low-income homeowners and offers up to \$20,000 over 20 years at 1%. There is also a grant program for homeowners age 62 and older who cannot afford a loan payment and need to remove health and safety hazards from their home. The grant is for up to \$7,500.

This workshop is being conducted by Luz Moore with the endorsement of Century 21 Harris & Taylor and the IV Chamber of Commerce. This is an effort to educate the people of our community about the opportunities available to them and their families. Seating will be limited. For registration and for those wishing to apply for a housing loan, please phone Luz at (541) 415-1961.



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Walden takes strong stand for supporting O&C funding

Congressman Greg Walden (R-Ore.) announced that unless funding for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (county payments) is in the forthcoming stopgap spending bill to fund government operations -- known as a Continuing Resolution (CR) -- he will vote against the bill's passage.

A CR was passed at the end of the 109th Congress, and it will expire on Feb. 15. Another CR must be approved by Congress by that date to fund vital government functions.

“The federal government faces an extreme funding crisis if another CR is not approved next month by Congress,” Walden said. “However, Oregon’s county governments and rural

schools are already experiencing a funding emergency since Congress has not reauthorized and funded the essential county payments program.

“The federal government made a pact with forested communities nearly a century ago, and it’s high time this pact be upheld. I will not support a funding package that breaches the federal government's promise to our counties and schools. If the federal gov-

ernment does not fulfill its obligation to the county payments program in the Continuing Resolution, I will express my opposition loudly and vote against it.”

Walden and Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) already have written to the House leadership asking that a one-year extension of the county payments program be included in the CR.

“Many counties are faced with choosing between schools and law en-

forcement, between roads and libraries,” Walden said. “The layoff notices are being prepared. The consequences of the federal government breaking its promise to timbered communities will be dire. They are facing an emergency in every sense of the word.”

Walden and DeFazio introduced, on the first day of the new Congress, H.R. 17, a bill which would reauthorize the county payments program for seven years.

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ATTENTION!

Chiara Usher, 14, of Selma is reported missing, and her family wants help finding her. She last was seen early Friday, Jan. 26 in the 28000 block of Redwood Hwy. Chiara, a freshman at Illinois Valley High School, is 5-2 and has brown hair and brown eyes.

Phone (541) 597-4796 with information as to her whereabouts.