



## Northwest Forest Plan Updates

This newsletter is designed to provide information and updates on efforts to modernize the national forest plans within the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) amendment area.

### ***What is the NWFP?***

The NWFP is a landscape approach to public land management designed to protect threatened and endangered species in late successional and old-growth habitats, while also contributing to social and economic sustainability in the region. The NWFP was completed in 1994 and amended 19 National Forest and 7 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) resource management plans. These plans provide guidance for how public lands and resources will be managed for a period of time, usually 10-15 years. The NWFP initiated a new approach to public land management, encompassing 24 million acres of land across California, Oregon and Washington.

### ***What's happened recently?***

Since the NWFP amendment was completed, the ecological, social and economic conditions have changed in the NWFP area and new science has become available. It's time to consider updating the associated forest plans to ensure they are current and provide the best management direction possible. The BLM completed [revision](#) of their NWFP-associated resource management plans in 2016, and the Forest Service is preparing to update our NWFP-associated forest plans as well. The Forest Service remains committed to upholding the principles of the NWFP in all current and future forest plan updates.

### ***General Listening sessions:***

In March through June of 2015, the Forest Service held 19 [listening sessions](#) across Oregon, Washington, and northern California to share information about forest planning and the role of science, outline current thinking about how to strategically update forest plans, and gather ideas from the public on how to include them in the planning process. Three bi-regional listening sessions were held in coordination with Region 5 (California) and 16 forest-level listening sessions. In total, over 900 people participated in these events.

### ***Public forum on the Twenty-year monitoring reports:***

Later in 2015, we hosted a public forum to share results from our [20-year monitoring reports](#). When the NWFP was completed, an interagency monitoring framework was implemented for tracking the status

and trends of social and economic conditions, tribal relationships, watershed condition, late successional and old-growth forests, and population numbers and habitat condition for key species (e.g., marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls). The 20-Year Reports provide an analysis of monitoring data gathered within the NWFP-area since 1994, with a focus on the last 5 years and will be used to inform the forest plan revisions within the NWFP-area.

#### *Science Synthesis:*

The 2012 Planning Rule requires the use of best available scientific information to inform decisions. In recognition of this, as well as public input, [the Pacific Northwest Research Station](#) and [Pacific Southwest Research Station](#) initiated a [science synthesis](#) in 2016 to inform the assessment phase of forest planning. This science synthesis takes the findings from the full body of relevant science/research within a topic area and combines them into a concise and comprehensive summary of best available science for the area. This effort includes results from the 20-year monitoring reports, peer-reviewed science, and agency data. The [draft science synthesis](#) was released in December 2016 for public comment and scientific peer review. The final synthesis will be informed by the input received and will be released as a General Technical Report in 2018.

#### ***What's next?***

##### *Bio-Regional Assessment:*

A bio-regional assessment (BioA) is the next step towards informing this planning effort. A BioA evaluates existing scientific information and identifies key issues that span across national forest boundaries. For the NWFP area, the BioA will rapidly review the social, economic and ecological conditions and trends, as well as sustainability of the forests and grassland within the NWFP area. The BioA is in its early, conceptual stages, with the Forest Service currently determining the most effective and efficient way to complete this endeavor across 19 Forest Service units, 3 states, and 2 separate Forest Service regions (Pacific Northwest Region – R6, and Pacific Southwest Region – R5).

##### ***Why this approach?***

The [2015 listening sessions](#) uncovered two important themes that shaped the approach described in this newsletter. First, participants agreed that forest plans should be based on a solid scientific foundation – the [draft science synthesis](#), as well as the [results from our 20-year monitoring program](#), will provide this initial foundation—although we expect that new science may continue to emerge throughout the planning process. Second, listening session participants recognized the importance of considering the broad implications of planning efforts across the entirety of the NWFP area. The BioA will evaluate the broad and interconnected social, economic and ecological systems throughout the area.

##### ***Current/Future Public engagement opportunities***

The Forest Service is committed to creating a variety of ways and opportunities for State and local governments, Tribes, other Federal agencies, stakeholders, partners and our public to engage throughout the modernization of forest plans. In the months to come, we will be developing a plan for involvement and input into the BioA process.

## ***Resources and Information***

If you are new to forest planning, we encourage you to check-out the following guides to learn more about the planning process:

- 1) [A Citizens' Guide to National Forest Planning](#)
- 2) [Understanding Your Opportunities for Participating in the Forest Service Planning Process: A Guide for State, Local, and Tribal Governments](#)

To learn more about forest planning efforts, including recent products developed as part of this effort, please visit the following websites:

- [R6 Pacific Northwest Region](#)
- [R5 Pacific Southwest Region](#)
- [2015 Public Listening Sessions](#)
- [20-year Monitoring Reports](#)
- [NWFP Draft Science Synthesis](#)
- [Bureau of Land Management Resource Management Plan Revisions](#)