



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 12, 2016

Media Contact: Travis Joseph, American Forest Resource Council, (503) 867-0981

Unhealthy Oregon Forests and Continued Rural Poverty Ensured Under BLM's Latest Plan

Portland, Ore- Today, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released its final proposed Resource Management Plans (RMPs) for 2.5 million acres of forestland in Western Oregon, including over 2 million acres of unique "O&C" lands. These plans will replace the 1990's-era Northwest Forest Plan and guide the future management of O&C lands for decades to come – shaping future timber harvest levels, revenues for counties, forest sector employment, habitat for species, and forest health conditions.

Federal law requires the O&C lands to be managed for ongoing, sustained-yield timber production to generate shared revenues for essential county services like sheriff patrols, libraries, mental health services, jails, and road maintenance, as well as raw materials for local industry. No other federal forestlands are managed under this type of mandate.

Over the past two decades, harvest levels from the BLM lands – and linked county revenues – have fallen by over 80 percent. Today, the agency harvests less than 15 percent of the annual growth of these lands – resulting in persistently high rural unemployment, county governments unable to fund essential services, and overstocked forests at a high risk of catastrophic wildfire, disease, and insect infestation.

The future management of the O&C lands is critically important to Oregon's \$12.7 billion, 58,000-employee forest products sector, which is heavily dependent on harvests from federal forests. Approximately 60 percent of Oregon's forests are owned by the federal government. Oregon's forest products industry is among the most sustainable and innovative in the world, but without an adequate and predictable supply of timber it can't manufacture the local products needed for Oregonians' homes and office buildings of the future.

Travis Joseph, President of the Portland-based American Forest Resource Council (AFRC), issued the following statement in response to the BLM's final proposed RMPs:

"We have this huge opportunity in Oregon to produce local, sustainable, climate-friendly products right here in our backyard under some of the toughest environmental laws on Earth. We have the most advanced, innovative, and efficient manufacturing facilities on the planet. If given the opportunity, the Oregon forest products community could easily demonstrate to the rest of the country how sustainability, forest health, and economic growth are not mutually exclusive.

But this plan does not provide that opportunity. Instead of outlining a bold, strategic vision for the future of our BLM forests and Oregon's rural economy, this plan regurgitates the failed policies of the past: walk away from a majority of unhealthy forestlands and hope things get better. If the last 20 years provide any indication, this approach is doomed to fail our forests, wildlife, and our communities.

The numbers don't lie: this plan means less carbon sequestration, less Oregon wood for Oregon products, fewer Oregon jobs, less revenue for Oregon counties and taxpayers, and no improvement for the plight of the spotted owl. Instead of a win-win-win for the environment, wildlife, and rural communities, this is a lose-lose-lose plan.

AFRC and its members will continue to do what it has always done, work with Oregon's elected leaders – Democratic and Republican – to find a lasting solution that benefits all. We will also have to consider our legal options to compel the federal government to follow the law.”

#####

About AFRC

AFRC is a regional trade association whose purpose is to advocate for sustained yield timber harvests on public timberlands throughout the West to enhance forest health and resistance to fire, insects, and disease. We do this by promoting active management to attain productive public forests, protect adjoining private forests, and assure community stability. We work to improve federal and state laws, regulations, policies and decisions regarding access to and management of public forest lands and protection of all forest lands.