

Questions & Answers: BLM Resource Management Plans (RMPs) for Western Oregon - 2016

Q. Aren't these RMPs an improvement over the status quo?

A. In some cases, yes. But the status quo is woefully (and illegally) short of the promises made to Oregonians more than 20 years ago under the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP), to say nothing of the legal requirements of the O&C Act. And by those measures, the RMPs are far worse in terms of local wood products, jobs, forest health, county revenues, and benefits to wildlife. There's also no reason to believe that the RMPs can actually be implemented any better than the NWFP – the current plan. The BLM's "New" plan doesn't address any of the fundamental constraints on the BLM's ability to get the work done on the ground. These constraints include: litigation, appeals, and interagency consultation.

Q. The BLM says timber harvests will increase by 37 percent. Is that true?

A. No. The BLM is confusing its own numbers. The BLM's most recent analysis indicates that the BLM is capable of producing 277 million board feet (MMBF)/year on a sustained yield basis plus an additional 123 MMBF/year in thinning, for a total of **400 MMBF/year**. The BLM is currently producing half of that goal, or 203 MMBF per year, including thinning! The BLM's "New" plan is to achieve 278 MMBF/year, or less than 70 percent of what the BLM's most recent analysis indicates the agency should be doing.

Q. What are the industry's primary concerns with the BLM's RMPs?

A. The RMPs are based on a false premise: walking away from a majority of unhealthy forestlands – in this case, setting aside 80 percent of the O&C lands – will improve forest health. Twenty years of management has clearly shown that is a failed strategy. Responsible, science-based, proactive management across the landscape is the best way to improve forest resiliency, reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, disease, and insect infestation. It's also the best way to capture and store carbon and produce local, sustainable wood products.

If implemented, the RMPs would devastate southwest Oregon, which has the highest concentration of O&C lands and faces the greatest risk of wildfire. The RMPs would reduce proactive management in southwest Oregon by more than 50 percent, and shift more work to the northern BLM districts where more intensive harvest would occur. It is doubtful this approach could ever be implemented.

Q. What level of timber harvest is the industry advocating for?

A. There is a surprising consensus around the appropriate level of harvest from the BLM lands. Senator Wyden's goal for his O&C legislation was 450 million board feet (mmbf) of harvests per year. Legislation championed by Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives would have led to annual harvests of 550 mmbf per year. The federal O&C Act included an initial volume requirement of 500 mmbf. The industry supported the House O&C legislation and has always expressed interest in finding an Oregon compromise.

As background, the BLM lands in Western Oregon grow 1.4 billion board feet **every year**. Currently, the BLM harvests less than 15 percent of growth, or approximately 200 million board feet (mmbf) per year. That's an 80 percent reduction from historical harvest levels.

Q. What are the industry's plans moving forward?

A. 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. AFRC will also have to consider legal options to compel the federal government to follow the law.