



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Feb. 18, 2011**

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### **New spotted owl plan would hurt rural economy and ignore real solutions, forestry groups say**

The new spotted owl recovery plan written by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is being rushed to completion without taking into account the best science for how the owl can be saved, a coalition of forestry groups said today.

Instead, the recovery plan would hurt forest owners and the rural economy by tying up private lands, and increase the risk of wildfire by reducing efforts to thin forests and improve forest health. The plan also offers few remedies for the central factor in the spotted owl's decline: the invasion of a more dominant species, the barred owl.

“We agree with the communities, conservation groups and Federal agencies, like the U.S. Forest Service, who continue to express grave concerns about the spotted owl plan as written.” said David Tenny, President and CEO of the National Alliance of Forest Owners. “The draft plan was incomplete and in need of additional science and input from resource experts to address key shortcomings affecting owl recovery. The expedited pace for publishing the final rule ahead of the June 1 deadline suggests that the agency has not adequately addressed these shortcomings, and the agency hasn't provided a good answer for why it is moving so quickly.”

“The spotted owl is struggling to survive because of a lack of management of federal forests and the natural migration of the barred owl through Canada,” said Mark Doumit, Executive Director of the Washington Forest Protection Association.

The other forestry groups raising concerns are the American Forest Resource Council, California Forestry Association and Oregon Forest Industries Council. All five groups represent private forest landowners and mill owners throughout the range of the spotted owl.

California Forestry Association President David Bischel stated, “Ironically, some of the most robust populations of Northern Spotted Owls occupy sustainably managed private forests of Northern California. The proposed recovery plan completely ignores the positive benefits

provided by pro-active forest management, and potentially adds more regulatory gridlock without focusing on the two most significant impacts to Northern Spotted Owl populations ... namely risk of habitat loss from catastrophic wildfire, and the invasion of the more dominant Barred Owl species.”

“The new federal plan focuses instead on the taking of private forestland, which will hurt timber communities without helping the spotted owl,” said Ray Wilkeson, President of the Oregon Forest Industries Council.

“There is no evidence the sweeping policy changes contained in the draft plan will help the owl. Instead, they will lead to at least a 30 percent reduction in commercial thinning harvest volume on Forest Service lands where the owl lives. This not only hurts forest health, it will lead to further job loss in a time of unprecedented unemployment in our rural communities,” said Tom Partin, President of the American Forest Resource Council.

“The Draft Plan threatens to disrupt the scientific, economic, and policy equilibrium reached over the past 20 years.” The five forestry groups wrote a Feb. 10 letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior, outlining their concerns about the spotted owl plan (*see jt. Association letter at [www.wfpa.org](http://www.wfpa.org)*). “Making sweeping changes to the federal recovery strategy for the spotted owl, before the science has been completed, will eliminate the tenuous support for any strategy.”

The Fish and Wildlife Service has indicated it intends to issue a final spotted owl plan this month, even though the agency has until June 1 to complete the plan. This means the agency has three more months it could use to consider public comment and wait for the scientific research to be completed, but it is choosing not to do so.

### **About the forestry groups**

The **National Alliance of Forest Owners** represents private forest landowners owning or managing 79 million acres in 47 states. [www.nafoalliance.org](http://www.nafoalliance.org)

The **American Forest Resource Council** represents 80 forest product manufacturers and forest landowners in the West. [www.amforest.org](http://www.amforest.org)

The **California Forestry Association** represents professionals committed to sustainable forestry and the protection of the state’s natural resources. [www.foresthealth.org](http://www.foresthealth.org)

The **Oregon Forest Industries Council** represents more than 50 forestland owners and forest products manufacturing-related firms. [www.ofic.com](http://www.ofic.com)

The **Washington Forest Protection Association** represents private forest landowners growing and harvesting trees on more than 4 million acres. [www.wfpa.org](http://www.wfpa.org)

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