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## **BLM Plan Underscores Urgent Need for Oregon Delegation to Find a Balanced, Bipartisan Solution to O&C Lands Crisis**

Portland, Ore. – Oregon’s forest products industry is urging the State’s congressional delegation to revive efforts to achieve a legislative solution to resolve two decades of failed agency management plans for Western Oregon’s unique O&C Lands.

In a [letter](#) to Senators Wyden and Merkley and the Oregon House Delegation, Travis Joseph, President of the Portland-based American Forest Resource Council (AFRC), outlined how the BLM’s latest proposed resource management plan (PRMP) will result in a protracted court battle and further threaten Oregon’s rural communities, forest health, and the forest products industry that depends on the O&C Lands for raw materials to manufacture wood products used by every American every day.

Using the BLM’s own analysis and data contained in the BLM’s [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#), Joseph outlined some of the major legal, scientific, and logistical flaws of the plan, including:

- **The PRMP would limit sustained yield timber production to less than 20 percent of the total O&C land base**, despite federal law clearly stating that *all* O&C timberlands *shall* be managed for sustained yield.
- **Even under the flawed Northwest Forest Plan, the current management plan for the O&C Lands, the BLM is capable of producing 400 million board feet (MMBF) of timber per year.** According to the BLM, the new PRMP would produce 278 MMBF/year, or 122 MMBF/year less than the Northwest Forest Plan, which has already reduced O&C timber harvests by more than 85 percent from historic levels.
- **The PRMP would devastate southwest Oregon, a geographic area with the highest concentration of O&C Lands and that faces the greatest risk of wildfire.** If implemented, the PRMP would reduce proactive management in southwest Oregon by more than 50 percent, and shift more work to the northern BLM districts where more intensive harvests would occur. Reducing geographic dispersal of timber harvests while increasing the use of intensive management practices directly contradicts the goals of O&C legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives.
- **The BLM’s own analysis shows that the PRMP would have no effect on the likelihood of recovering the Northern Spotted Owl**, whose populations have already

declined by 55 to 75 percent since 1992 primarily due to the effect of the barred owl and wildfires. In fact, the BLM's own analysis shows that whether the agency harvests no trees, or maximizes timber harvests, the long-term population trends of the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) remain the same.

- **The PRMP does not address any of the fundamental constraints on the BLM's ability to get work done on the ground.** In fact, the PRMP contains language that would prohibit "incidental take" of the Northern Spotted Owl until a management plan is put in place to reduce NSO interaction with the barred owl. Put simply, the BLM would not be allowed to fully implement the PRMP until the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designs, approves, and receives Congressional funding for the lethal removal of thousands of barred owls in Western Oregon.

The Oregon Delegation was unable to reach a compromise between differing House and Senate O&C legislative proposals in 2014. Despite the lack of an agreement, the competing proposals shared similar components and demonstrated general consensus around the level of timber harvest from the BLM lands. In fact, Senator Wyden's legislation was intended to generate annual harvests of 450 MMBF and bipartisan House legislation championed by Reps. Greg Walden, Peter DeFazio, and Kurt Schrader would have led to annual harvests of approximately 550 MMBF. The latest BLM PRMP falls far short of generating these levels of harvests or the associated county timber receipts.

The 18 O&C Counties, which have long relied on the shared timber revenues from O&C timber harvests to fund basic county services like law enforcement, mental health services, and roads, have already announced that they will challenge the plan in federal court. While AFRC may also be forced to pursue legal options to compel the federal government to follow the law, the letter expresses a clear desire for the delegation to find an Oregon solution to an Oregon problem. The letter states:

*Given the flaws of the PRMP and its clear contradiction of the delegation's legislative vision for these lands, we ask – on behalf of the thousands of Oregonians and businesses that depend on the management of these lands – that you again work together to find an effective, lasting, bipartisan compromise. The truth is, despite good intentions and hard work, existing legislative O&C proposals do not appear likely to be signed into law. However, we believe there are similar components and outcomes in both the Senate and House efforts that can, and should, provide the foundation for renewed discussions. This issue is too important to a large segment of rural Oregon not to be resolved, no matter how great the temptation to give up in frustration over the failure of past efforts.*

*At AFRC, we are committed to working constructively with you to finally bring a resolution to the O&C Lands crisis in Western Oregon. We strongly believe that a solution designed with local input and passed by our democratically elected leaders would be a more durable and broadly supported approach than having the management of Oregon's public forests – and the future of our rural communities – be subject to the whims of federal judges. We stand ready to help.*

Recent editorials from the [Bend Bulletin](#) and the [Roseburg News Review](#) have also highlighted the flaws of the new PRMP and called on the Oregon delegation to take legislative action to resolve the crisis facing communities across Western Oregon.

To read the full letter, click [here](#).

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### **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.