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BLM Finalizes Disastrous Plan for Western Oregon, Congressional Leadership Needed

Portland, Ore. – Oregon’s forest products industry today expressed deep disappointment and frustration over the Bureau of Land Management’s decision to finalize resource management plans (RMP) for the statutorily unique O&C Lands in Western Oregon. By signing the Record of Decision (ROD), the BLM has put into motion an illegal and scientifically flawed management plan for more than 2.2 million acres of Federal forestland stretching from Portland to the California border. AFRC President Travis Joseph voiced his concerns about the plan:

Despite the hard work of Oregon BLM staff, this plan is doomed to fail because it starts from a false premise: that walking away from 80 percent of the O&C Lands is good for Oregon workers, rural communities, and our forests. The truth is, his plan will mean even fewer manufacturing jobs in Western Oregon. It will mean draconian cuts to public services in many rural counties. It will mean fewer opportunities to adapt our forests to climate change, wildfire and drought.

Who or what benefits from this new plan? Not the owl – BLM analysis has shown that – nor fish, nor drinking water, nor recreation, and certainly not our rural communities or manufacturing base. We are incredibly frustrated by the Federal government’s lack of vision for the O&C Lands that we Oregonians care so much about.

AFRC is calling on the Oregon Congressional Delegation to provide leadership and legislate a balanced solution to future management of O&C Lands. In a May [letter](#) to Senators Ron Wyden, Jeff Merkley, and Oregon’s House Delegation, Joseph outlined how the BLM’s latest RMP will result in a protracted court battle and further threaten Oregon’s rural communities, forest health, and a forest products industry that depends on the O&C Lands for raw materials used in manufacturing the wood products Americans use every day.

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. 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 plan falls far short of generating these levels of harvests or revenues to county governments.

Using the BLM's own analysis and data contained in the BLM's [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#), AFRC has outlined some of the major legal, scientific, and logistical flaws of the RMP:

- **The RMP 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 RMP 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 RMP 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 RMP 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 RMP 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 RMP does not address any of the ongoing obstacles to BLM's ability to get work done on the ground – including lawsuits on individual projects.** In fact, the RMP 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 RMP 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.

Unfortunately, since 2014, there has been very little progress from the Oregon delegation to find a solution and the BLM has pushed forward with its plan. Recent editorials from the [Register Guard](#), [Bend Bulletin](#) and the [Roseburg News Review](#) have also highlighted the flaws of the new RMP and called on the Oregon delegation to take legislative action to resolve the crisis facing communities across Western Oregon.

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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.