



An Industry That Cares About its Employees and Communities

The COVID-19 pandemic and demand for certain forest products is highlighting the [importance of supply chains](#). It is offering new opportunities to [reconnect the public](#) to America's renewable resource and demonstrating why our industry is considered critical infrastructure with an essential workforce. During these challenging times, all of us at AFRC are energized by the enduring optimism of our members and are inspired every day by our members' generosity. Our industry is made up of men and women who care about their employees and communities. Here are just a few examples:

- Hampton Lumber is donating what masks they can spare and purchasing gift cards from local restaurants and distributing them to local aid groups.
- Vaagen Brothers Lumber gave out more than a thousand loads of free bark to help community members cope during the quarantine. *(photo, right)*
- Boise Cascade donated gently-used laptops so disadvantaged kids can continue learning from home.
- Seneca provided their employees grocery bags with toilet paper, frozen meats and other food items.
- Roseburg donated 500 masks found in inventory at their Riddle Plywood plant, answering the call for personal protective equipment for healthcare workers.
- Idaho Forest Group launched the IFG Community Fund to support those in their communities most impacted by COVID-19.



Doubtlessly there are countless more acts of kindness that have gone untold. The constant theme from our industry is “We’re all in this together.” All of us at AFRC appreciate everything our members are doing to take care of their employees and communities. We will continue to help tell these stories, as we advocate for our members and position our industry for a strong future. */Nick Smith*

COVID-19: Advocating for Our Members

AFRC continues to advocate for its members' interests during these challenging and uncertain times. We are regularly posting updates for member companies and agency partners on our [COVID-19 Resources Webpage](#). For much of the month, our focus has been on working with the Forest Service, BLM, and Washington DNR on the many ways federal and state COVID-19 policies are impacting mills, loggers, workforces, and supply chains. This includes helping secure maximum flexibility – and consistent and clear direction – from agencies in implementing existing timber sales while simultaneously ensuring new public timber sales are auctioned. AFRC greatly appreciates the efforts of leadership of the Forest Service, BLM, and DNR to offer maximum flexibility to the purchasers of public timber.

Please continue to visit <http://amforest.org/covid-19-resources/> for additional COVID-19 related information and resources. /Nick Smith

Washington, DC Update

On April 10, the Forest Service announced purchasers holding timber sale contracts or certain Stewardship Contracts (IRTCs) awarded before April 1, 2020 are eligible for up to 2-year extensions after the Secretary of Agriculture made a finding of “Significant Overriding Public Interest” under the National Forest Management Act. AFRC, the Federal Forest Resource Coalition, and the American Loggers Council rallied 37 timber groups around the country to request these extensions. On April 23, Forest Service leadership sent [guidance](#) to agency staff urging “maximum flexibility” for service and procurement contracts, including Stewardship Service Contracts (IRSCs).

On April 1, AFRC sent a [letter](#) to the BLM requesting a blanket one-year extension for BLM timber sale contract holders. Acting BLM Director William Perry Pendley sent a response [letter](#) on April 22 recognizing the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 and offering a narrow, case-by-case approach for considering contract extension requests. Based on the guidance provided in the Pendley letter, AFRC developed a template for member companies to utilize in submitting a contract extension request to the BLM.

Congressional action. Congress spent most of April on recess since the March 27 passage of the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act to mitigate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. On April 23, the U.S. House followed the Senate in passing a \$484 billion measure to replenish the Small Business Administration (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) along with additional funding for hospitals and Coronavirus testing. With the additional funding, the SBA began accepting PPP applications from participating lenders on April 27.

Many observers expect the additional \$310 billion in PPP funding to be claimed quickly after the \$349 billion Congress originally appropriated for the program was exhausted in a little over two weeks. Democrats were not successful in adding assistance to state and local governments to what Congress deemed an “interim” measure. More details on the PPP and other assistance programs is available on [AFRC’s COVID-19 resource page](#).

Congress is expected to take up additional COVID-19 relief measures in the coming weeks and farmers, oil companies, and other industries are all lining up seeking financial assistance. Many in Congress and President Trump have also argued for a large infrastructure bill as a potential stimulus measure. Democrats are expected to continue pushing for direct aid to states and local governments dealing with declining revenues. It is not clear, however, when Congress will return to Washington. The House was scheduled to return the week of May 4, but announced a delay of at least a week as Coronavirus cases in Washington, D.C. continue to increase.

Public lands funding package? In the weeks leading up to the outbreak of COVID-19 Congress appeared poised to pass a major public lands bill called the Great American Outdoors Act, which would mandate full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at its \$900 million annual authorized level and direct \$9.5 billion to address the maintenance backlog on national parks and other public lands over the next five years. Both were to be funded through offshore oil and gas revenues.

LWCF is currently subject to the annual appropriations process where it has received more than \$400 million in recent years. Since the creation of LWCF about 60% of the funding has gone towards federal land acquisition – far greater than the original legislative intent of approximately 40% to federal land acquisition and 60% for state recreation project grants. Many Western Republicans oppose growing federal land holdings in their states. LWCF advocates, including environmental groups and some sportsman organizations, have mounted a sustained lobbying and public affairs campaign in support of full, mandatory funding of LWCF.

The National Park Service (NPS) faces an estimated \$11 billion deferred maintenance backlog. The Restore our Parks Act, which has 52 bipartisan sponsors in the U.S. Senate, was ultimately incorporated into the Great American Outdoors Act and broadened to include other federal land management agencies. Under the legislation, the NPS would receive 70% of the available funding while the Forest Service would receive just 10%, or about \$190 million annually. The Forest Service has a maintenance backlog of about \$4 billion, with three-quarters of that being for roads. However, under the proposal the Forest Service would be required to spend 65% of the funding on non-transportation projects.

The prospects for moving the Great American Outdoors Act as a package are now uncertain. Congress has already spent over \$2.6 trillion in response to COVID-19 and more is expected. Experts are also predicting an \$600 billion hit to federal tax revenues this year due to COVID-19 and the budget deficit will likely reach about \$4.5 trillion this year, over 20% of GDP. Revenues from offshore oil and gas production are also threatened as demand has plummeted, precipitating a global glut for oil. Spending over \$500 million every year on federal land acquisition could become a much tougher sell.

There is stronger support for moving an infrastructure package to get people back to work. Such a package could include funding for deferred maintenance, facilities, road projects, and other investments on public lands. As reported in the [March AFRC Newsletter](#), AFRC and FFRC were joined by 27 other organizations on a [letter](#) to Congressional leaders outlining specific funding requests for Forest Service and BLM accounts most likely to result in additional commercial timber sales and address staggering road maintenance backlogs on federal forests. In January, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee helped write a \$760 billion infrastructure and transportation package. Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) chairs that committee and understands the need to increase the share of funding available for road maintenance activities on federal lands.

As Congress continues debating potential investments in public lands AFRC and our allies will continue advocating for wise, lasting investments in timber management and road maintenance activities. The Hill newspaper recently featured an [opinion piece](#) from AFRC's Nick Smith highlighting the opportunity that exists. */Heath Heikkila*

Court Approves Historic Critical Habitat Agreement, Turning the Page on Decades of Litigation

After years of litigation, a broad coalition representing counties, business and labor reached an agreement with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to initiate a new public process for reevaluating critical habitat designated for the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO). The agreement was filed with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on April 16 and was approved by the Court on April 26. This agreement does not invalidate the 2012 NSO designation, nor does it change the Northwest Forest Plan.

The current critical habitat rule was adopted in 2012 and covers 9.5 million acres, an area more than twice the size of New Jersey, or about the same size as Switzerland. It is significantly larger than the vacated

2008 rule (5.3 million acres, a little more than one New Jersey), or the original 1992 rule (6.9 million acres, about the size of Massachusetts). The coalition brought suit in 2013. After the case was initially dismissed in 2015, the D.C. Circuit reversed the ruling in an [opinion](#) by then-Judge Kavanaugh. (see [April 2017 Newsletter](#)).

The Court-approved agreement requires the Service to initiate a public rulemaking process in July 2020 and conclude it in December. The Service will consider whether areas designated under the 2012 Final Rule should be excluded from the critical habitat designation pursuant to [Section 4\(b\)\(2\) of the Endangered Species Act](#). Section 4(b)(2) requires critical habitat designations be made on “the basis of the best scientific data available and after taking into consideration the economic impact, the impact on national security, and any other relevant impact, of specifying any particular area as critical habitat.” These other relevant impacts may include hindrance of needed work to restore forests and prevent fires. The ESA empowers the Service to exclude any area from critical habitat if “the benefits of such exclusion outweigh the benefits of specifying such area as part of the critical habitat,” unless the exclusion would cause extinction of the species.

The agreement is directly related to the landmark, unanimous U.S. Supreme Court [decision](#) in *Weyerhaeuser* finding the ESA does not authorize the government to designate lands as critical habitat, unless it is in fact habitat for the species. (see [November 2018 Newsletter](#)). Chief Justice Roberts wrote that “[a]ccording to the ordinary understanding of how adjectives work, ‘critical habitat’ must also be ‘habitat.’” *Weyerhaeuser* also determined, for the first time, that decisions *not* to exclude critical habitat are subject to judicial review—undercutting the analysis (or lack thereof) in the 2012 rule.

The 2012 designation includes of millions of acres of forests *not occupied* by the species, including over 1.1 million acres of federal lands designated for active forest management activities and where *no owls are present*. Much of these acres are younger forests that will never be used by owls without significant changes. There are over 4 million acres designated over O&C lands or USFS matrix—three-quarters of the matrix was captured by the 2012 rule.

Despite covering so much land designated for timber production in the 2012 rule, the Service ignored economic impacts—which it could do when insulated from judicial review. With this agreement, the Service has the opportunity to get it right and produce a definitive critical habitat rule. AFRC appreciates the support of our coalition partners in this effort and the work our of litigation counsel Mark Rutzick and Tyler Welti. */Lawson Fite*

Northern Spotted Owl Research Sheds Light on Impact of Barred Owls



Barred Owl

Spotted Owl

When the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) was listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in 1990, the scientific consensus was that habitat loss and degradation, due primarily to timber harvest, was the primary culprit for the species’ decline. The decades following this listing have seen a continued decline of the NSO despite very little additional loss of habitat due to timber harvest.

Thirty years later, habitat loss predating the federal listing is still considered a cause for the initial decline. But habitat loss has become overshadowed by a more immediate threat—competition from the invasive barred owl that has expanded its range west from its native habitat in

eastern North American forests. In fact, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service now considers competition with the Barred Owl as among the biggest threats to persistence of the species.

Advocates for continued limitations on timber harvest have implied competition with the Barred Owl underscores the need for *more* suitable habitat to allow the two species to coexist. These suggestions often cite previous research documents that have hypothesized this notion, such as a 2011 paper by [Dugger et al.](#) that suggests “increased habitat protection for Spotted Owls may be necessary to provide for sustainable populations in the presence of Barred Owls.”

A recent study [published last summer in the Condor](#) examined the dynamics between the NSO and the Barred Owl in Mt. Rainer National Park and provides results that inform whether this clamor for more habitat has merit.

The study area selected is unique in that it represents an area of over 80,000 acres of suitable NSO habitat undisturbed by timber harvest or wildfire since the Park’s creation in the late 19th century. Essentially, this provides an opportunity to examine the impacts of Barred Owl competition in a study area where habitat availability is not a limiting factor.

The first detection of Barred Owl presence in the Park occurred in 1986, and they have been detected every year since. The study found that occupancy rates of NSO territories decreased by 50% since the inception of the study 20 years ago. This decline occurred despite the lack of habitat disturbance or loss since the Park was created 120 years ago. In 2016, only 18 adult owls were detected in the study area, which was down from a high of 30 owls in 1998. The authors also “found no relationship between occupancy dynamics and any of the habitat covariates that we investigated despite previous studies showing that old-growth forest characteristics are strongly associated with Northern Spotted Owl occupancy and apparent survival.” Essentially, in this case, suitable habitat availability had little impact on NSO occupancy. The authors also note that much of the previous research linking species decline with habitat loss were conducted on fragmented landscapes with significant habitat disturbance due to timber harvest and wildfire.

The authors noted that since this study’s setting in Mt. Rainer National Park contains some of the oldest undisturbed intact suitable forest habitat for the NSO in the species’ range it demonstrates that “even when high-quality habitat was readily available, the presence of Barred Owls was negatively correlated with the dynamics of Spotted Owls.” In other words, in this instance, no amount of contiguous suitable forest habitat was sufficient to permit the NSO and the Barred Owl to coexist. /*Andy Geissler*

Ninth Circuit Upholds Moose Creek Project, in Another Win for Farm Bill CE

On April 7, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued a [decision](#) upholding the Moose Creek Vegetation Management Project on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. The project restores 2,200 acres northeast of White Sulphur Springs, Montana that have been adversely affected by severe infestations of spruce budworm and mountain pine beetle. The project treats part of the wildland-urban interface identified in Meagher County’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and was authorized under the [Farm Bill CE](#) (16 USC 6591b) enacted in 2014 and extended in 2019 on a broad bipartisan basis.

Anti-forestry groups brought suit against the project, challenging the project’s compliance with the Farm Bill CE old-growth requirements and also bringing claims against Montana Governor Bullock’s designation of nearly five million acres of federal forest lands that are in urgent need of restoration due to insect and disease infestation. AFRC intervened on behalf of the Montana Logging Association, Meagher

County, and Montana Wood Products Association, and [argued](#) the appeal in the Ninth Circuit. The State of Montana filed a supporting *amicus* brief in the District Court.

The Ninth Circuit agreed with the District Court that Gov. Bullock’s designation of five million acres does not require additional analysis under NEPA because the designation doesn’t adversely affect the environment. The Ninth Circuit also agreed the Forest Service used the best scientific information in designing the project, and that treatments would maximize the retention of old growth and/or large trees, as required under the Farm Bill CE.

To date, the Ninth Circuit has approved *every* Farm Bill CE project that it has reviewed (knock on your nearest wood product). Why is that? A number of potential answers. *First*, there is a growing recognition of the need to conduct active forest management. As Montana Senator Daines says, either we manage our forests, or they manage us. *Second*, the Farm Bill CE has clear guidelines for the Forest Service to follow in developing a project. *Third*, using a CE allows the agency to focus on more difficult and important issues, leading to better analysis and better decisions – just like the Forest Service is working to do in its changes to NEPA regulations. *Fourth*, Farm Bill projects have been aggressively defended by a wide variety of stakeholders, leading to development of positive precedent.



Farm Bill CE Projects in the Ninth Circuit

PROJECT	FOREST	SIZE	COURT APPROVAL
Sunny South*	Tahoe NF	2,700 ac	June 24, 2019
Moose Creek*	Helena-Lewis & Clark NF	2,200 ac	April 7, 2020
Lostine*	Wallowa-Whitman NF	2,110 ac	January 9, 2020
Smith Shields	Custer-Gallatin NF	1,660 ac	March 20, 2020

(*Direct AFRC Legal Program Involvement)

AFRC appreciates the opportunity to work with our members and partners on these cases. /Lawson Fite

Ninth Circuit Remands the Crystal Clear Restoration Project Back to the Forest Service

On April 3, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued an unfavorable decision on the Crystal Clear Restoration Project a fuels reduction project on the Mt. Hood National Forest. The project abuts two Wildland Urban Interface areas, and would generate approximately 60 million board feet (MMBF)—a significant part of the Mt. Hood’s timber program. The Forest anticipated that six timber sales or stewardship contracts would be needed to implement the project, three of which have been awarded. AFRC intervened on behalf of member High Cascade, who was awarded the Ahoy Stewardship Contract and the Plank Timber Sale. AFRC member Boise Cascade, was later awarded the Bilge Stewardship Contract.

The court determined that the Forest Service was arbitrary and capricious under the National Environmental Policy Act and elected not to reach plaintiff’s additional claims under the National Forest Management Act. The court held that the Forest Service’s decision not to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was arbitrary and capricious for two reasons. First, the court determined that the agency’s use of variable density thinning for the purpose of reducing large-scale fire risk was “highly

controversial and uncertain.” Plaintiff provided expert opinion that any fuels treatment work would have a modest effect on fire behavior and the removal of mature trees would have a negative effect on fire suppression efforts. The Ninth Circuit found that the agency did not consider this contrary scientific evidence in the EA and, therefore, that failure weighs against a finding that the agency met its NEPA “hard look” requirement.

Second, the court determined the Forest Service failed to identify and meaningfully analyze the cumulative impacts of the project. The court also concluded the Forest Service’s geographic scope for evaluating cumulative impacts—a 1.2-mile buffer around the project area to include any owl territories—was too small. In the court’s view, such “a small buffer zone fails to distinguish the EA’s cumulative impact analysis from an analysis of the direct effects of the Project.” The Ninth Circuit ultimately remanded the case back to U.S. District Court Judge Mosman with instructions to remand the project back to the Forest Service to prepare an EIS.

The Ninth Circuit’s decision is unpublished, meaning it does not have any precedential value. Plaintiff has requested that the court publish the decision, but the Ninth Circuit has not yet ruled on the request. Even though the decision is not precedential, it is problematic with respect to its analysis of the agency’s use of variable density thinning to reduce fuels risk. This is a typical method used by the agency for fire reduction efforts, and the court’s decision fails to afford the agency the appropriate amount of deference with respect to matters that are within the agency’s technical expertise. In addition, the court’s remedy, requiring that the agency prepare an EIS, conflicts with current Ninth Circuit precedent. For those reasons, this case may be a good candidate for a petition for rehearing, which need to be filed by May 18.
/Sara Ghafouri

AFRC Welcomes New Forest Supervisors

Three Forests in Region 6 have recently announced the hiring of new Forest Supervisors. The Willamette, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie (MBS), and Olympic National Forests have welcomed new leaders Dave Warnack, Jody Weil, and Kelly Lawrence respectively. You can find the Region’s official [announcement here](#). Each Forest presents its own set of opportunities for these new leaders.

The Willamette has grown into a regional leader in active forest management over the past several years. Fiscal Year 2019 saw the Forest hit a milestone by selling 100 MMBF of timber. The Forest has also become a leader in practicing timber management based on the principles of sustained yield by developing a management paradigm consisting of a balance between intermediate thinning and regeneration harvest. AFRC looks forward to working with Dave Warnack to keep the Forest on this positive track.

The MBS has seen some recent challenges and successes in their timber program. The successful sale of two Good Neighbor Authority projects is evidence that the Forest is looking to use various tools in the toolbox to achieve its goals and targets. A successful timber program can assist the Forest in reaching its multiple use goals. AFRC and its members welcome Jody Weil to the MBS and look forward to working with her and her team.

Despite a setback last fiscal year in meeting volume targets, the Olympic has been making positive steps forward in reaching its goals. With a Fiscal Year 2020 target of 54.2 MMBF, the Forest stands poised to set records in its performance under the Northwest Forest Plan. AFRC and its partners have worked with Kelley Lawrence, in her role on the Naches Ranger District of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

We look forward to continuing that positive working relationship in her new role as the Forest Supervisor of the Olympic National Forest. /*Andy Geissler and Matt Comisky*

Fighting Fire During a Pandemic



It may come as no surprise that Southwest Oregon is unusually dry. The Oregon Department of Forestry's Southwest District has declared fire season on May 1, which is the first time fire season has been declared this early since the 1960s. The fuels are dry, minimal rain is falling, and snow is rapidly melting. A 15-acre fire near Rogue River, OR started the week of April 19. Prescribed burns from earlier in the year have begun rekindling and with stay at home orders in place, increased yard work has led to increased backyard burning.

The top two priorities for the Forest Service during this pandemic have been first, human safety and second, fire preparedness. Because COVID-19 is a respiratory virus, when the pandemic started federal agencies chose to stop prescribed fire programs across the nation to eliminate particulates in the air that could affect the health and safety of nearby communities. Recreation sites and trail heads have been closed, but people have been flocking to our public lands to seek solace and relaxation. Every pull out, turn around, and dispersed camping site seems to be occupied. There is a concern about escaped campfires now and as our public lands start to open, the concern will likely get more severe.

The Forest Service is working to fill all of its fire staffing positions so they are prepared for whatever the fire season brings. In order to abide by social distancing guidelines and work around self-quarantining, virtual on-boarding and welcomes have been taking place. The Forest Service and other agencies have allowed all employees who were previously fire-certified in 2019 to be automatically recertified for the 2020 fire season. The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest plans to go "all in" on initial attack following the [Chief's letter of intent for wildfire-2020](#). Continuing aggressive firefighting efforts with an eye on rapid containment to minimize smoke exposure to firefighters and communities and to keep fires small with local management is the national direction. Large project fires with fire camps of almost 5,000 people are not uncommon in the Rogue Valley due to their moist growing season in the winter, severe drought in the summer, and the usual lightning storm.

The Rogue River-Siskiyou intends to do all they can to mitigate these risks. Mother nature does not always cooperate and having many fire starts at once will strain the local fire staff and certified firefighters on the Forest. Getting severity resources and preparing for lightning storms will be crucial for successful firefighting efforts in the coming season with additional necessity due to COVID-19. A long fire season is likely this year, with fuel moistures and precipitation already lower than average.

AFRC will continue engaging with the Forest Service and other public land managers to encourage the continued use of mechanical fuels reduction in order to continue necessary wildfire mitigation work in the woods. Hazardous fuels treatments, both commercial and non-commercial, are our only mechanism to mitigate fires without the use of prescribed fire. A healthy timber program and collaboration with partners is needed to continue this necessary work.

Although fire season has begun during a pandemic with social distancing guidelines, public land managers intend to be aggressive with initial attacks to limit the number of large project fires and staff exposure to COVID-19 in fire camps. We may be living in uncertain times, but we cannot afford to go into fire season blind. Over-communicating will be key for federal agencies to keep its local communities apprised of planning efforts and fire preparedness. /Amanda Astor

AFRC Comments on Nez-Clear Plan Revision

The comment period for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest's Draft Revised Forest Plan (Draft Plan) and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) closed on April 20, ending formal public input. The Forest began the Revision process in 2012, and the initial scoping period ended in June 2014 with the Forest receiving 13,800 comments. These comments were used to prepare the Alternatives in the Draft Plan.



AFRC, Heathy Forests Healthy Communities, member companies, and many interested partners submitted hundreds of comments stressing the importance of the Nez-Clear Forest to the local economy, forest products industry, and forest users that depend on the 4.1 million acre Forest.

AFRC's comments highlighted the need for more management on the Forest citing that between 1987 and 2017, approximately 53 percent of the Forest burned in wildfire, of which about 2.6 million acres burned in areas deemed suitable for timber production in the previous Forest Plan. The previous plan called for an annual timber harvest of 375 MMBF and the annual volume offered has averaged only 46 MMBF from 1997 through 2018. With the lack of management over the past 21 years, the Natural Range of Variation (HRV) analysis indicated a significant departure for species composition, forest structure and function compared to existing conditions.

Grand fir now dominates the majority of the forested area, and early seral species are reduced from historic ranges and continue to decline. Grand fir, lodgepole, Engelmann spruce have all increased in composition. Ponderosa pine, western larch, western white pine and whitebark pine have all decreased in composition.

Four action alternatives were developed based on internal and external input, including collaboration on alternative development. The No Action Alternative is the existing 1987 Forest Plan that the Forest is currently operating under. All alternatives analyzed in the Draft EIS met a minimum bar of being ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable per the applicable planning rule.

The first chart below shows timber volumes that would be generated per year and the time it would take to reach the desired stand conditions across the Forest. The second chart shows recommended wilderness and suitable wild and scenic rivers available for designation.

Alternatives for managing forest ecosystem

	Alternative W	Alternative X	Alternative Y	Alternative Z
Timber Volume (million board feet annually)	220-241	241-261	120-140	60-80
Acres Treated Annually	13,760	15,120	8,030	5,070
Years to meet Desired Conditions	30	20	50	100

	N/A	Alt. W	Alt. X	Alt. Y	Alt. Z
2(b) Recommended Wilderness	197,693	856,932	0	309,332	569,755
2(c) Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers	155,477	79,464	0	110,252	166,176

We encourage you to read AFRC’s [comments here](#). We believe a new modified alternative needs to be implemented that combines some of the better parts of Alternatives W, X, and Y. While we believe Alternative Y may meet some of the best balance for the Plan, under this strategy it takes too long to get to HRV and does not meet the future needs of the forest products industry in the coming years. Even under the best circumstances Alternative Y would take 50 years to achieve desired conditions, harvests will be capped at 140 MMBF and stand conditions forest-wide will continue to deteriorate. The final Alternative should provide the Forest and the forest products industry time to ramp up beyond the 140 MMBF level to more quickly attain the desired conditions for the Forest.

The release of the FEIS, Draft Record of Decision and Plan is scheduled for this Fall, to be followed by a 90-day objection period and a 90-day Resolution period. The Forest hopes to begin implementation of the Plan by late 2021. /Tom Partin

Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership Celebrates 10 Years

The Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership (IFRP) demonstrated its resilience by sponsoring the annual workshop on Shared Stewardship via Zoom. In its tenth year, the group continues to provide relevant information and affirmative messages from leaders in Idaho such as Gov. Brad Little, Region 1 Regional Forester Leanne Martin and Region 4 Regional Forester Nora Rasure.

The IFRP was formed to help strengthen collaborative forest restoration efforts across Idaho. Partners agreed to support a common vision: connect, inform, and support collaborative groups working to restore the resilience of Idaho forests. The partnership consists of a coalition of organizations and individuals, with the Society of American Foresters Snake River Chapter serving as fiscal agent. AFRC was recognized for our legal program and our work with the Caribou Forest Initiative.

Idaho Gov. Little, in his fourth year participating with the IFRP annual workshop, gave this year’s keynote address. Governor Little emphasized his commitment to Shared Stewardship and emphasized that working across broad landscapes and diverse land ownerships is more important than ever. COVID-

19 with its associated respiratory issues underscores the urgent need to reduce the amount of wildfire smoke.

The Idaho Shared Stewardship Agreement was signed by Gov. Little, USDA Undersecretary Jim Hubbard, the Regional Foresters and Idaho Department of Lands Director in December 2018. The Shared Stewardship agreement will use a collaborative approach to reduce hazardous fuels and improve forest and rangeland conditions.

The two priority landscapes were selected by evaluating best available science, the Idaho State Forest Action Plan and regional assessments, fire modeling information and forest health and development data. The evaluation included the capacity of the Forest Service, Idaho Department of lands, forest industry, counties, willing landowners and collaboratives. A priority landscape in the Idaho Panhandle and one in the southwestern portion of the state were selected. Work and implementation are already occurring on both priority areas.

Idaho remains a national leader in utilizing new tools and authorities and implementing work on the ground. This year's IFRP [can be accessed here](#). */Irene Jerome*

Washington State DNR Update

It has only been a month since our last update on the DNR trust lands program and the associated timber sales, but in some ways, it feels more like many months have passed. As we reported last month the Department has transitioned to remotely attended timber sale auctions. The March auctions were completed mostly without any issues beyond an unforeseen delay in the Northwest Region auction, which was completed the following week. We have received generally positive reviews from the purchasing community about the new auction process.

In March, DNR offered for auction 15 new sales and despite a shifting market, was able to sell 10 of those sales, for a total sold volume of 44,127 MBF. As of the March auction, DNR has sold 85 of 96 offered sales for a sold volume of 371,747 MBF. This has resulted in generating a gross sale of \$116,706,480.36, which will benefit a variety of beneficiaries, including counties, schools, fire districts, and libraries.

As DNR enters the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20), they report a target of 186 MMBF of remaining volume for the year. The target is made up of 143 MMBF of FY20 "new" offerings, 15 MMBF of FY20 no-bid reoffers, and 28 MMBF of FY19 arrearage. DNR plans to offer a total of 68,370 MBF in the April auctions, which were held this week. The Northeast and South Puget Regions held their auctions via Skype which were well attended with active bidders. The South Puget Region sold both of their timber sales and the Northeast Region sold several sorts along with both of their regular sales. The Olympic, Northwest, and Pacific Cascade Regions also have sales to be auctioned.

AFRC staff have been in contact with DNR leadership and staff regarding the current COVID-19 economic situation that is impacting lumber markets. The key areas we have expressed to DNR is the need for consistency in their review of timber sale contracts, within the trust obligations and laws governing those contracts when purchasers are exploring the options of extending timber sale contracts. Additionally, we expressed the desire for DNR to continue bringing volume to auction during this time. We are anticipating a letter from DNR to be sent to the purchasing community shortly on these issues.

Three timber sale Forest Practice Applications (FPA) have been appealed to the Pollution Control Hearing Board (PCHB). One has since been withdrawn, as the issues raised were not subject to the Forest

Practices Act and its approval process. The other two sales, City Skidder and Middle May, are still under appeal to the PCHB. City Skidder was approved by the Board of Natural Resources at the April Board meeting and is scheduled for auction in May. The appeal by Reed Blanchard, P.E., asked for a 90-day delay in the approval of the FPA, so he could further review the application regarding slope issues. However, the request was made after the FPA had been approved and was changed to a temporary suspension in timber harvest. That request has since been denied by the PCHB and a hearing on the appeal is scheduled for mid-July.

The other sale under appeal is the Middle May timber sale in Snohomish County, near Gold Bar. We mentioned this sale in our March newsletter and have written about its predecessor, Singletary in previous newsletters as well. Middle May is a replacement, “compromise” sale for Singletary, which was litigated by Peter Goldman with the Washington Forest Law Center (WFLC). DNR has undergone a series of stakeholder meetings in the development of Middle May. The sale, which could produce over \$300,000 for the Sultan School District, was to come to the Board of Natural Resources in the coming months for approval for auction. WFLC is representing North Cascades Conservation Coalition, David Gladstone, and Mike Towne in the appeal. The appellants raise concerns with Northern Spotted Owl habitat management, recreation concerns, and alluvial fan concerns. It appears that all aspects of the Middle May sale comply with the Forest Practices Act, the State Lands HCP, and other DNR and BNR policies. A hearing is currently scheduled for September.

The next Board of Natural Resources meeting will be held via webinar on May 5. The meeting will see the usual timber sale presentations and approval process, as well as, three proposed land transactions. Details on the meeting can be found [here](#). The land transactions are located in Clallam, Jefferson, Snohomish, and Chelan counties.

Finally, the DNR Federal Lands program, where the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) group is housed, reports continued progress on various GNA projects, including a small sale (Queets Corner) on the Olympic Peninsula, to be auctioned on May 27. Additionally, DNR staff are working on updating the State’s Forest Action Plan, a requirement to be eligible for federal funding through the State and Private Forestry section of the Forest Service. Coupled with this update is an effort to include western Washington in the 20-year Forest Health Strategic Plan that was completed about three years ago for eastern Washington. Stay tuned. */Matt Comisky*

Honoring Mike Fahey (1943-2020)



On April 7, Mike Fahey, CEO of Columbia Helicopters from 1999 to 2014, passed away after a short but courageous battle with cancer at the age of 76. Mike worked at Columbia Helicopters for 40 years. As a long-time member of AFRC’s Board of Directors, Mike was a strong advocate for the forest products industry. Fellow board members and AFRC staff fondly recall several memorable trips to Washington D.C. with Mike. He was also passionate about his faith and family. AFRC extends its sincere condolences to his wife Penny, three children and nine grandchildren.