

Agenda Item No:	5
Title and # of Issue:	Dynamic Forest Ecosystems - Issue #5
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SUMMARY

Oregon Department of Forestry staff recommends that the Board of Forestry modify its Dynamic Forest Ecosystems Work Plan. While the goal of the Work Plan remains unchanged, the three proposed new objectives and their products will better link this Work Plan to products resulting from the *Forestry Program for Oregon* Implementation Work Plan and other processes. The revised Work Plan also provides a clearer pathway for incorporating scientific information on dynamic forest ecosystems into future forest policies and programs.

CONTEXT

In September 2005, the Board approved the Dynamic Forest Ecosystems Work Plan. The Work Plan's goal is:

"To promote the science, information acquisition, and analysis systems that are essential for developing sound natural resource policies that sustain and enhance the health of Oregon's forest ecosystems, watersheds, and airsheds within a context of natural disturbance and active management."

In 2006, Department of Forestry staff, in consultation with ecological scientists, attempted to implement the September 2005 Work Plan and found the objectives and desired products to be somewhat vague and difficult to initiate (Attachment 1). At the same time, other technical and policy processes began emerging that have the potential to address the same general topic. Chief among these is the Interagency Mapping and Analysis Project (IMAP).

IMAP will produce consistent, coarse-scale vegetation mapping across Oregon and Washington landscapes. Through modeling processes, estimates of the historic vegetation and projected future vegetation will be available for planning purposes. Disturbance scenarios (e.g., climate change, wildfire, insect and disease risk) and treatment scenarios (e.g., accelerated fuels treatments in dry provinces) will be used to improve understanding of the effects of alternative management strategies on ecosystem dynamics. The intent is for IMAP and the Forest Assessment Project to provide a scientific foundation, documentation, landscape analysis, and probabilities for a likely range of future forest ecosystem dynamics, and the implications for

economic and social dynamics as they interact with a changing forest. The Board of Forestry Chair currently serves on the IMAP Policy Oversight Group representing Oregon State University.

Staff also identified opportunities to link the Dynamic Ecosystem Work Plan products to the planned 2010 Oregon Forest Assessment and the 2011 *Forestry Program for Oregon* revision process called for by *Forestry Program for Oregon* Implementation Work Plan Objective 4. As a result, Department staff has developed a revised Work Plan that clarifies the objectives and products and takes full advantage of these other processes and opportunities. The proposed revised objectives are:

OBJECTIVE 1: Promote dialogue and greater understanding among scientists, decision makers, and stakeholders about dynamic forest ecosystem processes and their interaction with forest policies.

OBJECTIVE 2: Synthesize existing analytical tools, monitoring data, and research information to begin quantifying short-term and long-term ecosystem risks and opportunities from potential future forest management and policy choices.

OBJECTIVE 3: Integrate adaptive management processes and evaluate and modify existing Board policies and Department of Forestry programs to accurately integrate the scientific understanding of forest ecosystem dynamics into forest management and protection strategies.

BACKGROUND

There has been considerable progress and growing consensus in the scientific community in understanding multi-scale dynamic ecosystem concepts. But scientific understanding of dynamic ecosystems often appears to collide with a range of strongly held values, public perceptions, and long-standing natural resource policy frameworks based on notions of controllable ecosystems responding in fully predictable ways. A 2003 Department of Forestry White Paper titled *Forest Practices Protection on Forestlands in the Context of Dynamic Ecosystems* was drafted as a result of direction from the Board of Forestry following discussions on how to better provide resource protection under the Oregon Forest Practices Act.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Oregon Department of Forestry staff recommends that the Board of Forestry adopt a revised Dynamic Forest Ecosystems Work Plan (Attachment 2).

NEXT STEPS

Following Board endorsement, Department of Forestry staff will immediately begin work on all three revised Work Plan objectives. Key products from the revised Work Plan will include:

- Up to six case study papers, each evaluating how a particular existing natural resource law or set of laws, policies, or regulations that were designed to address a set of forest ecosystem

elements has, or has not, incorporated an adequate understanding of ecosystem functions and dynamics.

- A one-day public symposium on multi-scale forest ecosystem dynamics hosted by the Board of Forestry, with a follow-up report.
- Oregon Forest Assessment Project and Interagency Mapping and Analysis Project research results, and management tools by which to quantify short-term and long-term ecosystem risks from potential future forest management and policy choices, including no action choices.
- A one-day public symposium on Oregon forest conditions and trends, organized around the 2003 *Forestry Program for Oregon* strategies and the Oregon Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management.
- The 2011 *Forestry Program for Oregon* used as the mechanism to develop and promote Board of Forestry policies that incorporate the use of indicators of sustainable forest management, and adaptive management concepts that will lead to environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable outcomes given current scientific understanding of multi-scale forest ecosystem dynamics.
- Based on the 2011 *Forestry Program for Oregon*, the Board may perform a comprehensive reevaluation of existing forest protection and management frameworks to identify needed modifications in specific policies and programs to be more consistent with current scientific understanding of forest ecosystem dynamics.

The Board will be kept informed, through consent agenda items, on the status of the case study paper development and the subsequent public symposium on dynamic forest ecosystems called for by Work Plan Objective 1.

GUIDE TO ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

Attachment 1: Summary of Objectives and Board Products in the Dynamic Forest Ecosystems Work Plan Approved September 7, 2005.

Attachment 2: March 16, 2007 Draft Dynamic Forest Ecosystems Work Plan Revision.