

**2.03.09 Meeting Summary  
Conference Room 250, 724 Columbia Street NW, Olympia**

**FOREST PRACTICES BOARD POLICY WORKING GROUP  
WASHINGTON STATE NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL**

Members Present

Ken Berg	USFWS
Shawn Cantrell	Seattle Audubon
Nina Carter	Audubon WA
Mark Doumit	WFPA
Kevin Godbout	Weyerhaeuser
Chris Lipton	Longview Timber
Robert Meier	Rayonier
Bridget Moran	WDFW, FPB
Vic Musselman	WFFA
Tom Robinson	WSAC
Paula Swedeen	Seattle Audubon
Chuck Turley	DNR

Absent

Don Halabisky	Sierra Club
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Also Present

Lois Schwennesen	Facilitator
Martha Wehling	Attorney General's Office
Cindy Mitchell	WFPA
Carolyn Dobbs	Evergreen College

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This is a summary of the third meeting of the Forest Practice Board's Policy Working Group (PWG). The Group reviewed letters developed by a subgroup (Doumit, Carter, Taylor) to the WA State Legislators regarding HB 1484 and SB 5401, which create a habitat open space program to facilitate strategic acquisitions of northern spotted owl and other endangered species habitat located on private lands. Ten representatives of the Group signed the letter to support the tools in the legislation which can help meet the goals of the Group. A second letter signed by eight members of the Group requested funds and support from State and Federal sources to obtain current information on northern spotted owls and barred owls and their habitat.

Staff transitions reduced the number of State representatives in the Group from three to two. After discussion, the Group agreed that two representatives could function just as well, given their experience, collective approach, use of consensus, and the opportunity for dissenting opinions to be recorded as defined in the Charter. Three seats remain vacant, two tribal and one land trust. The Group will try to fill them, and agreed it would be possible to integrate these constituencies into key points of the process instead of requiring full participation.

Group members noted that the best owl habitat on the east side is getting progressively worse and not because of harvest. Other east side habitat conservation issues include slower growing habitat, forest health and thinning, fire, and disease. Financial factors affecting owners' flexibility are market difficulties, lack of manufacturing and processing capacity. Other limitations are regulatory, as private sector forest managers are dealing with overlapping Spotted Owl Special Emphasis Areas (SOSEAs) and regulatory requirements for an LOP, LLP or HCP.

Potential opportunities for incentives and regulatory assistance were raised, such as safe harbor LLPs tailored to the east side, streamlined implementation, and sharing EIS costs. The Group will work to identify the best options and was urged by participants to take bold action. It may involve getting funding assistance to private land management, making regulatory corrections, and putting together multiple pieces to make it work.

The Federal Recovery Plan has a more flexible strategy on the east side. Unknowns about implementation concerned the conservation caucus. Uncertainties could be reduced by shaping an east side approach from the bottom up with landowners and land managers. Many voiced support for the Recovery Plan's shift in thinking from a set, static reserve that degrades over time, to a "shifting mosaic" concentrating on where the best existing and potential habitat is. Representatives from the conservation caucus acknowledged hesitancy and cynicism about how a Federal shifting mosaic would look, but voiced interest in making one work. The concern is about a shifting mosaic of harvest, not wanting to move harvest around so enough habitat never gets the time for growth and development. An alternate vision is a shifting mosaic of habitat to allow for evolution and rotation through different habitat uses. Group members noted the last eight years did not build trust. The path out of gridlock may be to take small steps and achieve specific deliverables to build working relationships, unravel distrust, and demonstrate that goals on the ground can be met.

"With massive amounts of public lands, will anything make a difference on private lands?" The Group will consider a potential pilot project to test promising approaches on the eastside. A subgroup (Lipton, Swedeen, and Moran) will return to the Group with a draft design of an on-the-ground test case for discussion. Coordination with the Forest Service will assist in finding sites with both habitat value and adjoining federal ownership.

An east side tour by the Group will be considered for the June 29-30 meeting, and an effort will be made to coordinate this with the Yakama nation. An update from Federal scientists about the state of the northern spotted owl on the east side will be scheduled as soon as possible.

A letter to the congressional delegation about the alternative energy bill will be drafted for Group consideration. It will address forests and biomass energy linked to thinning and the availability of Federal rural loan guarantees locally.

Ground rules proposed by the Forest Practices Board were reviewed and approved by the Group, and other working protocols were discussed, such as the use of consensus. The Group confirmed that if consensus recommendations are not obtainable, other alternative recommendations (with advantages and disadvantages noted per the Charter) can be forwarded. As its meetings are subject to the open meetings rules, the Group requested a presentation at the next meeting from the Attorney General's Office on what this practically means in regards to communications, emails, and personal notes.

The Group agreed to organize briefings and discuss in more detail at the next meeting: 1) owl presence and demographic trends, 2) specific east side and west side issues, 3) regulatory program implementation, and 4) incentives.

### **Meeting Adjourned**