

4.10.09 Meeting Summary
724 Columbia Street NW, Room 250, Olympia, WA

FOREST PRACTICES BOARD POLICY WORKING GROUP
WASHINGTON STATE NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL

Members Present

Ken Berg	USFWS
Shawn Cantrell	Seattle Audubon
Mark Doumit	WFPA
Kevin Godbout	Weyerhaeuser
Don Halabisky	Sierra Club
Robert Meier	Rayonier
Vic Musselman	WFFA
Miguel Perez-Gibson	Audubon
Tom Robinson	WSAC
Paula Swedeen	Seattle Audubon
Chuck Turley	DNR
Chris Lipton (via phone)	Longview Timber

Absent

Bridget Moran	DFW
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Also Present

Lois Schwennesen	Facilitator
Peter Goldman	WFLC
John Ehrenreich	WFPA
Jeff Kozma	Yakima Nation
Cindy Mitchell	WFPA
Martha Wehling	AGO
Kara Whittaker	WFLC
Tim McBride	WFPA/Hancock
Carolyn Dobbs	Board Member
Jennifer Cook	Schwennesen & Assoc.

Member Updates and Old Business

Bridget Moran is the new Deputy Supervisor of Aquatics and Agency Resources with DNR and no longer available. Chuck Turley noted that DFW plans to replace her in a timely manner.

The meeting summary from the March 24 meeting was approved as amended.

Federal Recovery Plan Litigation Update

Ken Berg stated that the USFWS has informed the judge in this case that the service no longer intends to defend the Plans as they stand, and has asked to withdraw them for further review from the scientific community and the general public. Their belief is that while the framework of the Plans is sound, there are outstanding issues that need to be addressed. Ken estimated that this process will take six to nine months and will not involve a complete overhaul with new teams. The judge is considering this new development and the parties involved have thirty days to come to an agreement. Shawn Cantrell acknowledged that the conservationists are pleased with the intent to increase the level of scientific input into the Plans.

Owl Presence, Needs, and Trends

Eric Forsman (US Forest Service PNW Research Station) gave a presentation laying out the declining demographics of the northern spotted owl, including detailed information about nesting habits, feeding habits, lifestyles, and reproductive rates. Specifically, the northern spotted owl has a much more limiting diet, whereas the barred owl can sustain itself with a much broader range of prey. He also pointed out that the declining population of the northern spotted owl is increasingly a WA State specific issue, and that Oregon and California are not facing the same severity of decline. Hard copies of his presentation were made available.

Barred Owl Management Options

Kent Livezey (USFWS, WA Fish and Wildlife) gave a presentation on the effect of the escalating barred owl population on the northern spotted owl, the possible strategies to mediate those impacts, and the possible collateral consequences of those actions. His belief is that there is sufficient data available to be able to responsibly make the necessary decisions about possible

barred owl population management, and that at least some management will be critical to reach the goal of preserving northern spotted owl populations in WA. Hard copies of his presentation were also made available.

Discussion of the Presentations

During the discussions after the presentations both the conservation and the government caucuses indicated that while there was some internal dissent, overall the presiding opinion was that barred owl population management was an option that remained on the table. The primary roadblock for both caucuses was concern about having sufficient evidence of effectiveness to justify such actions in the face of likely public concerns and reluctance. Both Kent Livezey and Eric Forsman agreed that the existing data, while compelling to the scientific community, may not be sufficient as yet to be used to defend policy decisions, and that doing limited experimentation in specific areas to gain more data might be appropriate. They also acknowledged that many scientists were more optimistic about the possible benefits of barred owl population management than they were.

During the discussion, both experts were clear that the barred owl was a significant factor in the declining northern spotted owl population, but it was by no means the only one. Habitat protection, enhancement, and ideally expansion would also be key to slow, halt, or reverse the decline. Eric Forsman pointed out that decertifying sites would be a recipe for extinction.

Design Team Reports

Kevin Godbout spoke for the west side design team. He noted that while the team hadn't been able to meet formally yet, the SW Telemetry project and Port Blakeley were in a position to offer valuable input, and that the key attribute was the willingness of the landowner to participate. Chris Lipton said that they were looking at a site in the Blewett Spotted Owl Special Emphasis Area (SOSEA), but that the appetite within Longview Timber was declining due to economic factors. Neither design team had significant new input to share with the Group, so this topic was tabled.

Statewide Screening Tool

Lois Schwennesen summarized the concept of a screening and ranking tool presented at the last meeting, and the concern of the forest products caucus that a statewide screening tool likely would lead to further regulation on identified sites that could have a significant negative impact on the timber industry. Chris Lipton reiterated that for the industry, decertification of unused sites and/or deregulation of some existing sites were the most valuable incentives discussed to date. The conservation caucus clarified that the proposed screening tool was necessary to identify the areas that had the greatest potential for habitat/population enhancement, that it was not the intent or the inevitable result of the tool to add to the number or acreage of sites under regulation or other encumbrances, and that in order to responsibly reach a conclusion that current sites could be decertified there would need to be a much broader and more rigorous scientific process than fell within the intent of the statewide screening tool.

Vic Musselman brought to the table the possibility of the Group facilitating the incentivizing of prior or current compliance to existing rules. The government caucus and the conservation caucus disagreed that this was in line with the intent of the Charter. The discussion then made it clear that different caucuses were interpreting the Charter in slightly different ways. It was suggested that each member reread the Charter, so that a less formal discussion of interpretations could happen during the evening session of the April 28 meeting.

Meeting Adjourned