WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

PR 14-004-200

Protecting Oak Woodlands

Date: May 2000

Application: All west-side forested ecosystems covered by the Habitat Conservation Plan, including the Olympic Experimental State Forest Planning Unit.

DISCUSSION

This procedure describes the management strategies for activities that are next to or around an oak woodland ecosystem. Oak woodlands are an important habitat, rarely found in western Washington that provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife species including Lewis' woodpecker and the western gray squirrel. The main objectives for protecting oak woodlands include maintaining and restoring, where possible, the quality and distribution of oak habitat. Currently, there are approximately 500 acres of known oak woodland in the five west-side planning units combined; the department will take measures to protect them.

The protection strategy for oak woodlands will incorporate using partial harvest techniques that retain large oaks and canopy cover, removing encroaching conifers, performing prescribed underburns, and avoiding new road construction.

Action

1. Incorporate the following conservation measures into the management activity if oak woodlands occur within the proposed management activity:

    - Retain all very large (greater than 20 inches diameter at breast height) dominant oaks.
    - Maintain 25 percent to 50 percent oak canopy cover.
    - Remove encroaching conifers (except western white pine) within the boundary of a management activity that involves timber harvest.
    - Avoid using herbicides or any silviculutural techniques that would select against oak germination and growth.
    - Retain standing dead and dying oak trees.

- Avoid road construction through oak woodlands, when roads can be routed around oak woodlands in a practicable manner that is consistent with other objectives of a comprehensive landscape-based planning process.

- Perform prescribed under-burns where and when appropriate.

- Alert the Natural Heritage Program to oak stands with particularly good ecological qualities so that those stands may be considered for the trust land transfer program.

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