WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

Northern Spotted Owl Management (Westside)

Cancels: --Westside applications of PR 14-004-120 Management Activities within Spotted Owl Nest Patches, Circles, Designated Nesting, Roosting, and Foraging and Dispersal Management Areas, September 2004
--HCP Implementation Memorandum #1, dated Jan 20, 1998
--Standard Practices Memorandum SPM 03-06 and SPM 03-07

Date: October 2007

Application: All forested state trust HCP lands (westside)

DISCUSSION

DNR's HCP for state trust lands is a multi-species conservation strategy that covers the range of the northern spotted owl (NSO) within the state of Washington and augments the federal Northwest Forest Plan. The intent of the HCP NSO strategy is to create habitat that significantly contributes to the species' demography, distribution, and habitat contiguity. DNR's role in this strategy is to provide nesting, roosting, and foraging (NRF) as well as dispersal habitat in key areas. Active silviculture on forested state trust lands is viewed as the tool to accelerate and enhance development of younger forest stands into structural forest stages suitable as NSO habitat. The Sustainable Harvest Calculation (SHC) of 2004 and the subsequent Settlement Agreement of 2006 *(WEC v Sutherland)* further advanced certain provisions to HCP commitments.

Thus, the purpose of this procedure is to provide comprehensive direction to regions regarding enhancing and sustaining northern spotted owl habitat.

Accordingly, this procedure's scope is to integrate provisions of the Settlement Agreement (PR 14-001-030) with the HCP and other governing documents as they apply to silvicultural prescriptions and related activities. Forest land planning is envisioned to further refine the process.

Action

The direction in this procedure has three parts: (1) a general description of spotted owl landscapes and key terms, (2) restrictions pertaining to NSO "known nest sites," and (3) a brief narrative on NSO management areas and attached corresponding decision trees. The narrative and decision trees together govern management activities in HCP-designated Nesting, Roosting, and Foraging (NRF) and Dispersal Management Areas, the Olympic Experimental State Forest, and Owl Areas.

1. <u>General</u>

a. "NSO Management Areas" are designated in the HCP. They consist solely of DNR-managed lands to be managed for the type of habitat designated.

b. "Spotted Owl Management Unit" (SOMU) is a spatial unit inside a non-OESF NSO management area used to track the required amount of suitable spotted owl habitat. SOMUs replaced the previously used Watershed Analysis Units (WAUs) in order to avoid periodic changes to current WAU boundaries by responsible officials (GIS data source: SHARED_LM.SOMU—current SOMU habitat levels can be ascertained by querying this layer). SOMUs essentially retain the 1997 WAU boundaries with minor changes approved by the federal services. Landscapes in the OESF are pre-designated per the HCP and are included within the SOMU layer.

c. An area classified as "unknown" with an age from stand origin of more than 25 years (GIS data source: SHARED_LM.NSO_HABITAT_MGMT) in NRF and dispersal management areas, the OESF, or Owl Areas, must have an inventory survey according to DNR standard inventory procedures to determine the actual classification of the habitat type prior to any timber harvest. Consult the Data Stewardship section of the Land Management division for assistance and refer to this layer for current habitat delineations.

d. "Known nest site" is a northern spotted owl site center recorded on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's database with a status of 1 or 2. "Known nest sites" will be maintained in the GIS database so that they may be referenced for this purpose.

e. "Owl circle" is a term no longer in use that refers to a circle of a specified radius around a known NSO site center, status 1 through 4.

f. "Nest patch" refers to a designated 500-acres within a NRF Management Area that consists of a 300-acre core (GIS data source: ROPA_OWLNEST_AREA) and a 200-acre buffer (GIS data source: ROPA_OWLNEST_BUFF_AREA).

g. "Owl Areas" refers to specific NSO site centers and forested stands within former owl circles (listed below) that are located **outside** of NRF/Dispersal Management Areas in the Westside planning units and the OESF. These owl circles are (a) designated in HCP Implementation Memorandum No. 1 (January 12, 1998), (b) within Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Status 1-R (reproductive) owl circles, and (c) the four owl circles identified in Standard Practice Memorandum SPM 03-07 (*Management of Northern Spotted Owl Circles And The Identification Of Northern Spotted Owl Habitat In Southwest Washington*). Hard copies of these documents are available upon request from the Ecosystems Services Section.

2. ***Restrictions Pertaining to "Known Nest Sites"***

a. "Known nest sites" **within** NRF and Dispersal Management Areas retain the restriction that timber harvest and road construction activities are prohibited from March 1 through August 31 of each year within .7 miles of "known nest sites." All other provisions originally associated with "owl circles" inside NRF and Dispersal Management Areas are rescinded. **See attached decision tree regarding management activities in NRF and Dispersal Management Areas.**

b. "Known nest sites" **outside** NRF and Dispersal Management Areas retain the restriction that timber harvest and road construction activities are prohibited within the best 70 acres (that may or may not be habitat) around the "known nest site" from March 1 through August 31 of each year. All other provisions originally associated with "owl circles" are rescinded. **See attached decision trees regarding management activities in Owl Areas and the OESF.**

c. The above restrictions are primarily noise disturbance deterrents. Thus, any other activities that may likely disturb a nesting spotted owl pair should be considered within this restriction (e.g. rock crushing, gravel pit development, etc.). Haul traffic and routine road maintenance activities are not included in this activity restriction.

3. ***SOMUs Designated for Nesting, Roosting, and Foraging (NRF) or Dispersal Management***

a. Northern spotted owl nest patches are generally deferred from silvicultural activities and land trade—**see attached NRF decision tree for further specifics**.

b. For SOMUs that have not attained the landscape-level SOMU objective (having at least 50 percent of its designated NRF or dispersal managed area meeting or exceeding stand-level habitat objective—dispersal or sub-mature), regions shall identify:

   i. Stands that meet or exceed the stand/FMU rotational habitat objective (i.e., dispersal or sub-mature for dispersal or NRF SOMUs, respectively)

   ii. "Next best" stands i.e., those stands to be managed into the FMU rotational objective habitat so that the SOMU objective may be met as soon as possible.

c. The sum of acres currently in habitat and "next best" ("target amount" per the HCP i.e., SOMU landscape objective) must equal at least 50 percent of the NRF or dispersal designated lands within the SOMU area. "Next best" stands will be identified according to the following priorities:

   i. Non-habitat forest stands within nest patch core and buffer areas in NRF SOMUs.

   ii. Forest stands that may include high quality nesting habitat, or other older forest conditions, but were not identified through the FRIS habitat querying process or stands that may be lumped within a larger FIU designated as non-habitat.

   iii. Forest stands that are non-habitat, but are considered closest to meeting the specific habitat criteria. Further guidance on this identification can be acquired from the Ecosystems Services Section.

d. After the identification of stands contributing to the target amount of habitat per SOMU, the full range of silvicultural activities may be applied in the remaining stands as long as:

i. The rotational objective for all stands in a SOMU will be to attain suitable spotted owl habitat identified in the landscape objective.

ii. The proposed regeneration harvest schedule (2004-2014) for the SOMU has been reviewed and approved by Land Management Division.

These steps will enable future foresters a maximum of flexibility in timber harvest unit selection.

e. For additional management provisions, see the attached decision trees for designated NRF and Dispersal SOMUs.

For background information regarding management activities relating to northern spotted owls, see final HCP, September 1997 pages IV.1-38 *Minimization and Mitigation for the Northern Spotted Owl in the Five West-side and all East-side Planning Units* and procedure PR 14-001-030, *Settlement Agreement*. Additional consultation on this procedure may be acquired from the Ecosystems Services Section on habitat issues, on silvicultural approaches and techniques from the Silviculture and Regeneration Section, and on forest land planning issues from the Data Stewardship Section.

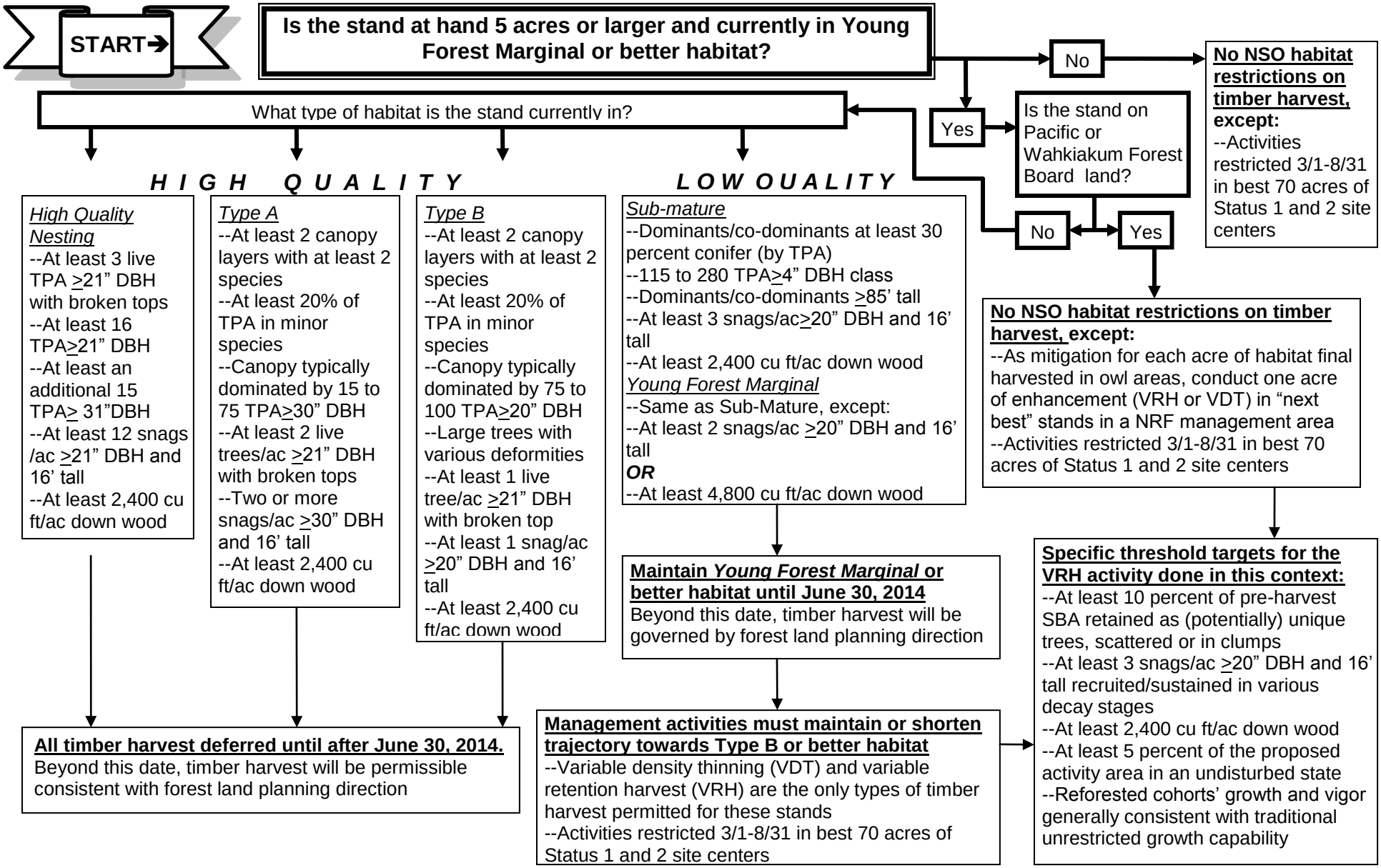
Approved by: signed: Gretchen Nicholas_____ **Date:** Oct 1, 2007__
Gretchen Nicholas
Manager, Land Management Division

SEE ALSO

- PR 14-001-030 The Settlement Agreement
- Management Area decision trees (attached):
  - Owl Areas
  - NRF
  - Dispersal
  - OESF

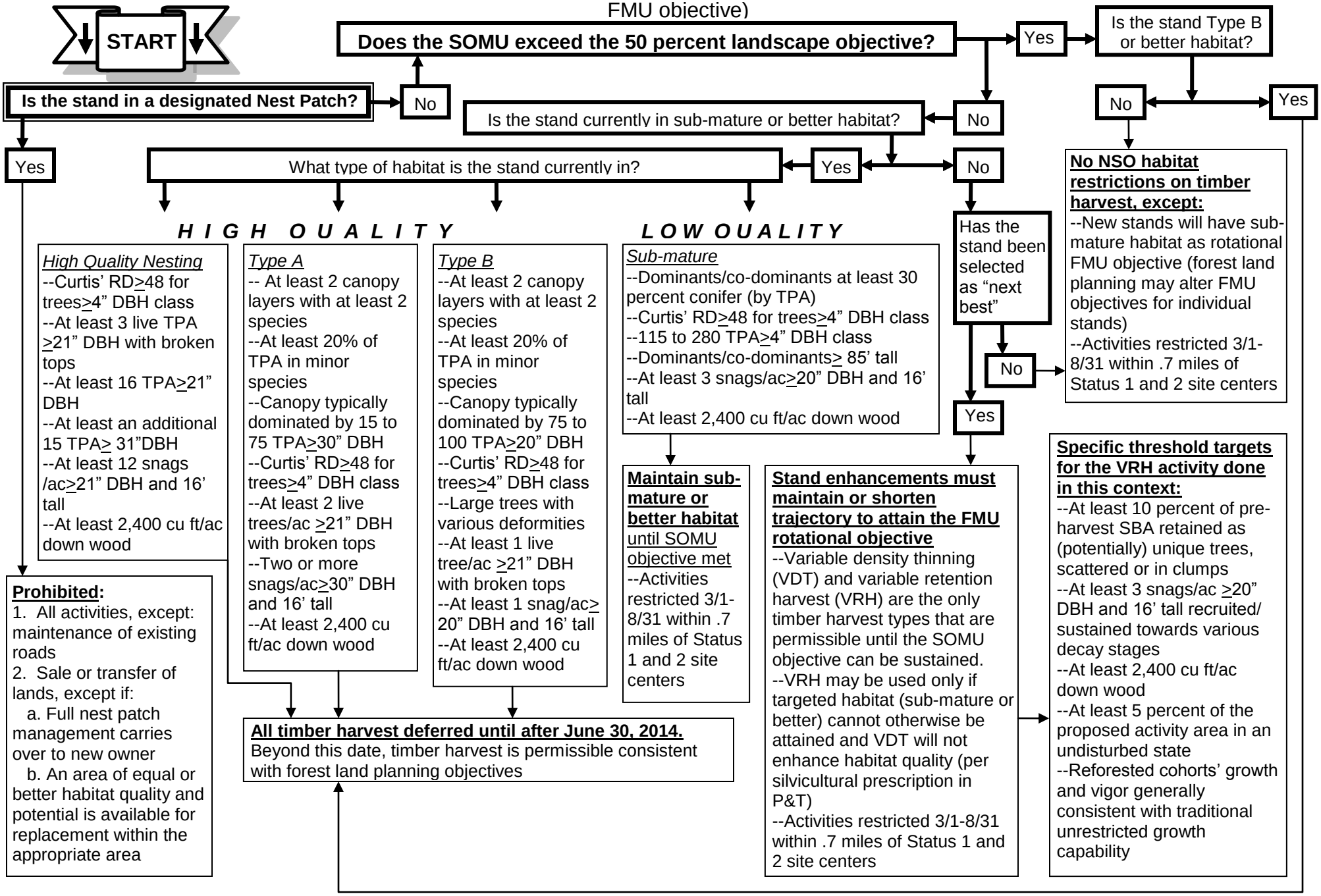
OWL AREAS (as Defined in the Settlement Agreement): HCP + Settlement Agreement

Owl Area Landscape Objective: At least maintain existing habitat quality until June 30, 2014 for areas of 5 or more contiguous acres of Young Forest Marginal or better habitat



SOMUs Associated With NRF Management Areas: HCP + Settlement Agreement

SOMU Landscape Objective: Protect nest patches, and attain and sustain at least 50% of NRF lands in the SOMU in sub-mature or better habitat (prior to attaining the SOMU objective, the habitat that is attainable soonest—sub-mature or better—will be the rotational FMU objective)



SOMUs Associated With Dispersal Management Areas: HCP + Settlement Agreement + Concurrence Letters

SOMU Landscape Objective: Attain, and then sustain, at least 50% of dispersal lands within the SOMU in dispersal or better habitat (prior to attaining the SOMU objective, the habitat that is attainable soonest—dispersal or better—will be rotational FMU objective)

START➔

Does the SOMU exceed the 50 percent landscape objective?

- Yes → Is the stand in Type B or better habitat?
  - No → **No NSO habitat restrictions on timber harvest, except:**
    --New stands will have dispersal habitat as rotational FMU objective (forest land planning may determine FMU habitat objectives for individual stands)
    --Maintain the SOMU at or above the 50 percent objective
    --Activities restricted 3/1-8/31 within .7 miles of Status 1 and 2 site centers
  - Yes → **Stand enhancements must maintain or shorten trajectory to attain FMU rotational objective**
    --Variable density thinning (VDT) and variable retention harvest (VRH) are the only timber harvest types permissible until SOMU objective can be sustained.
    --VRH may be used only if desired habitat cannot otherwise be attained and if VDT will not enhance habitat quality (per silvicultural prescription in P&T).
    --Activities restricted 3/1-8/31 within .7 miles of Status 1 and 2 site centers
    → **Specific threshold targets for the VRH activity done in this context:**
    --At least 10 percent of pre-harvest SBA retained as (potentially) unique trees, scattered or in clumps
    --At least 3 snags/ac ≥20" DBH and 16' tall recruited/sustained towards various decay stages
    --At least 2,400 cu ft/ac down wood
    --At least 5 percent of the proposed activity area in an undisturbed state
    --Reforested cohorts' growth/vigor largely unrestricted
- No → Is the stand at hand currently in dispersal or better habitat?
  - Yes → What type of habitat is the stand currently in?
  - No → Has the stand been selected as "next best"?
    - Yes → **Stand enhancements must maintain or shorten trajectory to attain FMU rotational objective** (as above)
    - No → **No NSO habitat restrictions on timber harvest, except:** (as above)

HIGH QUALITY

High Quality Nesting
--Curtis' RD≥48 for trees≥4" DBH class
--At least 3 live TPA ≥21" DBH with broken tops
--At least 16 TPA≥21" DBH
--At least an additional 15 TPA≥ 31" DBH
--At least 12 snags /ac ≥21" DBH and 16' tall
--At least 2,400 cu ft/ac down wood

Type A
-- At least 2 canopy layers with at least 2 species
--At least 20% of TPA in minor species
--Canopy typically dominated by 15 to 75 TPA ≥30" DBH
--Curtis' RD≥48 for trees≥4" DBH class
--At least 2 live trees/ac ≥21" DBH with broken tops
--Two or more snags/ac ≥30" DBH and 16' tall
--At least 2,400 cu ft/ac down wood

Type B
--At least 2 canopy layers with at least 2 species
--At least 20% of TPA in minor species
--Canopy typically dominated by 75 to 100 TPA ≥20" DBH
--Curtis' RD ≥48 for trees ≥4" DBH class
--Large trees with various deformities
--At least 1 live tree/ac ≥21" DBH with broken top
--At least 1 snag/ac ≥20" DBH and 16' tall
--At least 2,400 cu ft/ac down wood

LOW QUALITY

Sub-mature
--Dominants/ codominants at least 30 percent TPA conifer
--Curtis' RD≥ 48 for trees≥4" DBH class
--115 to 280 TPA≥4" DBH class
--Dominants/ codominants ≥85' tall
--At least 3 snags/ac ≥ 20" DBH and 16' tall
--At least 2,400 cu ft/ac down wood

Dispersal
--Curtis' RD≥48 for trees≥4" DBH class
--QMD ≥11" for largest 100 TPA
--Dominants/ co-dominants≥85' tall
--At least 4 TPA of largest size class retained for future snags

Young Forest Marginal
Same as sub-mature, except:
--At least 2 snags/ac ≥20" DBH and 16' tall ***OR***
--At least 4,800 cu ft/ac down wood

All timber harvest deferred until after June 30, 2014. Beyond this date, timber harvest is permissible consistent with forest land planning strategies

Maintain at least current habitat
--Activities restricted 3/1-8/31 within .7 miles of Status 1 and 2 site centers

Maintain at least current habitat except:
--*with LMD approval,* may allow taking below habitat
--Activities restricted 3/1-8/31 within .7 miles of Status 1 and 2 site centers

Olympic Experimental State Forest: HCP + Settlement Agreement

Landscape Planning Unit Objective: Attain and sustain at least 40 percent of DNR-managed lands in each landscape planning unit in a Structural or Old Forest habitat condition, such that at least 20 percent of each landscape planning unit becomes sustained as Old Forest habitat.

START➔

Forest land planning has been initiated. Has it been implemented?

- **Yes** → Is the stand Field Verified Old Forest, per maps attached to Settlement Agreement?
  - **Yes** → **All timber harvest deferred until after June 30, 2014.** Beyond this date, timber harvest is permissible consistent with attaining and sustaining forest land planning direction objectives
  - **No** → **Silvicultural activities permissible consistent with forest land planning objectives, except:**
    --Activities restricted 3/1-8/31 in best 70 acres of Status 1 and 2 site centers
- **No** → Is the stand currently in young forest marginal or better habitat?
  - **Yes** → What type of habitat is the stand currently in?
    - ***OLD FOREST HABITAT***
      Field Verified Old Forest, per Settlement Agreement maps and typed as:
      - *Type A*
        --At least 2 canopy layers with at least 2 species
        --At least 20% of TPA in minor species
        --Canopy typically dominated by 15 to 75 trees≥30" DBH
        --Curtis' RD≥48 for trees≥4" DBH
        --At least 2 live trees/ac ≥21" DBH with broken tops
        --Two or more snags/ac≥30" DBH and 16' tall
        --At least 2,400 cu ft/ac down wood
        → **All timber harvest deferred until after June 30, 2014.** Beyond this date, timber harvest is permissible consistent with attaining and sustaining forest land planning direction objectives
      - *Type B*
        --At least 2 canopy layers with at least 2 species
        --At least 20% of TPA in minor species
        --Canopy typically dominated by 75 to 100 TPA≥20" DBH
        --Curtis' RD≥48 for trees≥4" DBH
        --Large trees with various deformities
        --At least 1 live tree/ac ≥21" DBH with broken top
        --At least 1 snag/ac ≥ 20" DBH and 16' tall
        --At least 2,400 cu ft/ac down wood
        → **All timber harvest deferred until after June 30, 2014.** Beyond this date, timber harvest is permissible consistent with attaining and sustaining forest land planning direction objectives
    - ***STRUCTURAL HABITAT***
      Sub-mature
      --Dominants/ co-dominants at least 30 percent conifer (by TPA)
      --Curtis' RD≥48 for trees ≥4" DBH
      --115 to 280 TPA ≥ 4" DBH
      --Dominants/codominants ≥85' tall
      --At least 3 snags/ac ≥20" DBH and 16' tall
      --At least 2,400 cu ft/ac down wood

      Young Forest Marginal
      Same as submature, except:
      --At least 2 snags/ac≥20" DBH and 16' tall ***OR***
      --At least 4,800 cu ft/ac down wood

      → **Sustain or improve current habitat AND Retain or shorten trajectory toward Field Verified Old Forest AND**
      --Activities restricted 3/1-8/31 in best 70 acres of Status 1 and 2 site centers
  - **No** → Is the stand age 50 years or more?
    - **Yes** → **Acres final harvested (other than VRH) prior to completion of forest land planning are subject to the following limitations:**

Landscape Planning Unit	Maximum number of acres to be final harvested after June 30, 1997
Sekiu	191
Clallam	2940
Dickey	947
Sol Duc	3139
Reade	245
Goodman	246
Willy	390
Kalaloch	123
Clearwater	0
Coppermine	100
Queets	260

      --VRH is an enhancement in this context and not counted against the above final harvest maximums
      --Acres enhanced through VRH or VDT should at least equal acres final harvested through final harvest systems other than VRH
      --Acreage balances will be tracked in DNR corporate database
    - **No** → **No general NSO habitat restrictions on timber harvest, except:**
      --Silvicultural prescriptions and FMU rotational habitat objectives will be prescribed as Young Forest Marginal or better
      --Activities restricted 3/1-8/31 in best 70 acres of Status 1 and 2 site centers