



## Fact Sheet: What is the Northwest Forest Plan?

The Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP or Plan) is a federal land management plan that was developed by a large team of scientists and adopted by the Clinton Administration in 1994 to resolve intense controversy over logging of old-growth and riparian habitat in the Pacific Northwest within the range of the northern spotted owl. Widely praised for its scientific and ecosystem-based approach toward forest management, the Plan effectively protected most of the region's remaining old-growth forests and riparian habitat from logging and reduced federal timber sales by about 80 percent to more sustainable and legally defensible levels.

The NWFP amended forest management plans for 19 national forests administered by the U.S. Forest Service covering 19.4 million acres in Washington, Oregon, and Northern California, along with 7 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) districts covering 2.7 million acres in Western Oregon and Northern California. Since 1994, the NWFP has remained essentially unchanged with respect to the 19 national forests. However, the Plan has not applied to the 7 BLM districts since 2016, when the BLM separately amended its local forest management plans for those districts.

The NWFP divides the federal lands into several different management categories and provides management direction for each category through a set of Standards and Guidelines. In addition to Congressionally reserved areas and administratively withdrawn lands, the Plan's main management categories are:

- Late Successional Reserves and Managed Late Successional Areas (7.5 million acres) – large blocks of forest land managed to protect and restore late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems.
- Riparian Reserves (2.6 million acres located in Matrix) – wide bands of forest along rivers, streams, and landslide prone areas managed to protect water quality, fish habitat, and aquatic ecosystems.
- Adaptive Management Areas (1.5 million acres) – 10 areas around the region with specific local direction in which more management flexibility is provided to encourage testing of innovative approaches to forest management.
- Matrix (4 million acres) – all remaining federal forest lands, where commercial logging is generally permitted.

The Plan also established a four-part Aquatic Conservation Strategy, consisting of Riparian Reserves (see above), a large network of Key Watersheds, watershed analysis requirements, and watershed restoration. Restoration work was to focus on reducing erosion from old logging

roads and restoring riparian vegetation and in-stream habitat complexity based on a scientific assessment of needs and risks to aquatic function.

The scientists who designed the NWFP sought to provide enough habitat to conserve all species that rely on old-growth forest habitat, as required by law. The Plan gave special attention to the habitat needs of relatively well-known imperiled species such as the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, Chinook and coho salmon, and steelhead. The vast networks of Late Successional Reserves and Riparian Reserves, together with existing wilderness areas and other Congressionally or administratively protected areas, formed the primary basis of the Plan's species conservation strategy.

The Plan also protected hundreds of unique endemic or globally rare species that depend on mature and old-growth habitat for survival -- ranging from salamanders to mosses and lichens -- in order to maintain the key ecological functions that they provide. Due to the risk of irreparable harm to these species, the Plan added "survey and manage" requirements before logging could occur in the Matrix lands.

To ensure well-coordinated and consistent implementation, the Plan established regional administrative teams and sub-regional advisory committees, along with a long-term monitoring program led by scientists in the research branch of the Forest Service. The monitoring program has periodically produced extensive reports evaluating the Plan's effectiveness, including several 20-year monitoring reports in 2015.

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