

EASTSIDE FOREST UPDATE



Working Toward
Science-Based
Forest
Management

Vol. 1, No. 6

DRAFT EISs SCHEDULED FOR SUMMER RELEASE

The Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Management Project, launched in January 1994, is expected to release in the summer of this year Draft Environmental Impact Statements (DEISs) that will provide management direction for the subsequent amendment of 36 national forest plans and 14 BLM district resource management plans in the Interior and Upper Columbia River Basin.

One of the most important elements of the DEISs will be descriptions of management alternatives intended to reach "desired future

conditions" sought by the public, land managers, and scientists on federally managed lands. These alternatives are meant to serve as vehicles to enable resource managers to move from today's forest conditions to those desired by society. The Project has made a concerted effort to develop alternatives based on public suggestions as well as from a Scientific Assessment of conditions in the Interior Columbia River Basin. (See the inside spread for a display of some of the major issues that need to be considered.) The current

schedule calls for the Draft EISs to be submitted to USDA Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas and BLM Director Mike Dombeck in early May. The Drafts will be available for public review in July. Following a 90 day public comment period, a Final EIS is expected to be released later this year. We hope you agree the release of the Draft EISs is an important Project milestone. We encourage you to stay informed, become involved, and voice your opinion.

IDAHO STUDY PREDICTS MORE MILL CLOSURES

Study Underlines Importance of Federal Timber to Local Economies

A recently released study of the effects of changing federal timber policies on rural communities in Northcentral Idaho predicts that declining timber sales from national forests will have severe economic impacts on the area — closing sawmills, eliminating jobs, and threatening local governments with budget deficits. The study was commissioned by the Idaho State Legislature.

The study found that alternative sources of economic growth in the region, such as tourism, would have to quadruple by the year 2,000 to replace the earnings lost from the expected mill closures.

Economic Importance of Timber. Timber has been the economic mainstay of many rural north Idaho communities for decades. National Forest plans released in the late 1980s proposed an increase in sustainable harvest. However, political and judicial decisions have blocked implementation of these plans and significantly reduced the availability of federal

timber. The result has been a drop in the allowable sale quantity of 281 million board feet (MMBF) proposed in forest plans to actual production of only 21 MMBF in 1995. Federal timber availability is projected to drop to less than 3 MMBF by the year 2,000.

Reductions in Timber Sales. These reductions, according to the study, will result in the probable closure of six of the area's nine sawmills, the loss of 2,900 timber and timber-related jobs, and \$87 million in annual earnings losses. County governments and school districts face as much as a 65% reduction in their share of revenues from federal timber sales.

Widespread Pattern in Northwest. The pattern of economic losses forecast for Idaho's rural communities from declining federal timber sales is similar to the pattern which has already occurred in other western states following severe restrictions to the implementation of forest plans. From 1989 to 1994, 222 sawmills closed in Washington, Oregon, Montana and California, resulting in a

loss of 29,000 sawmill and logging jobs.

Protecting the Environment While Providing Commodities. The study also examined the implications for local communities of implementing one of the alternatives contained within the current forest plans. This alternative would allow timber harvesting where it would not conflict with recreational and existing preserve areas of the forest. Although this alternative proposed a timber harvest considerably lower than the adopted forest plan, it would provide for an allowable sale quantity of 216 MMBF, ten times higher than the 21 MMBF produced during 1995. This alternative would provide enough local timber to keep existing mills operating at their 1994 levels, and supply an additional five new mills.

The outcomes projected from this alternative suggest it is possible for federal forests to meet society's needs for commodities while preserving environmental quality.

Idaho State Legislature Funded Study. The study (*A Study of the Effects of Changing*

Continued on page 4

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD: WEIGHING EXPECTATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

The principal challenge facing planners on the Interior and Upper Columbia River Basin EIS teams, as expressed in the Project's own Purpose and Needs Statement, is to develop an ecosystem management strategy that will *"support economic and/or social needs of people, cultures, and communities, and provide sustainable and predictable levels of products and services from lands administered by the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management."*

"Children, adults, families, communities, wildlife and trees should all carry equal weight within the scope of ecosystem management."

— Dr. Richard D. Cole, Superintendent, Colville School District
ID#3049 05/11/95

"The National Forests were created to sustain our natural resources. If actively and properly managed, we can continue to improve the health of our forests as well as providing jobs in timber dependent communities."

— Lee Fledderjohann, Resource Manager, Fremont Sawmill
ID#3162 06/14/95

"We believe you should devote substantial effort to analyzing the impediments to achieving your desired results. The EIS should include alternatives and recommendations for removing these impediments. You may find your EIS will recommend not only changes in policies and procedures, but internal reorganization, restructuring the budget and budget process, and possibly changes in law."

— Governor's Office, State of Oregon ID#3169 06/14/95

"Forest management plans must provide predictable levels of timber harvest so as to even out the wide swings in lumber prices that destabilize the home building industry."

— Spokane Homebuilders Association ID#3052 05/15/95

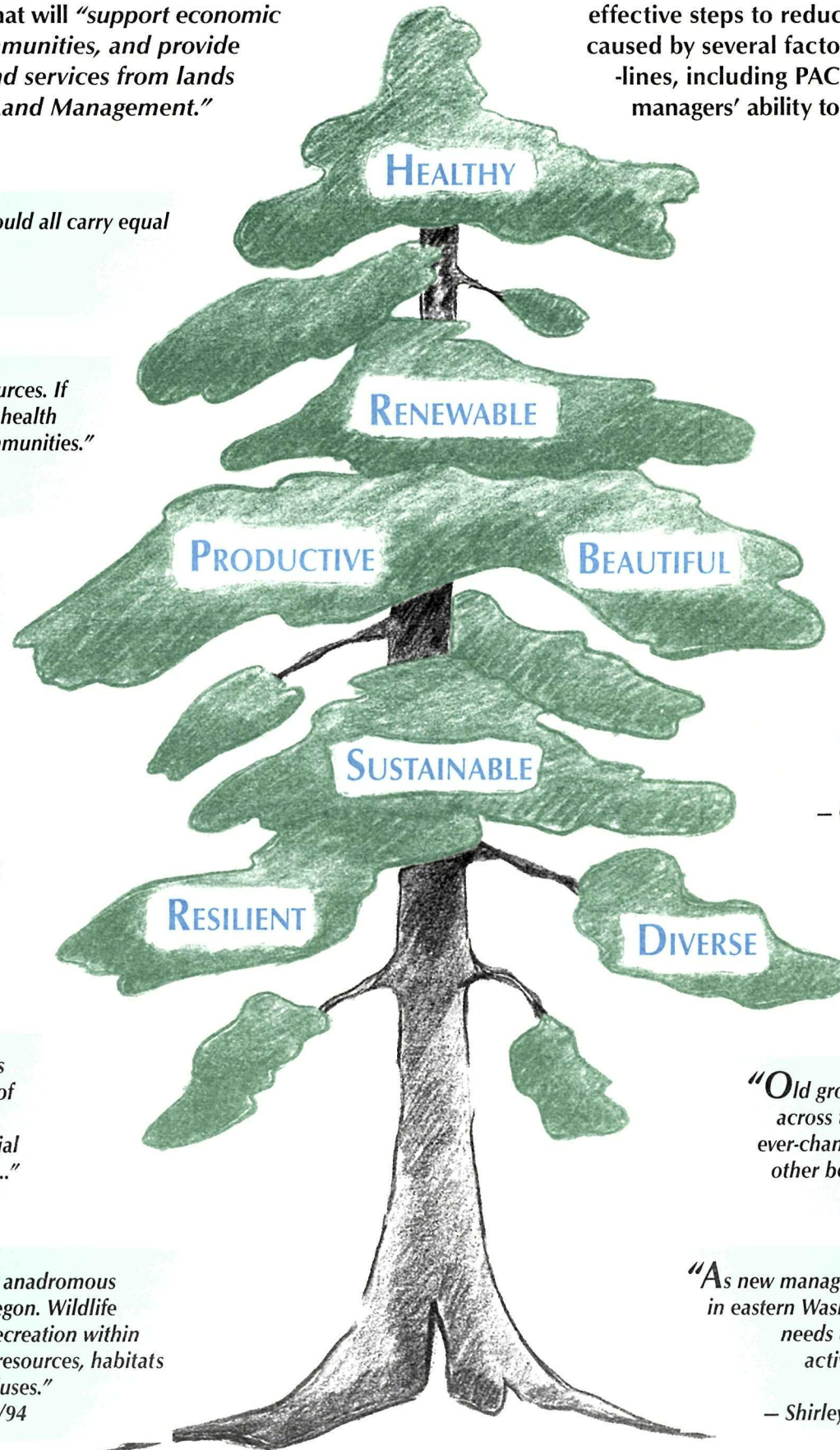
"Any ecosystem management strategy for the ICRB which seeks to maintain regional biodiversity needs to incorporate a system of reserves. Large unexploited landscapes where natural ecosystem processes and natural communities predominate provide essential roles as controls on our experiments in ecosystem management..."

— Sierra Biodiversity Institute ID#2978 04/22/95

"Hunting and fishing are high value recreation resources, and anadromous fish support a commercial economy within Washington and Oregon. Wildlife observation, photography, and nature study also contribute to recreation within the area. To support these valuable commercial and recreation resources, habitats must be managed to support populations with harvestable surpluses."

— Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife ID#1219 07/01/94

To meet this challenge, project planners must design a long-term management strategy for overcoming the gridlock which has prevented natural resource managers from taking effective steps to reduce the forest health crisis in the basin. The gridlock has been caused by several factors, but particular problems have been a set of interim guide-lines, including PACFISH and the "Eastside Screens," which severely limit forest managers' ability to deal scientifically with health problems specific to their areas.



"The resources that flow from public lands must be of sufficient quantity and quality that they will continue to provide a consistent foundation upon which our local economy may diversify."

— Mark Simmons and Melinda Whittemore,
La Grande/Union County Chamber of Commerce
ID#3102 05/31/95

"Soils are essential to both the growth of plants (and thus ecosystem productivity) and to the integrity of hydrologic systems . . . The test of an ecosystem-based planning effort will be whether it begins with consideration of soils rather than ending with it."

— National Wildlife Federation ID#1175 06/27/94

"A great deal of consideration must be given to social and economic systems in order for ecosystem management to be successful."

— Michael Draper, member general Executive Board,
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners ID# 3072 05/24/95

"Salmon populations need to be restored to historic, havestable levels sufficient to meet subsistence, ceremonial and commercial needs."

— Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation ID#3711 11/09/95

"Seek as outcomes of the Project policies that permit and encourage watershed, habitat, forest, and rangeland management and protection, which will sustain healthy and productive ecosystems over the long term and will recognize the integral role humans play on the landscape."

— Eastside Ecosystem Coalition of Counties ID#2733 03/15/95

"Old growth forests should not be the primary emphasis of eastside forests. Forests across the landscape represent a divergence of age classes which are dynamic and ever-changing. It is not possible to identify one age class as more important than the other because many species have a need for a diverse range of habitat conditions."

— Associated Oregon Loggers ID#171 03/28/94

"As new management strategies are being developed for our federal forests and rangelands in eastern Washington it is extremely important to strive for a balance between the various needs of the human and biological communities. These natural resources must be actively managed if they are to address all the needs. We cannot afford to focus on one component of the ecosystem at the expense of the others."

— Shirley Doty, Board Member, Yakima Chamber of Commerce ID#3638 10/24/95

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

JULY '93 President Clinton directs federal resource management agencies "to develop a scientifically sound and ecosystem-based strategy for management of eastside forests."

JANUARY '94 The Forest Service and the BLM jointly charter a project to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement that describes a scientifically sound ecosystem-based strategy for managing federal lands in the Interior Columbia River Basin.

FEBRUARY '94 Scientific Assessment of conditions in the Basin begins.

MARCH '94 Formal scoping conducted to obtain public comment on issues to be addressed by the Project.

JULY '94 Upper Columbia River Basin EIS Team formed to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for National Forest and BLM lands in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada and Utah.

JANUARY '95 Upper Columbia River Basin scoping conducted.

MARCH '96 Evaluation of Draft EIS Alternatives scheduled for completion.

MAY '96 Draft EIS Alternatives, Scientific Framework, and Scientific Assessment scheduled to be submitted to USDA Forest Service and USDI BLM.

JULY '96 Draft EISs scheduled to be released for 90 day public comment period.

FALL/WINTER '96 Final EIS scheduled for release.

The EIS team has received numerous letters from members of the public, community leaders, government agencies, environmental organizations, and business interests commenting on project documents and making suggestions about issues which the EIS should address and resolve. Displayed at left are excerpts from a sampling of these letters which show the wide range of values and concerns which must be considered while formulating the ecosystem management plan. ID numbers were assigned by the Project.

Idaho Mill Closures *continued from page 1*

Federal Timber Policies on Rural Communities in Northcentral Idaho was funded by the 1994 & 1995 Idaho State Legislature, and was carried out by the Center for Business Development and Research at the University of Idaho. It is the most ambitious effort to estimate local economic impacts of Forest Service policy ever funded by a state legislature, and follows a similar analysis of forest plan performance for three counties of Northeast Oregon conducted by Dr. Charles McKetta in 1993 (*Socio-Economic Implications of a Below Cost Timber Program on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest*, February 1994). Copies of the Idaho study may be obtained from the Center for Business Development and Research.

WORKING TOWARD SCIENCE-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT

This Eastside Forest Update newsletter is provided by Boise Cascade Corporation for people who are interested in efforts to develop and implement an immediate remedy and a long-term solution to forest ecosystem health problems facing federal forests and rangelands. One long-term management effort has been underway since early 1994 — a Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management planning effort officially known as the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project, or the Eastside Project.

INFORMATION RESOURCES & COMMENT CONTACTS

If you wish to learn more, or provide your input to the Eastside Project, these addresses may be helpful:

Project Headquarters & Science Teams

EIS Team for Eastern Oregon & Washington

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Computerized Library of Project Documents

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Internet:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/land/c-basin/welpage.htm>

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