Northwest Forest Plan Update

The existing Northwest Forest Plan has failed in both its scientific and social goals and needs major course correction.

The norther spotted owl population has continued to decline despite a mostly hands off approach to the areas it was found to populate. The two major reasons for this are catastrophic fire and the presence and evolutionary success of the barred owl.

The other major failure of the plan was the devastation it caused rural communities and their economies despite the plans stated goal to sustain these communities.

The opportunity to adjust the plan is an important step.

Active forest management needs to return as a tool used by local ranger districts with each district having some flexibility to enact practices that fit their unique landscape and forest lands. Adaptive Management Areas should be expanded with the goal of protecting NSO habitat while reducing the risk of catastrophic fire. Each district should be encouraged to try different techniques to suit their local goals and landscape needs. In this scenario, best practices can be shared which will accelerate and encourage success.

Active forest management will provide the additional benefit of generating revenue to local districts so roads and infrastructure can be returned to a functional state. Road infrastructure has essentially been abandoned, which eliminates the opportunity to react to fires before they become overwhelming and devastating. In Washington, these roads can also be brought to Road Management and Planning (RMAP) guidelines with the benefit of improving fish passage and habitat. Increased access for recreation will be an additional benefit.

In summary, managing the forest to promote a healthy regenerative state would benefit the environment and the communities closest to these areas. Active management including some timber harvest will have significant benefit if done in a thoughtful manner. Revenue generated can improve forest infrastructure and within the communities surrounding these areas.

I hope time and thoughtful consideration will be invested in looking at all science and social needs.

Sincerely,

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