



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 28, 2006

CONTACT:

Dr. Jack Williams, Senior Scientist/Trout Unlimited; 541-772-7724

Dr. Dominick DellaSala, Forest Ecologist/World Wildlife Fund; 541-482-4878

Dr. Jerry Franklin, University of Washington, Seattle, 206-543-2138

NORTHWEST FOREST PLAN MARKS TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY WITH MIXED RESULTS

WASHINGTON, D.C./Ashland, OR - A 1994 plan intended to protect hundreds of species associated with old-growth forests and diffuse gridlock over timber management of America's northwestern forests is getting a fresh look by nineteen nationally-renowned scientists, including several of the Northwest Forest Plan's original architects. In the April special feature edition of the international journal, *Conservation Biology*, scientists offer their analyses of the Northwest Forest Plan's effectiveness in achieving its ambitious goal to balance logging with forest protections on nearly 25 millions of acres of federal land. Advance copies of journal articles are available online at www.conbio.org

According to Jerry Franklin, University of Washington professor and principle architect of the plan, "the Northwest Forest Plan was the first attempt anywhere to address the many factors that contribute to forest ecosystem health and sustainability on such a large scale. Not surprisingly with a plan this complex, success has been mixed but has resulted in a great deal of learning. Ecological values have certainly been protected by the plan but there has been inadequate attention to restoration, especially on eastside forests with uncharacteristic fuel loadings. Timber harvest levels have been less than projected, partially because of efforts to log old-growth stands outside of reserves, something which is no longer socially acceptable."

Franklin added, "the Northwest Forest Plan has missed the mark on timber outputs for many reasons, including continuing efforts to log in old-growth forests and the need for extensive species surveys prior to timber harvesting activities."

"We should all be proud of what this plan has accomplished," said Jack Williams, a former Forest Service supervisor and senior scientist with Trout Unlimited who helped edit the special feature. "We've seen real progress in protecting old-growth species and watersheds across millions of acres of America's forests. Stream conditions have improved steadily, particularly where communities work side-by-side with restoration ecologists."

Adoption of the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994 followed years of conflict over timber harvesting on the one hand, and protection of old-growth forests, watersheds, and wildlife on the other.

Covering 25 million acres of federally-managed land in the Pacific Northwest, the plan marked a transition from timber-focused planning to forest-wide ecosystem management. Incorporating input from numerous stakeholders, the plan sought to balance logging of the nation's forests with conservation of salmon runs and other wildlife, old-growth forests, and northwestern watersheds.

While the plan has been successful on many fronts, many scientists decry the Bush Administration's efforts to strip protections for millions of acres of old-growth forests in Oregon, loosen protections for endangered salmon, and log in old-growth reserves following fires.

"Recent attempts by the Bush administration threaten to unravel the ecological fabric of the Northwest Forest Plan," said Dominick DellaSala, forest ecologist with the World Wildlife Fund and guest editor for the special feature.

DellaSala added that "the Plan is working best in places where federal managers are working with local communities to thin overly stocked plantations for fuels reduction and restoration, such as the Gifford Pinchot and Suislaw National Forests, rather than where the agencies continue to log in older forests."

Journal papers and abstracts are available at www.conbio.org (click on Latest News) or contact *Society for Conservation Biology*, 703-276-2384 x101

Journal Contents and Authors (all papers were peer reviewed):

- The Northwest Forest Plan: A Global Model Of Forest Management In Contentious Times – Dominick DellaSala (WWF) and Jack Williams (Trout Unlimited)
- The Northwest Forest Plan: Origins, components, implementation experience, and suggestions for change - Jack Ward Thomas (University of Montana), Jerry Franklin (University of Washington), John Gordon (Interforest), and Norm Johnson (Oregon State University):
- Effectiveness of the Northwest Forest Plan in conserving the Northern Spotted Owl - Barry Noon and Jennifer Blakesley (Colorado State University)
- Conservation of the Marbled Murrelet under the Northwest Forest Plan - Martin Raphael (US Forest Service)
- Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan - Gordon Reeves (US Forest Service), Jack Williams (Trout Unlimited), Kelly Burnett (US Forest Service) and Kirsten Gallo (US Forest Service)
- Protecting rare, old-growth, forest-associated species under the Survey and Manage Program guidelines of the Northwest Forest Plan - Randy Molina (US Forest Service), Bruce Marcot (US Forest Service), Robin Leshner (US Forest Service)
- Status of mature and old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest, USA - James Strittholt (Conservation Biology Institute), Dominick DellaSala (World Wildlife Fund) and Hong Jiang (Conservation Biology Institute)
- The Northwest Forest Plan as a model for broad-scale ecosystem management: a social perspective - Susan Charnley (US Forest Service)
- Public timber supply, market adjustments, and local economies: economic assumptions of the Northwest Forest Plan – Thomas Powers (University of Montana)
- Conserving old-growth forest diversity in disturbance-prone landscapes - Thomas A. Spies, Miles A. Hemstrom, Andrew Youngblood, and Susan Hummel (US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station)

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE JOURNAL PAPERS



Conservation Biology cover photo – K. Schaffer

The Northwest Forest Plan: origins, components, implementation experience, and suggestions for change - Jack Ward Thomas (University of Montana), Jerry Franklin (University of Washington), John Gordon (Interforest), and Norm Johnson (Oregon State University):

- The Northwest Forest Plan has proven to be more successful in achieving restoration goals for old-growth and aquatic ecosystems than in achieving economic and social goals.
- Three recommendations are made: 1) recognize that the Plan has evolved into an integrative conservation strategy, 2) conserve old-growth trees and forests wherever they occur, and 3) manage federal forests as dynamic ecosystems.

Effectiveness of the Northwest Forest Plan in conserving the Northern Spotted Owl - Barry Noon and Jennifer Blakesley (Colorado State University):

- Monitoring of Northern Spotted Owls has shown a continuing decline in the species despite a dramatic drop off in timber harvest on federal lands.
- Since enactment of the Plan, new threats have emerged, including movement of Barred Owls into the range of the spotted owl and loss of owl habitat from fire and logging on private lands.

Conservation of the Marbled Murrelet under the Northwest Forest Plan - Martin Raphael (US Forest Service):

- Most of the higher suitability habitat for the Marbled Murrelet, a coastal seabird that nests in old-growth forests, was included in forest reserves called “late-successional reserves.”
- Nonetheless, monitoring ten years after implementation shows mostly stationary populations with predictions of 4-6% annual declines in the near future as a result of timber harvest on private lands and changing ocean conditions that are not favorable for the birds.

The Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan - Gordon Reeves (US Forest Service), Jack Williams (Trout Unlimited), Kelly Burnett (US Forest Service) and Kirsten Gallo (US Forest Service):

- Ten years after implementation, the aquatic conservation strategy, designed to protect key watersheds and streamside areas from logging, appears to have halted most declines in stream and riparian conditions, resulting in measurable improvements to 64% of watersheds examined.
- Most improvements were in riparian (streamside) conditions, critical to stream health and a focal point for protections in the Northwest Forest Plan.

Protecting rare, old-growth, forest-associated species under the Survey and Manage Program guidelines of the Northwest Forest Plan - Randy Molina, Bruce Marcot, Robin Leshner (US Forest Service):

- The Survey and Manage Program sought to protect approximately 400 little known species (e.g., amphibians, fungi, mollusks, plants, small mammals) found mainly in older forests by creating the need to survey for these species before logging and then protecting if found.
- The program gained valuable information about these species but created conflicts with other timber objectives of the plan, which ultimately resulted in program changes.

Status of mature and old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest, USA - James Strittholt (Conservation Biology Institute), Dominick DellaSala (World Wildlife Fund) and Hong Jiang (Conservation Biology Institute):

- Since European settlement of the Pacific Northwest, **approximately 72% of old-growth conifer forests have been lost to logging and development**, most of remaining old-growth is on public lands.
- Of the remaining old growth, nearly half is found in the Central and Southern Cascades (Washington and Oregon) and Klamath-Siskiyou Region (northern California/southwest Oregon) **but less than 1/3 of older forests is protected in parks and wilderness areas.**
- Strengthening protections for older forests in the late-successional reserves (by eliminating post-fire logging) and roadless areas (by reinstating the roadless rule) would protect nearly 60% of the remaining older forests on public lands.

The Northwest Forest Plan as a model for broad-scale ecosystem management: a social perspective - Susan Charnley (US Forest Service):

- The Plan's socioeconomic goals met with mixed success and the plan never delivered on its timber harvest assumptions.
- The reasons behind the mixed results were that some key agency assumptions on socioeconomics were flawed and, secondly, that agencies had reduced institutional capacity to achieve the goals.

Public timber supply, market adjustments, and local economies: economic assumptions of the Northwest Forest Plan – Thomas Powers (University of Montana):

- Contemporary economics indicate that the economic links between forests and local communities are much broader than simply the flow of commercially valuable logs.

- The flow of environmental services from forests has increasingly become an amenity that has drawn people and economic activity to forested areas and these amenities have traditionally been undervalued by federal land managers.

Conserving old-growth forest diversity in disturbance-prone landscapes - Thomas A. Spies, Miles A. Hemstrom, Andrew Youngblood, and Susan Hummel (US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station)

- A decade after its creation, the Northwest Forest Plan is contributing to the conservation of old-growth forests on federal land. However, the success and outlook for the plan are questionable in the dry provinces (east of the Cascade Range).
- Losses of old growth to wildfire have been relatively high (ranging from 1.4 to over 14% on a decadal basis) and risks of further loss remain. Consequently, new landscape-level strategies are needed to meet the goals of the plan in these complex and dynamic landscapes.

For the abstracts and full articles go to - www.conbio.org