

**ORIGINAL**

DRAFT RECOVERY PLAN  
FOR THE  
NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT, the public information meeting was taken before LeAnne Law, Certified Shorthand Reporter, on Tuesday, May 22, 2007, beginning at the hour of 6:30 p.m., at the Douglas County Fairgrounds Conference Hall, 2110 S.W. Frear Street, in the City of Roseburg, County of Douglas, State of Oregon.

APPEARANCES

PRESIDING OFFICIAL:

Robert Ruesink, Retired  
US Fish and Wildlife Service

PANEL MEMBERS:

Dave Wesley, Deputy Regional Director  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Recovery Team Leader

Miel Corbett  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Assistant Project Leader

REPORTED BY:

LINDA CRAGO & ASSOCIATES, LLC  
Freelance Court Reporters

BY: LeANNE LAW, CSR

836 West Military  
Suite 210  
Roseburg, Oregon 97470

Eugene: (541) 683-1314  
Roseburg: (541) 673-6628  
FAX: (541) 673-2180



1 MR. RUESINK: Good evening. On behalf of  
2 the United States Fish & Wildlife Service, I welcome you  
3 to this public meeting on the Draft Recovery Plan for  
4 the Northern Spotted Owl. My name is Robert Ruesink.  
5 The last name is spelled R-u-e-s-i-n-k. I will be  
6 serving as the presiding official for this listening  
7 session.

8 My role is to conduct the session in order  
9 that we receive your comments accurately and for the  
10 record. I am not involved in any decision-making  
11 involving this issue.

12 Here with me at the front table also are  
13 representatives from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.  
14 To my immediate right is Dave Wesley. Dave is the  
15 deputy regional director of the Pacific Region and the  
16 team leader for the Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Team.

17 To Dave's right is Miel Corbett. Miel is  
18 the assistant project leader for the Oregon Fish &  
19 Wildlife office in Portland.

20 We do have a court reporter here this  
21 evening to make sure that we get an accurate record of  
22 comments and statements that you make to us on this  
23 draft recovery plan.

24 Next to the meeting room over to my left is  
25 an information room. Some of you may have been over

1 there already. It's where we do have a lot of written  
2 and display materials to provide information about the  
3 draft recovery plan for the NSO.

4 We also have staff from the US Fish and  
5 Wildlife Service, from the Forest Service, and from the  
6 Bureau of Land Management in that room to help answer  
7 any questions you might have.

8 At this point I'd like to introduce Dave  
9 Wesley, who will give a presentation on the draft  
10 recovery plan. Dave.

11 MR. WESLEY: Thank you, Bob. Can everybody  
12 hear me? I think I'm going to walk down here and  
13 actually do this from the front. I'm going to take just  
14 a few minutes and walk through what we did with the  
15 recovery plan and what you can expect.

16 Some of you may not have had an opportunity  
17 to read the recovery plan or perhaps you've read various  
18 things about the recovery plan, so I thought I'd take  
19 just a few minutes and walk through what we spent the  
20 last year working on and give you an overview before we  
21 receive your comments.

22 Just for some background information, the  
23 norther spotted owl (NSO) was listed in 1990 as a  
24 threatened species. This follows on after the  
25 Interagency Scientific Committee talked about that in a

1 report that was dated in 1990 as well.

2 In 1992 the Fish and Wildlife Service  
3 provided critical habitat for the NSO, and in 1992 there  
4 was also a draft recovery plan that was prepared by  
5 another recovery team. That draft was never made final.  
6 It was completed in the second form in December of 1992  
7 but was never made final.

8 And in 1994 the administration at that time  
9 came out with the Northwest Forest Plan, which was  
10 deemed to be the federal contribution for the recovery  
11 of the spotted owl, a further reason why we don't have  
12 it done.

13 And between that and 2004 a lot of research  
14 was done on the NSO. A lot of information was provided  
15 to scientists and a lot of different research was done.

16 And as far as our ongoing responsibilities  
17 under the Endangered Species Act, we're required to  
18 conduct a review of the species every five years.

19 There was a review done in 2004 under  
20 contract to a private consulting firm, and they  
21 completed that five-year review in 2004. That basically  
22 serves as an excellent document to summarize all of the  
23 information about owls.

24 So when we started our plan, we were  
25 fortunate that we had many of the documents to refer to

1 as well as the 2004 five-year review, which, like I  
2 said, did an excellent job of summarizing all the  
3 information to that point.

4 What is in the recovery plan? The recovery  
5 plan is basically a road map to allow folks to look at  
6 what is necessary to take the species off the list.

7 First of all, there's a strategy. What is  
8 necessary? What do you want to do? How do you get  
9 there? What is the strategy? What are some objectives?  
10 How do we go about developing the specific objectives?

11 You have to have some measurable criteria.  
12 What is it that you're going to be able to look for? We  
13 really worked hard on the measurable part of it.  
14 Looking at the plan, there's some very detailed  
15 descriptions about those criteria and what they are.  
16 It's very important that they be measurable, we all  
17 agree on what it is we're looking for and how we measure  
18 that.

19 There's also specific recovery actions that  
20 are necessary that are outlined in the recovery plan.

21 And I want to remind everybody the recovery  
22 plan is advisory only. It does not have any force of  
23 law. It's not a regulation. It's an advisory document  
24 and it doesn't contain any regulatory authorities. So  
25 there's nothing that we can make people do as a result

1 of the recovery plan.

2 So how do we go about doing that? We  
3 started this process in April of 2006. The plan was  
4 developed initially and completed by December of 2006.  
5 We sent it to Washington. There was some review. They  
6 asked us to look at other options under the plan, and  
7 some additions were done, and those revisions were  
8 completed, and the plan was published in April of 2007.

9 There's currently a 60-day comment period  
10 that we're asking for folks to be able to provide  
11 comments on. That ends right now on the 25th of June, I  
12 believe, but we are likely that we're going to be  
13 extending that. We received a request for extension,  
14 several of those. I don't have an official date yet  
15 when it will be, but it will probably be extended.

16 If you know what comments you'd like to make  
17 and you already have your comments, I encourage you to  
18 go ahead and get them in early, but there is a  
19 possibility that we are going to extend it for another  
20 60 days.

21 We also committed to having a public  
22 meeting. There's no requirement for us to do that, but  
23 we felt that this was a subject of interest and of such  
24 import for the public that we would do a public meeting  
25 in each state.

1           In fact, we're going to do two in Oregon.  
2 This one is the first one. We're doing tomorrow night  
3 in Redding, California, and we're doing one next week in  
4 Portland and then also next week in Lacey, a suburb of  
5 Tacoma. But we will be doing four public meetings.

6           And our goal is to have the final plan  
7 completed in the public and Federal Register by April of  
8 2008.

9           So how did we get to there? We had a  
10 recovery team that was providing advice to the service  
11 as it developed it.

12           And I want to, again, advise folks that this  
13 is a service document. All of the recovery team members  
14 may not agree with all the information that's in there.  
15 We work for a consensus and we try to get there, but  
16 they may not all agree with all the stuff that is there.  
17 So it is a service document that is advised by the  
18 recovery team.

19           We did have 12 members on the recovery team.  
20 We tried to get initially and throughout the process as  
21 good a representation as we could. We had five federal  
22 land management agencies that were involved: Fish and  
23 Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the  
24 Park Service, the Fish and -- start again -- Fish and  
25 Wildlife Service, The Bureau of Land Management, the

1 Forest Service, the BIA, and I'm missing one.

2 AUDIENCE SPEAKER: Park service.

3 MR. WESLEY: Park Service. Thank you very  
4 much. The Park Service.

5 And so the three -- besides several agencies  
6 we had the three states involved, a representative from  
7 Washington, Oregon, and California; and we had folks  
8 from the timber industry, two folks from the timber  
9 industry; and we had two folks from environmental  
10 organizations.

11 So we did have 12 members of the team.  
12 Several of those members are here tonight, and they'll  
13 be -- in fact, I'll go ahead and recognize them now.  
14 John Siperek.

15 John, will you raise your hand.

16 John is with California. He was our big  
17 California representative. Lowell Diller, is one of the  
18 industry representatives. Ed Murphy is another one of  
19 the industry representatives. Mike Cafferata is from  
20 the State of Oregon, and Lenny Young is from the State  
21 of Washington, and Mike Haske over here from the Bureau  
22 of Land Management.

23 So those are some of the members of the  
24 team, and they're here to be able to interact with you  
25 later on in the program.

1           And I did mention the two conservation  
2 folks. I forgot to mention those. Again, there were  
3 some from the conservation community, one from the  
4 National Center for Conservation Science and Policy and  
5 one from the National Audubon Society. So we think we  
6 did have a good representation of where we were.

7           The team was very active. We met either in  
8 person or via conference call almost 30 times within the  
9 ESA. We did look at and heavily rely on information  
10 that we got from science. We conducted three different  
11 types of panels where we had 50 scientists or managers  
12 that are actively involved in spotted owl work or  
13 spotted owl management to get them to inform us about  
14 some of the science that they were working on from the  
15 management action and to help us identify the threats,  
16 some of the actions and criteria that we would be able  
17 to develop to do that.

18           We built from existing frameworks including  
19 the draft recovery plan and the Northwest Forest Plan.  
20 What kept coming up over and over again was the  
21 information that the structure in the original plan was  
22 probably a pretty good one and we should look at staying  
23 at that kind of information after.

24           Some of the portions of the document are  
25 already peer reviewed, and I'll talk about peer review

1 in a minute, but we wanted to make sure that the biology  
2 was right, so the whole biology section of the plan has  
3 been peer reviewed, and we feel it's a good  
4 representation of the biology in the plan.

5 So what are the recovery objectives? It's  
6 the kind of thing you would see in most recovery plans.  
7 I've been in this business for almost 34 years, and it's  
8 not too dissimilar from a lot of the recovery plans that  
9 we see.

10 A lot of them talk about populations. There  
11 are large contingencies of them. They occur throughout  
12 the historic range.

13 The next one that -- obviously if you've got  
14 populations, then you need the habitat to support them,  
15 and you also have to have the habitat spread throughout  
16 the range.

17 And the third one is you have to deal with  
18 the threats. One of those threats hanging over the  
19 population or the habitat is how do you mitigate or  
20 manage for those kinds of threats? How do you eliminate  
21 those threats so that the species is likely to be able  
22 to stay recovered? First of all, you've got to recover,  
23 then stay recovered.

24 One of the things that we learned early on  
25 is there is a threat from the barred owl that has not

1 been discussed or noticed in a lot of the previous  
2 literature that was done, so it's a relatively new  
3 threat.

4           There's a concern about the barred owl  
5 coming in and competing with the spotted owl and  
6 actually displacing it from its area.

7           Also habitat loss and modification is also a  
8 key factor. When we listed the owl, it was loss of  
9 habitat and regulatory mechanisms. Well, we think we  
10 have some very good mechanisms in place. The owl has  
11 been listed, but we don't want to lose sight of the fact  
12 that we continue to protect and monitor the habitat.

13           The barred owl has perhaps got a fair amount  
14 of press is how do you deal with the barred owl. And  
15 one of the things that we talked about doing was forming  
16 the barred owl working group. That's one of the first  
17 recommendations in the plan so that we could have a  
18 group of scientists and managers that work together to  
19 look at that threat and give us some guidance on how to  
20 proceed forward dealing with that. They want to be able  
21 to conduct research so that we can better understand the  
22 threat.

23           And then once we understand that to proceed  
24 with some kind of experimental removal to see if in fact  
25 there is a relationship between removing barred owls and

1 some response -- positive response by the spotted owl.

2 How do we do that? Where do we do that?  
3 How large a scale do we do it? How often do we have to  
4 do that? There's a lot of questions that we need to  
5 look at before we proceed on any kind of a large-scale  
6 project of that nature.

7 When you get to habitat, the plan is a  
8 little different than any other plan that we've done  
9 before in that it talks about two different kinds of  
10 options. There are two options in the plan that  
11 describe how you would protect habitat.

12 Option 1 is pretty much the standard that  
13 you've seen before. It models on a lot of stuff that  
14 was done in some of that earlier work where you have  
15 distinct areas that are outlined on a map. They are  
16 specific reserves that are clearly identified and they  
17 are reserves that are set aside. There are specific  
18 areas where -- actually that are targeted.

19 These areas are called managed owl  
20 conservation areas, lovingly called MOCAs. So we have  
21 another new vernacular for you in the agency. If you're  
22 familiar with the owl, then you're familiar with DCAs,  
23 designated conservation area, or the HCAs, habitat  
24 conservation areas. Our moniker is MOCAs, managed owl  
25 conservation areas.