

**United States
Department of
Agriculture
Forest Service**

**United States
Department of
Interior
Bureau of
Land Management**

**United States
Department of
Interior
Fish and
Wildlife Service**

Reply Refer To: 2670 FS/ 6840 BLM (OR931) P

Date: August 30, 2000

EMS TRANSMISSION

FS-Memorandum

BLM-Information Bulletin No. OR-2000-315

To: USDI Bureau of Land Management District Managers: Coos Bay, Eugene, Medford, Roseburg, Salem and Field Managers: Arcata, Ukiah; USDA Forest Service Forest Supervisors and USDI Fish and Wildlife Service Project Managers Within the Range of the Marbled Murrelet in the Northwest Forest Plan Area

Subject: Marbled Murrelet Inland Survey Protocol Update

The attached document is an update of the 1994 Inland Survey Protocol for Marbled Murrelets prepared by the Pacific Seabird Group (PSG), hereafter referred to as the 2000 Inland Survey Protocol. This document clarifies aspects of the previous version of the Protocol and provides additional supporting information and discussion for many of the recommendations. The PSG cover letter for the Protocol describes, in brief, what is new and what remains unchanged in the 2000 version. Please include the PSG cover letter with all copies of the Protocol.

The 2000 Inland Survey Protocol will be used as guidance for the survey of potential habitat for marbled murrelets on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Oregon/Washington and California, and Regions 5 and 6 of the Forest Service (FS); subject to the clarifications contained in this memorandum. In some cases, the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP) standards and guidelines supercede the Survey Protocol. The following clarifications should be brought to the attention of managers, wildlife biologists, and field surveyors:

Number of Survey Visits

The May 1, 1998, joint Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)/FS/BLM (6840 P (BLM-OR931)/2670 FS) memorandum regarding the Marbled Murrelet Inland Survey Protocol, outlined the direction to be followed for the number of visits in order to determine presence and occupancy on FS or BLM-administered lands. The 1998 direction regarding visits is updated and given renewed emphasis below.

The number of visits to determine the presence or occupancy of marbled murrelets in potential habitat administered by the Oregon/Washington and California BLM and Regions 5 and 6 of the FS is as follows:

1) Presence surveys will require a minimum of four survey visits in each of two consecutive years using the methods recommended by the 2000 Inland Survey Protocol for determining the number and location of survey stations.

2) Determination of marbled murrelet occupancy status for a project area will require additional visits once the presence of murrelets is established. If presence is established in the first year of survey, every reasonable effort should be made to attain ten survey visits in each of the two protocol survey years.

However, there may be situations when attainment of the ten visits within the first year may not be possible (e.g., presence detection late in survey season). There may also be instances when the presence detection occurs during the second year of the survey. If agency managers have questions regarding the need for additional visits, or are precluded from conducting additional visits in a given year, they should seek technical assistance from FWS. Agency managers may elect to discontinue surveys of a project area to determine occupancy when presence is established if the proposed project is abandoned. In this case, no coordination with FWS regarding additional surveys is necessary.

Survey Validity Over Time

Refer to the second paragraph (page 20) of the 2000 Inland Survey Protocol for a discussion on survey validity over time, and use the guidance offered there to determine when additional surveys may be appropriate.

Potential Habitat in Younger Forests

On page 3 it states: "Therefore, any forested area with a residual tree component, small patches of residual trees, or one or more platforms is potential habitat." To further clarify the phrase "any forested area," recognize that in addition to having trees with platforms the area should possess tree form and height characteristics that, in the opinion of the evaluator, would make it useable by marbled murrelets for nesting.

Technical assistance may be requested from FWS in situations regarding the uncertainty of determining a forest stand as potential habitat. If the action agency and FWS cannot agree, the area will be considered potential habitat.

Circling Behavior Above the Canopy

The interpretation of circling behavior above the canopy has been under discussion for a number of years. In the 1994 version of the Inland Survey Protocol, this behavior is described as indicating possible occupancy of a stand; and increased survey effort and consultation with the regulatory agency is recommended when this behavior is observed. The 2000 Inland Survey Protocol (pages 5 and 6) states that birds flying in small- or large-radius circles above the canopy is defined as "presence" and additional survey effort is required to determine if the site is occupied. The Record of Decision (ROD) for the NFP (page C-10) defines "birds flying in small or large radius circles above the canopy" as a behavior indicating marbled murrelet occupation. In the May 1, 1998, joint BLM/FS/FWS memorandum, you were advised to consider circling of murrelets above the canopy an occupied behavior if no additional surveys are completed, and to seek technical assistance from FWS if additional surveys do not detect occupied behaviors. In keeping with the direction in the ROD when circling is detected the stand will be considered occupied. Additional surveys may be conducted to provide more specific information about murrelet use of the stand, but the survey results would not change the occupied determination which was based on the previously confirmed circling behavior.

Survey Area Delineation

Note that the delineation of the Survey Area has changed from the previous version of the Protocol. The previous guideline stated that "the minimum amount surveyed should be the contiguous potential habitat extending one quarter mile out from the unit or project boundary or 125 acres, whichever was greater." The new version eliminates the 125-acre guideline, stating "The minimum area surveyed should be the potential habitat that falls within the proposed project area, and within one-quarter mile of the project boundary that is contiguous with the project area (Figure 1)."

Survey Area Occupancy Status

Page 10 of the 2000 Inland Survey Protocol states: "Because the survey area, by definition, is contiguous potential habitat, the classification of probable absence, presence, or occupied determined at the site applies to the *survey area*. For example, if a large block of contiguous potential habitat is divided into three survey sites, and one of those three sites yields subcanopy detections, the entire survey area is considered occupied, not just that one site, because all the sites form one large piece of contiguous habitat."

The delineation of an occupied marbled murrelet stand will follow the direction on page C-10 of the NFP ROD which states: "If behavior indicating occupation is documented, all contiguous existing and recruitment habitat for marbled murrelets within a 0.5 mile radius will be protected. The 0.5 mile radius circle should be centered on either the behavior indicating occupationWhen occupied areas are close to each other, the 0.5 mile radius circles may overlap."

Determining the Survey Area in Younger Forests

The following sections of the Protocol provide guidance for establishing survey areas in younger forest conditions where trees with platforms may be scattered across the stand.

As stated on page 10 of the 2000 Inland Survey Protocol: "In places where remnant trees are scattered equally throughout younger forest, the contiguous potential habitat should be delineated by forest that contains this combination of young and remnant trees. If a large expanse of young forest without remnant trees is adjacent to the potential habitat, it should not be included in the survey area boundary."

Refer also to the section (page 14) of the Protocol entitled *Location With Respect To Potential Habitat*. Use the guidance provided in these text sections and your professional judgment to establish a survey area and place survey stations.

Inland Limit for Surveys

Please note that there is an error in the "Inland Limit for Surveys" section (page 7) where the sentence that reads: "Murrelet distribution may be more limited in the Siskiyou Mountains, where the farthest inland detection was at 51 km (32 mi)...." It should read: "Murrelet distribution may be more limited in the Klamath Province of southwestern Oregon, where the farthest inland detection was at 28 km (18 mi)."

If you have any questions regarding marbled murrelet surveys on FS or BLM-administered lands, please contact the following individuals: FS Region 6, Sarah Madsen (503-808-2673); FS Region 5, John Robinson (707-562-8929); BLM Oregon/Washington, Joe Lint (541-440-4931 ext. 288); and BLM California, Paul Roush (707-825-2313).

Signed By
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Authenticated By

1 Attachment (under separate cover)

1 - Methods for Surveying Marbled Murrelets in Forests: An Update to the Protocol For Land Management and Research

BLM Distribution

WO-230 (Room 204 LS) - 1
CA-930 (Robert Middleton) - 1
CA-330 (Paul Roush) - 1
OR-931 (Joe Lint, Barb Hill) - 2
REO (Harold Belisle) - 1

Forest Service cc:

R5-F&WL (John Robinson)
R6-SP (Sarah Madsen)

FWS cc

Portland (Lee Folliard)
Olympia (John Grettenberger)
Arcata (Lynn Roberts)