



NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. Department of the Interior
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USFWS, BLM, USFS Leadership Travel to Pacific Northwest to Discuss Northern Spotted Owl Recovery, Forest Health

Washington, D.C. – As part of the Administration’s on-going commitment to improving forest health in the Pacific Northwest, recovering the northern spotted owl, and supporting sustainable economic opportunities for local communities, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe, Bureau of Land Management Principal Deputy Director Neil Kornze, and U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell this week travelled to California, Oregon and Washington to meet with employees from both the U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture in an effort to underscore what they see as an historic opportunity for forest ecosystem progress.

"In the past two years, the Service has used the principles of ecological forestry and the latest scientific information to revise and update the recovery plan and identify habitat essential to the survival and recovery of the spotted owl," said USFWS Director Dan Ashe. "With all three agencies aligned around these principles, we have an historic opportunity to accelerate the protection and restoration of healthy forest ecosystems that will support owl recovery and sustainable timber supplies."

The USFWS, BLM and USFS have been working together for two decades on recovery of the northern spotted owl, protected as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The four employee meetings – held in Olympia, Washington; Portland, Oregon; Eugene, Oregon; and Redding, California – provided an important opportunity for agency leaders to articulate a common vision and intent, and address questions from the people who will play a key role in achieving that vision. The visit emphasizes the importance that sustainable forest health plays in the social, cultural and economic viability of communities in the Pacific Northwest.

"Balance is the key to our success," said BLM Principal Deputy Director Kornze. "We are working collaboratively with our partners to develop a sustainable path forward and a long-term solution to the complex forest management challenges in western Oregon and throughout the Pacific Northwest."

In December 2012, the USFWS finalized a science-driven proposal identifying lands in the Pacific Northwest that are essential to the survival and recovery of the northern spotted owl. The USFWS identified 9.29 million acres of critical habitat on Federal land and 291,570 acres on state land.

“Our National Forests in the Pacific Northwest are a great national treasure, not least for all of the values they provide to local communities,” USFS Chief Tidwell said. “We are working with partners and communities to apply the latest science in maintaining and restoring habitat for spotted owl and other wildlife.”

The agencies have worked closely in developing the revised critical habitat designation and recovery plan. The plan embraces active forest management by applying principles of ecological forestry to target and achieve forest health. This will allow forests within the range of the northern spotted owl to be managed for conservation of the species, ecosystem health and economic opportunities for local communities.

The BLM is revising its resource management plans for 2.5 million acres of forest lands across six BLM Districts in western Oregon in order to address new scientific information related to forest health, the USFWS’s recovery plan and proposed critical habitat designations for the northern spotted owl. The plans will supersede those completed in 1995.

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