

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision—2014

Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests



Aquatic Species and Habitats

In a Nutshell (The Preferred Alternative)

- Contributes to maintaining or restoring aquatic habitats, species diversity and species viability during the life of the plan, while providing other benefits. Habitat restoration would contribute to recovery of ESA-listed aquatic species and maintain other aquatic species of conservation concern.
- Would achieve desired conditions for aquatic species and their habitats in two complementary ways:
- By continuing to apply protective elements from previous aquatic conservation strategies used in the Pacific Northwest,
- By adding a new emphasis on active management (Objectives) for the longterm benefit of riparian and aquatic habitats and species.

The Preferred Alternative would provide benefits to riparian management areas and aquatic species forestwide in the following ways:

- Desired Conditions, suitable management activities and land uses, and standards and guidelines, would focus on protecting riparian and aquatic habitats. Examples of standards and guidelines that protect aquatic species and habitats include:
 - Standards for management of Key watersheds, would ensure roads management would continue progress towards achieving desired conditions for hydrologic processes, fish passage, water quality and aquatic habitat complexity.
 - Guidelines for grazing management in Riparian Management Areas would reduce risk of slowing habitat recovery currently ongoing through natural processes.



for the greatest good

Active management for the benefit of watershed function, water quality and riparian and aquatic habitats would accelerate rates of riparian and aquatic habitat restoration and species recovery in priority watersheds through Objectives for:

- Restoration of historic forest vegetation and in priority watersheds through combinations of mechanical treatments and use of managed wildfires
- Replacement or removal of culverts that are problems for fish passage.
- Restoration of riparian vegetation and water tables.
- Reduced connectivity between existing roads and streams to improve water quality and natural stream channel and floodplain function.

Definitions

Active restoration: Active management that contributes to restoration of well-distributed, well-connected high-quality habitats for aquatic focal species in priority watersheds. The list of priority watersheds is available in Appendix B of the DEIS.

Passive restoration: restoration of riparian and aquatic habitats through natural processes; occurs in the absence of detrimental impacts from management activities; achieved by ensuring habitat protections, not achieved by means of active restoration.

Key Watersheds: These are a combined and refined set of watersheds originally identified for conservation and protection of Threatened species under earlier conservation strategies. Key watersheds serve as high-quality habitat and population anchors and serve as source areas for population expansion and species recovery, similar to their purpose under earlier conservation strategies.

Priority Watersheds. The term Priority Watershed is used in Plan Revision to mean a specific subset of Key Watersheds that will be targeted for active management to achieve Desired Conditions for Watershed Function and Species Diversity.

Focal species: A select set of aquatic species whose habitats represent the range of aquatic habitats and aquatic species diversity within river networks throughout the Blue Mountains national forests, from large rivers to small cold high-elevation streams. Population viability analyses were conducted for each individual focal species.



Document Sections

Desired Conditions for Watershed Function and Species Diversity are described in the Vision section in Chapter 2. They are also described under Desired Conditions 1.1 through 1.2 in Appendix A (Tables A-50 through A-52).

The list of priority watersheds is available in Appendix B of the DEIS. These are the watersheds where active restoration would be undertaken for the benefit of riparian and aquatic habitats and species.

A variety of active restoration Objectives may be used to achieve Desired Conditions for aquatic species and habitats in priority watersheds. They are listed in Appendix A, Tables A-50 through A-52 of the DEIS. Objectives 1.1 and 1.1. Specific aquatic focal species objectives under Objectives 1.2, apply in all cases. Other Objectives may apply, depending on local conditions and mid-scale watershed analysis.

Current population status and habitat conditions for individual focal species and other aquatic species of conservation concern are presented in the Aquatic Species Affected Environment section of Chapter 3 in the DEIS.

Further details on development and application of the Blue Mountain Aquatic Species Viability Model are contained in the Watershed section-Chapter 3 of the DEIS, and in Appendix B of the DEIS.

The Monitoring Framework in Appendix A, Table A-58, describes monitoring of restoration progress.

More detailed descriptions of Key and Priority Watersheds and their selection are provided in the Watershed Function section of Chapter 3 and in Appendix B of the DEIS.

The sections on Watershed Condition and Water Quality set the stage for determining effects to aquatic species and their habitats. Sections in the document that explain the key issues for the resource

FAQs

Q1. Must projects help move aquatic and riparian habitats towards Desired Conditions for these habitats?



A1. Yes, projects that may affect these areas would be designed to help move these habitats towards Desired Conditions, through coordination and consideration of other land use needs.

Q2. Can priority watersheds for active restoration of watershed function, riparian and aquatic habitat improvement change if there is a need to switch priority?

A2. Priority watersheds for active restoration are selected from among the watersheds chosen as Key Watersheds. Key watersheds will not change, but watersheds targeted for active restoration may be reprioritized and others selected, at any time if the need exists.

Q3. Will the Preferred Alternative contribute to maintaining or restoring viability for Threatened populations of the focal species selected to represent species diversity in the planning area?

A3. Yes, the preferred alternative will contribute to maintaining or restoring populations of the selected focal species, and will contribute to maintaining species diversity in the planning area.

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