

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision—2014

Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests



Terrestrial Wildlife

In a Nutshell (Preferred Alternative)

The preferred alternative maintains species viability during the life of the plan while providing other benefits. It also emphasizes dry forest restoration, the most highly departed habitat for wildlife.

Definitions

Species Viability- what does it mean?

That there is enough habitat and reproducing individuals to allow the species to be self-sustaining on the landscape. For habitat, several scientists have concluded that in order to protect the most sensitive species and to deal with uncertainty, a minimum of 40% of the amount of habitat that occurred historically would represent a “critical threshold for habitat”.

The planning rule says that “In order to insure [sic] that viable populations will be maintained, habitat must be provided to support, at least, a minimum number of reproductive individuals and that habitat must be well distributed so that those individuals can interact with others in the planning area.” 36 CFR 219.19

Focal Species- what are they?

Focal species serve an umbrella function in terms of encompassing habitat needs for other species, being sensitive to changes likely to occur in an area, and otherwise serving as an indicator of ecological sustainability for its habitat group. Focal species represent the full array of potential responses to management activities and provide the coarse filter analysis of habitat and ecosystem health to aide in development of management direction for forest plan revision.

Document Sections

Discussion for terrestrial wildlife species can be found in the *Blue Mountains National Forests Proposed Revised Land Management Plan* in the following section:

Part 1 – Vision: 1.2 Species Diversity pages 29-31

Part 2- Strategy: 1.2 Species Diversity pages 105-113

Part 3- Design Criteria: Species Diversity page 118-120



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Terrestrial Wildlife Species analysis is found in volume 2, chapter 3 on pages 181-343 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Species viability is specifically addressed from pages 183 to 270 in volume 2, chapter 3.

Additional information regarding the analysis can be found in volume 3 appendix B.

FAQs

Q1. Were Management Indicator Species (MIS) used in the viability analysis?

A1. Not directly- Although two of the MIS species are also focal species and therefore were used in the viability analysis, that is not the purpose of selecting MIS. MIS are intended as a tool to: 1) establish explicit Forest Plan objectives for wildlife and fish habitat, 2) analyze the degree to which Forest Plan alternatives meet those objectives, and 3) monitor the effect of forest plan implementation. Section 219.19 establishes the requirements for wildlife viability and for management of threatened and endangered species under forest plans. The use of MIS may contribute to meeting those requirements, but it is clear that MIS are also intended to serve a broader role in management for diversity. For example, MIS may include species that are hunted, fished or trapped. These clearly are not species for which the primary concern is viability. Rather, the objective for these species is to provide habitat that will help meet established population objectives. MIS may also include “invertebrate species” which are not covered through the viability requirement because that provision applies only to vertebrates. Therefore, use of invertebrates as MIS would clearly address broader concerns for diversity than are addressed through the viability requirement.

Q2. How will you address species that fall outside of the “focal” species concept?

A2. Focal species are intended to serve as an indicator of ecosystem sustainability. The viability of the focal species is assumed representative of the group of species with similar ecological requirements and this group is assumed to respond in a similar manner to environmental change. There are some species, especially rare plants, that the “coarser” context of ecosystem diversity may not satisfy their specific needs. In such cases a finer scale analysis at the plan level if appropriate, was done (see the following questions). However with some species the scale must be smaller (i.e. land snails) and therefore a detailed



analysis is expected at the project level where necessary (directed by standards and guidelines).

Q3. Does the Forest Plan address the gray wolf?

A3. Not directly- The gray wolf is covered by the 2005 Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan and it is the state departments of wildlife that are responsible for population management. The Forest Plan sets the objectives for management of habitat, so it may indirectly influence wolf populations through improved prey habitat.

Q4. How does the Forest Plan address elk populations?

A4. Management of wildlife populations is a state responsibility and both Oregon and Washington have elk management plans. Because of their social and cultural importance, the plan establishes desired conditions and guidelines for elk habitat management which are to be implemented in strategic areas in coordination with the state wildlife agencies. Elk use a broad array of habitats throughout the year and by providing for ecosystem health it is felt that, in general, this will provide the appropriate quantity and quality of habitat to sustain a healthy elk population.

Q5. How does the current situation with the sage grouse affect forest planning?

A5. The three forests have very little habitat for this species so there is little impact to the planning effort. The Umatilla National Forest does not have any habitat identified as occurring on the forest. The preferred alternative (E) incorporates some standards/guidelines similar to the BLM proposal as side boards for planning purposes. However the desired condition of no net loss of sagebrush habitats under all alternatives should provide ample protection on those few acres found on the National Forests.

Percent of habitat identified by BLM that occurs on Forest Service lands, the Malheur NF and Wallowa-Whitman (WAW) NF in management zones identified by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as well as what portion occurs in Oregon, and what percent of that occurs on the Malheur and Wallowa-Whitman NF.						
BLM Habitat designation	Entire management zone			Oregon portion of management zone		
	Forest Service	Malheur	WAW	State	Malheur	WAW
MZ IV- Snake River Plain						
Preliminary Priority Habitats	7%	0.1%	0.01%	15%	0.8%	0.1%
Preliminary General Habitats	10%	0.1%	0.03%	47%	0.3%	0.1%
MZ V- Northern Great Basin						
Preliminary Priority Habitats	1%	0.1%	0%	47%	0.2%	0.0%
Preliminary General Habitats	2%	0.5%	0%	53%	0.8%	0.0%



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Management Indicator Species

Where do MIS come from?

From the 1982 planning regulations 36 CFR 219.19(a) (1) - "... certain vertebrate and/or invertebrate species present in the area shall be identified and selected as management indicator species..."

Why are they are selected?

"These species shall be selected because their **population changes** [emphasis added] are believed to indicate the effects of management activities." 36 CFR 219.19(a) (1)

"Planning alternatives shall be stated and evaluated in terms of both amount and quality of habitat and animal population trends of the management indicator species." 36 CFR 219.19(a) (2) Population and habitat trends could be either positive or negative.

Management Indicator Species can be selected from the following:

- Federally-listed species
- Regional Forester's Sensitive Species
- Non-game species of special interest
- Species commonly hunted, fished or trapped
- Species with special habitat needs

Attributes of good Management Indicator Species

- Species that are relatively common but have high fidelity to specific vegetation types
- Species whose **population** demonstrates a strong and/or predictable response to management activities
- Species involved in existing monitoring programs (e.g., some bird species)
- Species that are monitored by other entities (e.g., state wildlife agency elk census data)

MIS are required by the 1982 planning rule, but no longer represent the best available scientific approach. Essentially, monitoring the population trend of one species should not be extrapolated to form conclusions regarding the status and trends of other species. In addition, population trends for most species are extremely difficult to determine

Focal Species

Where do focal species come from?

Focal species is a concept developed in the late 90's that identified a suite of species targeted for the management of threatening processes and vegetation-restoration efforts and together, their "requirements for persistence define the attributes that must be present if [the landscape] is to meet the needs of the remaining biota" (Lambeck 1999). Focal species were mentioned in the 2000 Planning Rule and the concept has been adopted in the 2012 Planning Rule.

Why are they are selected?

Focal species are surrogate measures for evaluating ecological sustainability, including species and ecosystem diversity. The key characteristic is that the status and trend of a focal species provides insights into the integrity of the larger ecological system to which it belongs. Individuals or groups of species that use habitat in similar ways or perform similar ecological functions, may be identified as focal species. Focal species serve as an umbrella in terms of encompassing habitats needed for many other species, play a key role in maintaining community structure or processes, are sensitive to changes likely to occur in the area, or otherwise serve as an indicator of ecological sustainability. Certain focal species may be used as surrogates to represent ecological conditions that provide for viability of some other species, rather than directly representing the population dynamics of those other species. (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 90)

Focal Species can be selected from the following:

- Indicator species
- Keystone Species
- Species of concern
- Link species
- Umbrella species
- Ecological engineers
- And others



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within the 15-year life of a plan, as it may take decades to establish accurate trend data, and data may be needed for a broader area than an individual national forest or grassland.

So, in addition to MIS, the plan includes focal species, which are the current accepted approach.

Monitoring the status of selected focal species over time is intended to provide insight into the integrity of ecological systems on which those species depend and the effects of management on those ecological conditions (i.e., the coarse filter aspect of the diversity requirement). It is not expected that a focal species be selected for every element of ecological conditions.

Focal Species used in the Blue Mountains forest plan revision		
Common Name	Family	Group
Gray-Crowned Rosy-Finch	Alpine/Boreal	Alpine
Boreal Owl	Alpine/Boreal	Boreal Forest
Water Vole	Alpine/Boreal	Boreal Forest
Northern Goshawk	Forest Mosaic	All Forest Communities
Cassin's Finch	Medium/Large Trees	All Forest Communities
Pileated Woodpecker	Medium/Large Trees	Cool/Moist Forest
American Marten	Medium/Large Trees	Cool/Moist Forest
White-Headed Woodpecker	Medium/Large Trees	Dry Forest
Western Bluebird	Open Forest	All Forest Communities
Fringed Myotis	Open Forest	All Forest Communities
Fox sparrow	Open Forest	Early Successional
Lewis's Woodpecker	Open Forest	Post-fire
Black-Backed Woodpecker	Open Forest	Post-fire
Peregrine falcon	Human Disturbance	Habitat Generalist
Wolverine	Human Disturbance	Habitat Generalist
Townsend's Big-Eared Bat	Chambers/Caves	Chambers/Caves
Upland Sandpiper	Upland Grassland	Upland Grassland
Golden Eagle	Woodland/Grass/Shrub	Woodland/Grass/Shrub
Lark Sparrow	Woodland/Grass/Shrub	Woodland/Grass/Shrub
Pallid Bat	Woodland/Grass/Shrub	Woodland/Grass/Shrub
Ash-Throated Flycatcher	Woodland/Grass/Shrub	Juniper Woodland
Loggerhead Shrike	Woodland/Grass/Shrub	Woodland/Shrub
Greater Sage Grouse	Woodland/Grass/Shrub	Shrub
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep	Woodland/Grass/Shrub	Grass/Shrub
Northern Harrier	Woodland/Grass/Shrub	Grassland
Inland Tailed Frog	Riparian	Conifer Riparian
Wood Duck	Riparian	riparian/large tree or snag/open water
Bald Eagle	Riparian	riparian/large tree or snag/open water
Red-Naped Sapsucker	Riparian	Shrubby/Deciduous Riparian



Focal Species used in the Blue Mountains forest plan revision		
Common Name	Family	Group
MacGillivray's Warbler	Riparian	Shrubby/Deciduous Riparian
Columbia Spotted Frog	Riparian	Pond/Small Lake/Backwater
Black-Crowned Night-Heron	Riparian	Marsh with Adjacent Large Trees
Marsh Wren	Wetland	Marsh
Wilson's Snipe	Wetland	Marsh/Wet Meadow
Eared Grebe	Wetland	Marsh/Open Water

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