



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Northwest Forest Plan Amendment Newsletter | Issue 2 | July 2024

Northwest Forest Plan Amendment Update

Draft Amendment Process

The Forest Service is making a lot of progress drafting an amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP). A team of specialists drafted a proposed action and alternatives and now the environmental impacts and benefits of the proposal and alternatives are being assessed. The proposal, as well as the environmental analysis, is expected to be released in the draft environmental impact statement at the end of summer. The proposed amendment, alternatives, and effects analysis were informed by several sources including tribal engagement, public comments from the Notice of Intent, recommendations from the Federal Advisory Committee, internal subject matter experts, and best available scientific information, including Indigenous Knowledge.

The draft environmental impact statement release will launch another 90-day public comment period. We will host webinars and public meetings across the NWFP area to share information about the draft amendment and the environmental analysis. Details will be posted on our website and sent to our email list. Sign up for updates about the release and upcoming engagement opportunities! [USDA Forest Service \(govdelivery.com\)](https://govdelivery.com).



Marbled Murrelet. USDA Forest Service photo.

Working Together to Take Care of Endangered Species

The Forest Service has signed consultation agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service! These agreements will foster cooperation and allow the project team to work closely with the Services throughout the Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation process. We are working together to develop biological assessments that look at effects of the amendment on federally listed species and their designated critical habitat within the plan area. Work together includes determining the general approach, species lists, biological assessment formats, best data to use, and data analysis needs.



We welcome your participation and input!
Sign up for future updates at tinyurl.com/bdecza2d

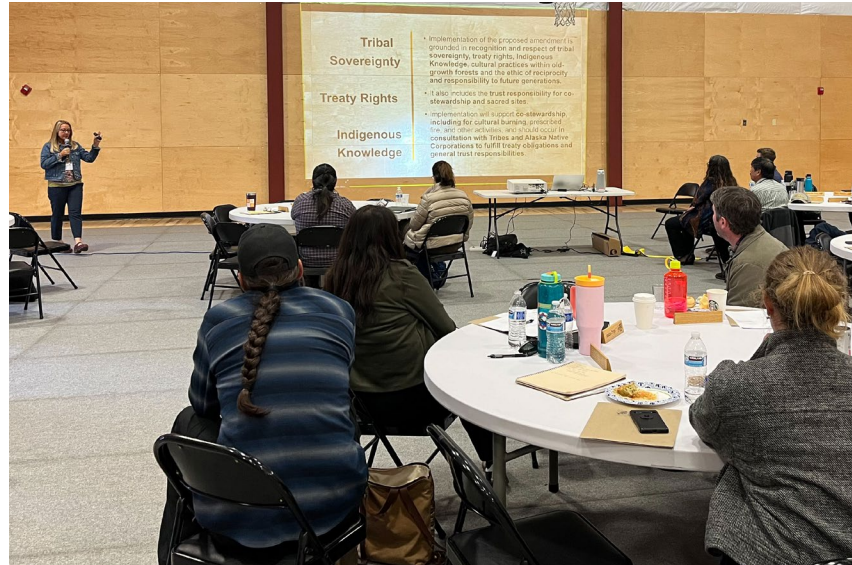


Insights Gained from Discussions with Tribes

The USFS recognizes that tribal input is essential when considering updates to the NWFP. Since launching work on the NWFP amendment, we have reached out to Tribes to seek their input in a variety of ways, including webinars about the Notice of Intent (NOI), invitation for formal consultation with follow up webinars to ask questions, and staff-to-staff meetings. Collaborative efforts included two tribal staff members in the development of the amendment. We also held several tribal roundtable meetings within the NWFP region to connect with and hear from tribal leaders and staff. Outcomes from these meetings included development of an extensive list of shared and individual tribal concerns that were considered in the proposed action and alternatives. This year's roundtables have included the following:

- March - Roundtable hosted by the Snoqualmie Tribe in Snoqualmie, Washington near Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.
- April - Northwest Forest Plan and National Old Growth Amendment roundtable hosted by the Karuk Tribe in Yreka, California near Klamath National Forest.
- July - Roundtable hosted by the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians in Canyonville, Oregon near the Umpqua National Forest.

Tribes shared feedback regarding what they have learned from implementing the 1994 NWFP, as well as how it could be improved. Tribes also provided input on how the USFS could better protect treaty rights and other protected tribal rights, enhance opportunities for co-stewardship with Tribes, and support tribal workforce development. Tribal representatives asked the Forest Service to recognize and consider Indigenous Knowledge in planning and project development and to monitor the status of resources associated with treaty and other reserved tribal rights. Opportunities with the NWFP amendment include recognizing the ecological and cultural benefits of cultural burning, establishing plan language to reduce barriers to cultural burning, and integrating Indigenous Knowledge and tribal partnerships in post-fire reforestation. Tribal representatives suggested plan language to protect and ensure sustainability of culturally significant foods, improve tribal access, and limit competition for resources with commercial harvesters.



A Northwest Forest Plan Amendment team member present during the Karuk tribal forum. USDA Forest Service photo.



Inter-tribal crew members in Lomakatsi's Tribal Youth Ecological Forestry Training Program conduct ecological thinning within the Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project, April 23, 2024, near Ashland, Oregon. USDA Forest Service photo by Preston Keres.

Questions? Frequently asked questions are answered at tinyurl.com/ueu3njx3

The Forest Service Hears From the Public

We received more than 9,000 comments during the public comment period that followed the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) last December. Comments came in from a wide array of entities and individuals. These included federal and state agencies, counties and other governmental organizations, Tribes and Tribal organizations, businesses, over 100 non-governmental organizations, and several thousand individuals. Feedback covered a range of perspectives and topics – there were both areas that saw some level of agreement, as well as different views. The agency has worked to consider these comments as we crafted the draft amendment. Some of the themes identified by comments from the public, found in the [Northwest Forest Plan Amendment Scoping Period: Written Public Comment Summary](#), include:

- Various management approaches to reduce wildfire risk, such as cultural burning, prescribed fire, thinning, and not suppressing unplanned wildfire.
- Suggestions on how to prepare for and adapt to climate change. Support and opposition for using timber harvest as a tool.
- Preserve mature and old growth forests.
- Support for improved Tribal involvement and use of Indigenous Knowledge.
- Regional and local economic impacts.
- Suggestions for changes to Land Use Allocations.
- Analytical suggestions for the Environmental Impact Statement.

What's Our Federal Advisory Committee Been Up To?

The NWFP Amendment Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) has completed a comprehensive set of recommendations for amending the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) aimed at modernizing forest management practices across the Pacific Northwest. After developing the recommendations over the last 10 months, the Committee voted unanimously to approve and advance the completed recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture. The recommendations address critical issues such as ensuring Tribes are included in land management planning and implementation, protecting mature and old growth ecosystems and the species that rely on them, providing sustainable economic opportunities for rural communities, and supporting fire resiliency for forests and communities. FAC Recommendations are available to view online: [FAC Recommendations to US Forest Service NWFP Amendment](#). Next, the FAC will turn its attention to developing recommendations for implementation of the NWFP Amendment. The FAC's recommendations are available on the NWFP FAC website, along with the agenda and video recording of the meeting: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/r6/nwfpfac>



FAC Members participated in a field trip on the Olympic National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo.

Want to learn more? The Northwest Forest Plan Amendment library catalogs important documents in the planning process at tinyurl.com/2kcyaz4r



USFS Employee Internal Engagement

There is extensive experience and expertise on the NWFP across the agency, particularly on the NWFP forests that have implemented the plan's direction for 30 years. In an effort to hear from agency employees, we conducted an internal survey, hosted several employee webinars, and robust discussions among subject matter expert panels. Input from these engagements is informing the draft amendment and we will continue to coordinate with local and regional staff.



Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area employees participate in a community event. USDA Forest Service photo.

Engage With Us

A goal of public involvement is to identify opportunities to contribute to mutual objectives, resolve or reduce conflicts, and achieve mutually agreeable outcomes on the land and in our communities. Public involvement continues to be a key part of efforts to implement and update the Northwest Forest Plan and opportunities will continue to be available. While seeking to increase public involvement, the 2012 Planning Rule also emphasizes meaningful engagement with populations historically absent from the planning process including youth and underserved communities.

We hosted four public webinars in January and a virtual open house in February! If you missed them, you can watch them on our [NWFP website: Region 6 Planning](#). We're planning for in person public meetings in late summer and fall, when we plan to release the draft environmental impact statement on the proposed amendment.

For more information, visit
www.fs.usda.gov/goto/r6/nwfp



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