

Recommendations for amending Northwest Forest Plan completed

July 30, 2024



A Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) has completed a comprehensive set of recommendations for amending the Northwest Forest Plan aimed at modernizing forest management practices across the Northwest Forest Plan area.

After developing the recommendations over the last 10 months, the FAC voted unanimously to approve and advance the completed recommendations to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Committee members statement

"Federal forest policy in the Pacific Northwest is complex and challenging," the committee members state in the report. "Finding and articulating shared values, goals, and a vision for our national forests has eluded our region for more than three decades. Our collective task established in the Committee's charter was to develop consensus recommendations to help guide the Forest Service in developing a climate-smart forestry

amendment to the NWFP. We accomplished that task (with additional steps to follow as described in this report)."

The FAC members state in the report summary that what they accomplished over the past nine months is historic.

"By unanimously approving dozens of meaningful recommendations to modernize the Northwest Forest Plan, this Committee has demonstrated the power of collaboration, consensus, and working together for a common cause: we all share a deep love and commitment to our national forests and people and communities that steward them.

"The following report represents the most significant progress in the last 30 years to achieve our shared values for responsible forest stewardship on national forests in the Pacific Northwest.

"We believe our work and recommendations – if implemented – would meaningfully change the trajectory of our national forests and all of the ecological, social, cultural, and economic values they provide to society. We hope this report will encourage you to engage in the process, ask questions, continue learning, share your perspective, and join us in refining and implementing a more modern, just, inclusive, and effective Northwest Forest Plan," the summary states.

Critical issues

The recommendations address critical issues such as ensuring tribes are included in land management planning and implementation, conserving mature and old growth forests and the species that rely on them, providing sustainable economic opportunities for rural communities, and supporting fire resiliency for forests and communities, according to a release from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service Pacific NW Region.

The recommendations come as part of an effort to update the NWFP, originally implemented in 1994, to better align with current environmental, social, and economic challenges.

"The recommendations from the Federal Advisory Committee represent a significant milestone in our efforts to update the Northwest Forest Plan," Pacific Northwest Region Forester Jacque Buchanan said. "These thoughtful proposals reflect a collaborative approach to addressing the complex challenges facing our forests today, including climate change, wildfire resilience, and the need for sustainable forest management. We are committed to carefully considering these recommendations as we move forward with the plan amendment process."

The committee developed 192 recommendations targeting key areas that update the current NWFP. These areas include Tribal Inclusion and Rights, Economic Opportunities, Fire Resilience, Climate and Ecosystem Integrity, Carbon Sequestration and Storage, Community Protection, and Adaptive Management. The FAC also made a host of recommendations for how to develop Forest Stewardship- across the diverse NWFP landscape.

Next steps

The FAC's work provides a foundation for addressing these complex issues while honoring the plan's original goals of ecosystem conservation, endangered species habitat protections, and sustainable timber production.

"What the Committee accomplished is historic," said Northwest Forest Plan Federal Advisory Committee co-chairs Susan Jane Brown and Travis Joseph in a joint statement. "By unanimously approving dozens of meaningful recommendations to modernize the Northwest Forest Plan, this group has demonstrated the power of collaboration, consensus, and working together for a common cause. We all share a deep love and commitment to our national forests and people and communities that steward them."

The 20-person committee is a diverse group from Tribes, local communities, environmental groups, industry, and academia across Northern California, Oregon and Washington.

"We tackled some of the most challenging and contentious issues that ignited the Northwest Forest Wars," Brown and Joseph wrote. "While we recognize our work does not address all the issues and injustices of the Northwest Forest Plan, the Committee's consensus recommendations represent the most significant progress in the last 30 years to achieve our shared values for responsible forest stewardship on national forests in the Pacific Northwest."

The Forest Service will carefully review the FAC's recommendations as the agency works toward amending the Northwest Forest Plan. Public engagement opportunities will be announced in the coming months as the plan amendment process moves forward.

The Federal Advisory Committee's recommendations can be viewed here:

[NWFP FAC Recommendations](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1188978.pdf) direct link: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1188978.pdf

The Northwest Forest Plan is a comprehensive plan for administering parts of federally managed lands in Oregon, Washington and California. The plan was designed to protect old-growth forests and critical habitat for the northern spotted owl, while also providing for forest products, water quality, recreation and other uses.

Resources

Northwest Forest Plan Federal Advisory Committee: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/r6/nwfpfac>

Northwest Forest Plan: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r6/reo/>

The Pacific Northwest Region: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r6>

For more news and information about National Forests in the Pacific Northwest, visit our news page at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/news/r6/news-events> or our home page, at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r6>.

For more information about the USDA Forest Service visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov>.

