

## NW Forest Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement to be release in November

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The release of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Northwest Forest Plan amendment is now expected in November, according to the US Forest Service.

The decision follows a productive meeting of the Northwest Forest Plan Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) held September 25-27 in Stevenson, Washington.

The three-day meeting proved pivotal in ensuring the forthcoming DEIS accurately reflects the FAC's comprehensive recommendations. After in-depth discussions with the FAC, the Forest Service opted to revise portions of the DEIS to better align with the committee's consensus recommendations.

The meeting was a critical step in the agency's amendment process, according to US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Regional Forester Jacque Buchanan

"By thoroughly discussing and interpreting the FAC's recommendations, we're ensuring the DEIS reflects the needs of our forests, Tribes, and communities," Buchanan said. "It is vital that we get this amendment right because it will guide the management of millions of acres of forest land for years to come."

Key topics addressed during the meeting included climate change adaptation, sustainable economic opportunities for rural communities, and greater Tribal inclusion in land management planning and implementation.

“The management of our national forests is of keen interest to many in the Pacific Northwest,” said Susan Jane Brown, co-chair of the FAC and Principal and Chief Legal Counsel of Silvix Resources. “Ensuring the climate-smart amendment to the Northwest Forest Plan reflects the best available science, including Indigenous knowledge, is essential. While progress was made, the Committee identified some areas that need further refinement before the amendment is ready for public review and comment.”

The Forest Service’s decision to take additional time to refine the DEIS highlights its commitment to delivering a thorough draft that best represents Tribal, FAC, and public input, according to Buchanan.

The FAC, a diverse 20-person group representing Tribes, local communities, environmental organizations, industry, and academia across Northern California, Oregon, and Washington, unanimously advanced a comprehensive set of recommendations for updating the Northwest Forest Plan. In the Stevenson meeting, the Committee examined the Forest Service’s efforts to incorporate those recommendations into the draft amendment.

“The Committee’s 192 consensus recommendations send a clear message to the Forest Service: the status quo isn’t working,” American Forest Resource Council President and co-chair of the FAC Travis Joseph said. “Modern, proactive stewardship is critical to addressing 21st-century challenges. We, like the public, are eager to review the DEIS and are committed to working with the agency to ensure this amendment results in meaningful change for Tribes, rural communities, and the health of our forests.

The DEIS is expected to be published in the Federal Register in November, initiating a 90-day public comment period. This will provide an opportunity for all interested parties to shape the future of forest management in the Pacific Northwest, according to the Forest Service.

The Northwest Forest Plan is a comprehensive plan for administering parts of federally managed lands in California, Oregon, and Washington. 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**

For more information, visit:

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

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

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

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

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

