

# ASSESSMENT OF WESTERN WASHINGTON AND OREGON (FEMAT)

Catherine (Cay) Ogden

I was asked to tell the story of the FEMAT report today. The story of this document actually begins on April 2, 1993 when President Clinton came to Portland and convened the Forest Conference. He invited a lot of representatives of constituent groups, different interested parties, scientists, and economists to meet with him and have some open discussion of the issues affecting management of the Pacific Northwest forests. We were all painfully aware of the divisive attitudes of the past ten years in trying to manage those forests. This was his effort to bring the Pacific Northwest back together again and come up with a plan that would provide sustainable timber harvest, yet maintain the ecosystem that all of us cared so much about.

I am going to read some quotes from President Clinton when he was here in Portland. First he said, "How can we achieve a balanced and comprehensive policy that recognizes the importance of the forests and timber to the economy of this region? And how can we preserve our precious old growth forests which are a part of our national heritage and, once destroyed, can never be replaced? The most important thing we can do is admit to each other there are no simple or easy answers. This is not about choosing between jobs and the environment, but about recognizing the importance of both; and recognizing that everyone here cares about both."

President Clinton decided that he wanted to provide five guiding principles for this work. "First, we must never forget the human and economic dimensions of these problems. Where sound management policies can preserve the health of the forests, timber sales should go forward. Where this requirement can not be met, we need to do our best to offer new economic opportunities for year-round, high-wage, high-skilled jobs. Second, as we craft a plan, we need to protect the long-term health of our forests, wildlife, and waterways. They are a gift from God and we hold them in trust for future generations. Third, our efforts must be, insofar as we are wise enough to know it, scientifically sound, ecologically credible, and legally responsible. Fourth, the plan should produce a predictable and sustainable level of timber sales and non-timber resources that will not degrade or destroy the environment. Fifth, to achieve these goals we will do our best, as I said, to make the federal government work together and to work for you. We may make mistakes but we will try to end the gridlock within the federal government and insist on collaboration not confrontation."

When he left Portland, the President's staff then created the FEMAT team. FEMAT stands for Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team. Jack Ward Thomas was asked to head that team and Martin Raphael served as his deputy leader for the

group. Jack brought together many people he had worked with in the past. You may know that Jack has worked on several of these projects: the Interagency Spotted Owl Report and the Gang of Four Report. He has a long history of these sorts of projects. He also brought in some new people. In response to President Clinton's request, all agencies were involved: the Environmental Protection Agency, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service all sent representatives to the FEMAT team. You will notice that I talk about the FEMAT team as they. I was not a member, so I am translating the best I can the work they did and their results.

The President's staff provided some baseline groundrules that they wanted the team to use. They wanted an array of options, so the President could choose which approach might be the best. They wanted to provide for viability of the northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets. They wanted well-distributed, viable populations on federal lands for other species as well. They also wanted maintenance and restoration of anadromous fisheries, and maintenance or creation of a well-connected old growth forest network.

The FEMAT team started developing the options. They eventually came up with ten options. Because they were only given three months to do this project and were dealing with 57 million acres (the range of the northern spotted owl), including 24 million acres of federal lands, their options were for what was going to happen on those federal lands. Within the 24 million acres of federal land the team worked with, 20 million are Forest Service, about 3 million are BLM and 2 million are Park Service lands. They looked at some of the existing work they had. They relied on the Gang of Four report, prepared for Congress a couple of years ago, which had some ideas on preserving old growth ecosystems in this region. The Spotted Owl Recovery Plan was used as a base for some of the options because they were pretty confident if the Recovery Plan would take care of the owls, then it could be built on to provide for the other species.

I am not going to explain to you what all the ten options were. What I can say is that all of them would allow for significantly less timber harvest than that of the 1980s. In the end, the alternative that was selected has between 1/5 and 1/4 of the timber harvest of the 1980s. So, these options created a lot of reserves.

As you look at the table of contents for the document, you will see it is divided into chapters. What I will do is hit some highlights of the different chapters. The terrestrial group had the biggest number of species to deal with. They had 1,400 species or species groups which they tried to assess. Again, their charge

was to determine what each of the ten options would do for each 1,400 species or species groups. That gets to be a lot of work for a three month time period. They divided the range of the spotted owl into 12 provinces. Some of the options had different management recommendations for different provinces, as would be appropriate.

The terrestrial group relied on a method of expert panels because they didn't have the time to technically quantify the benefits of the different options to all species. They brought in the most knowledgeable people and sought their opinions on what certain options would do for specific species. Panel members were given 100 "points" to be distributed towards options however they wanted. For example, they could put 100 points on one option, or 20 points on 5 different options, etc. ranking them based on their ability to protect certain species. This allowed the FEMAT team to get a sense of the questions that were in the minds of some of the expert panelists. How the panelists distributed their points indicated uncertainty about different options. The team then used the expert panel results to make their determinations about how well they thought different options would work.

The focus of the entire FEMAT effort was on late successional conifer forests. The FEMAT team relied on some stand data prepared from satellite imagery to try to capture the description of old growth forests. They divided the late successional conifer into three types. There were stands that were 9 - 21 inches DBH, single story stands that were greater than 21 inches DBH and multistoried stands that were greater than 21 inches DBH. Some of the data in here is presented within these stand categories.

The terrestrial group also included a group of ecologists who were asked to rate how well the different options would provide for this concept of a well-connected, functioning old-growth ecosystem. You will see their results in here also. Basically, one of the things that was important was that they did not feel that a "no-touch" management regime was appropriate, especially on the eastside. The ecologists felt that because of some of our conditions on the eastside, they were going to have to rely on some active management to control the fuel and some of the stocking levels. So, that was what the terrestrial group did.

The aquatic group came up with four key components of their work. They identified a series of key watersheds that were both tier one and tier two. Tier one key watersheds were those very important to anadromous fish or bull trout. They also described some management recommendations for riparian reserves. There were two riparian reserve scenarios. One provided more protection than the other. They also described a process of watershed analysis that would require agencies to really look at the watershed closely before future actions take place in there. A watershed analysis would be required for key watersheds and recommended for all other watersheds. There are a lot of other rules associated with when you would do watershed analysis. They also identified the need for watershed restoration projects and emphasized the priority we should place on those.

Now we get into a realm I am uncomfortable with, and that is the economics and the social chapters. I can tell you they are in

here. I really don't feel qualified to say much about them. As I said, the timber harvest levels of all the options were quite a bit less than what was occurring in the 1980s. Largely, this was because of the four guiding principles. If you are going to assure viability of all these species, and restoration and maintenance of anadromous fisheries, drastic changes in federal forest management is called for. So, all of these alternatives reflect those changes. The social group looked at the traditional timber community issues. They also explored Native American issues on management of federal forest lands. They addressed recreation, scenery, amenities and things such as that. Again, I apologize. I am not the person to describe for you what their results were.

The ten options which FEMAT developed were then presented to the group I worked on, the environmental impact statement team. You will hear people talk about the options as alternatives. That is because when the transition was made from FEMAT to EIS, options became alternatives. When we published the draft EIS, President Clinton had selected as his preferred alternative, Alternative 9. You will hear a lot of discussion of that one. The unique features of that alternative are that the FEMAT team had looked to capture efficiencies. We knew we needed to protect anadromous fish, and we knew those key watersheds were important for fish, so how about if the reserves for terrestrial species were placed, as best we could, over the top of those key watersheds. The idea was to maximize the overlap and minimize the acreage taken out of the timber base.

## Author

Catherine (Cay) Ogden  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Interagency SEIS Team  
P.O. Box 3623  
Portland, OR 97266