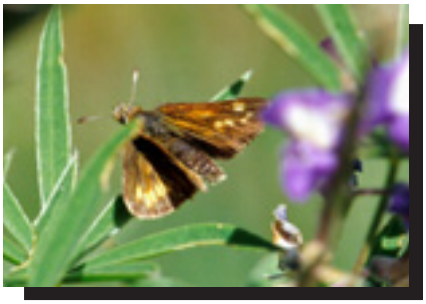
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Western Washington

Northwest Forest Plan Division

- *Cascades frog*

- *Engineered log jam*



- *Mardon skipper butterfly survey*

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Background

Since 1994, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has actively collaborated in the implementation of the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP). Through these efforts, we work to conserve species associated with late-successional and old-growth forests, such as the federally listed northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet; restore watershed conditions; and provide goods and services to the American public including timber products and recreational opportunities.

Who We Are

We are a diversely experienced team of wildlife and fisheries biologists dedicated to the restoration of forest and aquatic ecosystems. We are commited to assisting our partners in the successful implementation of the NWFP.

Who We Serve

- Private citizens
- Western Washington National Forests: Mt.Baker-Snoqualmie, Wenatchee - Okanogan, Olympic and Gifford Pinchot
- Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
- Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument
- Counties
- Tribes
- Other federal agencies

What We Do

Forest management planning

We assist the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in planning their actions to be consistent with the goals of the NWFP.

This includes addressing endangered species' issues early in the process. Examples include:

- Membership on the Gotchen late successional reserve fuels reduction Interdisciplinary Team.
- Membership on the Interstate-90 corridor upgrade planning team.
- Development of the Finney Adaptive Management Area Plan.
- Assisting in the technical design of a large-scale road obliteration project in the Olympic National Forest.

Endangered Species Act consultations

Due to our involvement early in the planning process, we have streamlined consultation procedures and timelines.
Some examples include:

- Facilitated consultation on a multi-jurisdictional project to repair the Hoh River Road by assisting in the preparation of the Biological Assessment.
- Worked with the USFS and Sk'lallam Tribe to meet the Tribe's need for a large cedar tree while minimizing environmental effects.
- Prepared programmatic consultations for five national forests, covering hundreds of actions annually on these forests. We are preparing programmatic consultations to cover adverse effects to listed fishes.
- Prepared approximately100 Biological Opinions for other actions.

Landscape-scale Assessments
We assist in the technical analysis and development of management recommendations for:

- Late-Succesional Reserves
- Adaptive Management Areas
- Watershed Analyses

Monitoring and Adaptive Management
We conduct ESA compliance monitoring and participate in annual inter-agency NWFP implementation monitoring. By monitoring, we apply adaptive management through improved understanding of cause and effect relationships.

Investigations
We conduct investigations to learn more about a species, their habitats and how land management actions may affect them. Examples include:

- Barred owl and spotted owl interactions
- Bull trout (a federally listed species) movement within drainage basins using radio telemetry
- Status of Mardon skipper butterfly, a federal candidate species

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the spotted owl still listed as threatened given the protection provided in the NWFP?
At the inception of the NWFP, it was known that many of the newly-established reserves were too young to support late-successional dependent species and it would take several decades for these reserves to provide the type and distribution of habitat sufficient for species recovery.

Is the spotted owl recovering?
Based on demographic studies, the spotted owl population is still declining range-wide, but it is declining at a slower rate than pre-NWFP conditions.

Why do we still need designated critical habitat if the NWFP provides habitat for the spotted owl through the reserves?
The NWFP reserves were delineated in 1994, 2 years after critical habitat was designated. These two types of reserves overlap extensively and provide similar functions. The FWS is currently not funded to amend critical habitat given the adoption of the NWFP.

Has the NWFP met all of its initial goals?
The NWFP is working well towards the conservation of ecosystems and species, but in recent years the actual timber outputs have been less than anticipated under the plan.

Will the barred owl replace the spotted owl?
It is not known at this time what the full impact of the invasion of barred owls, a native of the eastern US, may mean to the survival and recovery of the spotted owl. However, we are concerned about the barred owl and are monitoring its invasion and effects on the spotted owl.

What is the greatest challenge in future forest management?
We anticipate the increasing demand for various types of recreational experiences will be difficult to manage and will have increasing impacts on wildlife and fish. Another challenge is finding innovative solutions to the economic viability of forest management actions such as precommercial and commercial thinnings.

How much old-growth is left and does the NWFP allow for the harvest of old-growth?
We estimate that Washington has less than 10 percent of its original old-growth. The NWFP allows for the harvest of old-growth within the "matrix" land category, and some adaptive management areas with specified guidelines. Matrix lands comprise approximately 1/6th of the lands covered by the NWFP.
The Olympic and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forests harvest little to no old-growth.