



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

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### DRAFT RECOVERY PLAN FOR NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL RELEASED

The U.S. Department of the Interior today released a draft recovery plan for the northern spotted owl which proposes a framework to manage 5.4 million acres of federal land in the Pacific Northwest for owl habitat.

"We had two broad objectives in preparing the recovery plan," said Jonathan Bart, chairman of the recovery team. "To provide adequate assurance of recovery as required by the Endangered Species Act, and, within that constraint, to reduce social and economic costs as much as possible."

The plan is based on a network of 196 conservation areas located on federal land and widely distributed across the range of the owl. The areas encompass a total of 7.5 million acres of federal land, 2.1 million of which are wilderness and national parks. Forest management guidelines for the conservation areas and the federal land between them also are in the plan.

"When the habitat in the conservation areas is fully functioning," Bart said, "we expect the areas will support a population of about 2,300 breeding pairs of owls." While this is less than the current population, he said, the recovery team believes that this population will be large enough and well enough distributed to survive and replenish itself.

Economic estimates in the plan placed the regional cost of owl protection at 32,100 jobs, compared to levels of employment that might have been reached in 1995 if nothing were done to protect the owl. This figure includes jobs in the timber industry and those in closely related sectors of the economy.

(more)

The recovery plan is similar in concept to the conservation plan created for the owl in 1990 by an interagency scientific committee, but also makes use of studies completed since that plan was written, Bart said. The recovery plan seeks to reduce the economic impacts of owl protection in a number of ways, including:

-- By recommending that the Fish and Wildlife Service reduce critical habitat for the owl by 22 percent, from 6.9 million acres to 5.4 million acres;

-- By tailoring recommendations to local conditions, including the possibility of delisting, or removing the owl from the list of threatened species in any one of the 11 large areas within its range;

-- By allowing limited and controlled thinning and salvage in the conservation areas;

-- By basing the conservation areas, to the extent possible, on lands already withdrawn from, or unsuitable for, timber management;

-- By using a continuing program of monitoring and research to refine the plan over time.

The plan is being released in draft form for 60 days of public review and comment. It already has been through a process of scientific peer review. Copies of the summary of the plan, or the entire technical document with maps, are available by writing to the Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Team, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 911 NE 11th Ave., Portland, OR 97232-4181. Comments on the draft plan should be sent to the same address.

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