

# Forest Management Program on the Umpqua National Forest

## Issue

Changing and increasingly complex forest management direction has created misunderstandings about agency priorities and practices, particularly old-growth harvest, timber volumes, and how uninventoried roadless areas are considered during timber-program decisions. Timber targets on the Umpqua National Forest have reduced dramatically since the 1980s when the annual target was 350-plus million board feet.

## Background

**Setting Priorities:** Consistent with the Forest Service Mission, the Umpqua National Forest has a multiple-use vision shown here in part:

**Umpqua National Forest Vision**  
*Our pride is the Forest. Service is our legacy.*

We, the employees of the Umpqua National Forest, are committed to sustaining the health of the lands and waters of the Umpqua National Forest. Restoration in the North and South Umpqua and Row River watersheds is a key signature of our management.

We proudly provide goods and services to local individuals, businesses, and communities and others who come to us from across Oregon and the Nation....

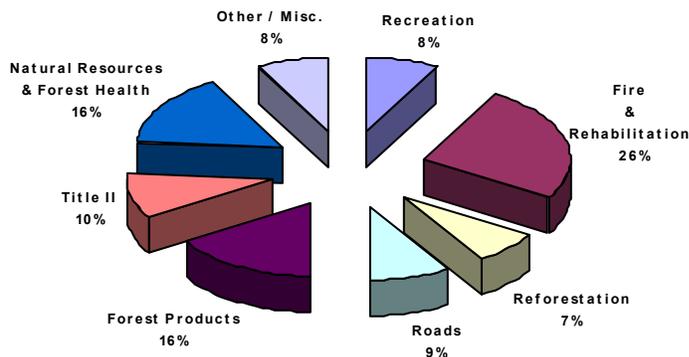
As a multiple-use forest, our vision implies that we will act to secure water quality, fisheries, wildlife, aquatic habitat, and other resources desired by the American people along with a sustainable timber supply. Consistent with this vision, the Forest’s Restoration Business and Strategic plans identify aquatic restoration as a priority.

For many years, we have chosen to invest in restoring the Steamboat drainage, our top aquatic restoration priority on the Forest as identified in our Restoration Business Plan (updated in 2003). Consistent with President Bush’s 2004 Executive Order requiring cooperative conservation, we published a flyer in our local paper in July 2005 as the most cost-effective way to inform our community about the status and direction for the Steamboat Restoration project.

**Budgets:** Congressional intent limits the use of funds. For example, recreation or road funds may not be used for reforestation work. Following Congressional intent and forest priorities, from 2003 to 2005 we spent \$72,000 of Forest Service funds to decommission roads and \$2.3 million for reforestation in burned areas.

Here is a summary of 2005 funding allocations to the Umpqua National Forest. The preponderance of funds is for timber, vegetation and watershed management, and fire management.

**Allocation to Spend  
FY2005 Umpqua National Forest Budget**



**Timber Program Management:** With the publication of the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan in 1990, we went from a program of intensive timber management providing an annual timber harvest of about 365 million board feet to a program with a harvest of 333 million board feet. With implementation of the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994 and the listing of Coho salmon as a threatened species, the annual probable sale quantity (PSQ) for timber harvest dropped to about 70 million board feet per year. Over the past several years, funding has been available for 25 to 45 million board feet to be offered annually.

From 2002 to 2005, we reduced timber-sale costs per thousand board feet by about 90 percent due to increased production and cost-management measures. (Refer to Table 1)

**Table 1: Umpqua National Forest timber volume and cost by year (million board feet (MMBF))**

Fiscal Year	Target Volume (MMBF)	Cost (thousands)	MMBF offered	Average cost per MMBF (thousands)	Major Events Affecting the Timber Management Program
2005	29	\$3,227	Approx 24	\$135	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carryover balance of 5 MMBF to be offered in first quarter 2006</li> </ul>
2004	42	\$3,598	37	\$97	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed planning for fire salvage sales</li> <li>Prepared and offered salvage sales</li> <li>FY04 Reorganization into forest-wide planning, preparation and administration timber teams</li> </ul>
2003	42	\$4,686	7	\$669	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focused on fire salvage proposals</li> <li>Delayed by court ruling that stopped issuance of biological opinions from regulatory agency</li> </ul>
2002	30	\$4,309	3	\$1,436	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NEPA litigation impacted 32 MMBF of planned and partially prepared timber sale volume</li> <li>Forest Service Chief suspended target accomplishment to allow employees to fight record forest fires</li> </ul>

**2002 Fires and Recovery Actions:** Fires burned 88,000 acres and were controlled by October 1, 2002, at a cost of \$78 million. (Refer to *Wildfires – Fires of 2002 – The Umpqua National Forest* publication.) Twenty-six percent of the acreage burned at moderate-to-high fire intensity. Although we are not required to reforest burned acres, we planned for and then reforested many acres. Along with considering reforestation needs, staff responded to the fires with many restorative actions, including:

- Completed the **Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER)** in November 2002
- Updated the Umpqua National Forest Restoration Business Plan** in March 2003 identifying activities such as reforestation and road rebuilding.
- Completed the Fire Assessment – Wildfire Effects Evaluation Project** -- in April 2003
- Diverted our green timber** sale planning funds in fiscal years **2003 and 2004** to plan **salvage sales**; sold 10 sales, ranging from 125 MBF to 7,243 MBF
- Mortality was mapped** in approximately **12,500 acres of plantations** and **13,400 acres of unmanaged stands**
- Prepared **fire recovery budget estimates** showing about **\$45 million** was needed for full recovery, including **\$8.2 million for reforestation**. During the past three years, the Forest **received \$2.3 million for reforestation** in burned areas and **another \$4.4 million** in fire rehabilitation

- Limited funding forced a priority of reforesting moderate-to-high-intensity-burned plantations and riparian reserves within Matrix and Late Successional Reserves. Natural stands were planted only if salvaged or within severely burned Riparian Reserves
  - **Reforested 47 percent of stand-replacement fire areas** outside of harvest units within Baked Apple Timber sale area; remaining salvage units to be reforested in 2006 and 2007
  - **Reforested 5,600 acres** of plantations out of **9,100 acres identified for reforestation**
  - Anticipate **25 percent of moderate-to-severely burned areas** that were not reforested to **naturally regenerate within 10 years**
- **Reforestation funds** comprised of **55 percent appropriated funds, 34 percent Title II** funds from Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, and **1 percent Knutson-Vandenburg** funds

**Road Decommissioning:** The Umpqua National Forest maintains about 4,800 miles of roads. Strategies to address road issues have been controversial, particularly road decommissioning although current national direction requires we consider decommissioning unneeded roads. We have decommissioned 28.5 miles of storm-damaged roads, or about 0.006 of the total Forest road system, during the past three years in key watersheds with significant natural resource protection concerns and when repair was infeasible. We spent \$72,000 of Forest Service funds, \$195,000 from other federal sources, and \$15,000 from Oregon Trout.

**Findings from Management Reviews:** A **Regional Forester's Review** was conducted in May 2004 to provide oversight on the management of the Umpqua National Forest and observed:

- Outstanding work on restoration of the Baked Apple landscape
- Commendable work on planting seedlings that show early economic benefits and strong root development in burned area on Tiller Ranger District
- Good cooperative work between timber and fire units to manage for fuels-reduction program
- Poor recent (2000-2003) record of timber program accomplishment
- Encouragement to continue working with polarized sectors of the public to move towards full success of the timber program

Among the responses to the review, we established a multi-year accountability plan to ensure future timber targets are met and shifted to a mix of regeneration and thinning volume.

**Uninventoried Roadless Areas:** Forest staff acted within guidelines shared in a November 2004 memo from the agency's regional office to continue analyzing impacts to unroaded areas on a project-by-project basis instead of mapping or identifying uninventoried roadless areas at a Forest level.

**Asking for Reforestation Help:** Reforestation using funds donated by the public has long been a hallmark of public-lands forestry. After the Tillamook burns, Oregon schoolchildren and people from all walks of life volunteered money and time to replant State forests. The Forest Service has sought and received similar donations for almost 100 years from sources as diverse as the Penny Pines program and Bates Casket Company. In 2005, we submitted one grant application to the Umpqua Basin Watershed Council for \$18,000 of Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board funds to reforest riparian areas outside salvage sales to improve watershed conditions. The Watershed Council did not support the grant.

## Opportunities:

- ❑ We estimate **\$18 million, over the 10-year program** identified in our 2003 Restoration Business Plan, is **needed to accomplish** additional **fire salvage, reforestation, hazard reduction, and trail and recreation site restoration**.
- ❑ To further **reduce unit costs** in managing our timber program, we will **continue working collaboratively** with local and national groups to achieve a vigorous timber program on the Umpqua National Forest that is supported by our diverse publics. This follows direction provided in Executive Order on Cooperative Conservation reinforcing collaborative efforts when implementing laws relating to the environment and natural resources.
- ❑ **To promote recovery in Late Succession Reserves (LSR)**, we are investigating methods to develop late-successional stand characteristics in managed stands through thinning stand density, releasing conifers from brush and hardwoods, and reducing fuels to improve wildlife habitat and strengthen the landscape's resiliency to fire as well as prepare the landscape to eventually reintroduce fire as a natural tool to maintain the LSR
- ❑ We **anticipate additional monies** from the Regional Office to **conduct surveys** on unplanted, moderate-and-high-severity sites **to determine where natural regeneration has established**, in order to be most effective in reforesting areas, with our available monies.
- ❑ We will continue meeting Forest's priorities, as funding permits, consistent with recommendations in restoration business plans and 2004 Strategic Plan for the Umpqua National Forest. Partners will be critical in achieving these priorities.
- ❑ We will seek partners to reduce \$46 million backlog of road maintenance to provide forest access.

## Stakeholders

- ❑ Douglas Timber Operators
- ❑ Southern Oregon Timber Industries Association
- ❑ Local contractors and businesses including mills
- ❑ Communities for Healthy Forests
- ❑ Private Landowners; Local Community Members
- ❑ Douglas County Commissioners
- ❑ Umpqua Basin Watershed Council
- ❑ Environmental groups: North Umpqua Foundation, Umpqua Watersheds, others
- ❑ Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- ❑ Oregon Hunters Association
- ❑ Douglas Forest Protective Association
- ❑ Oregon Department of Forestry
- ❑ US Fish and Wildlife Service
- ❑ NOAA Fisheries

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