
Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project

Press Release

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Federal Land Agencies Adopt Science Strategy for Interior Columbia River Basin

(Boise, ID; Portland, OR) -- The Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced the completion of the nine-year old Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project. With the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding the federal agencies – Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, NOAA Fisheries, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency and the Forest Service’s Forest and Range Experiment Stations – will cooperatively implement the *“The Interior Columbia Basin Strategy”* to guide the efforts to update land use plans for National Forests and BLM lands in the four-state region.

“It is the interest of all parties to this MOU to utilize the findings of the Project’s Science Team, new information and best available science as it emerges during the life of the Strategy,” said Intermountain Regional Forester Jack Troyer. “The science developed during the Project will guide our work to update land use plans, as well as on the ground management. Our goal is to manage public lands in the Interior Columbia Basin to meet community needs for goods and services in an ecologically sustainable way.”

The agencies released a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and proposed decision for the management of federal lands in eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho and western Montana on December 15, 2000. Instead of a formal, basin-wide decision from the Project however, the regional decision makers elected to adopt a strategy of incorporating the science into ongoing land use planning efforts.

Completion of the Project received support from regional leaders. Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne said, “I am pleased to see the completion of this project in a manner that will allow the science to be used in decisions made at the local level, by those most affected by land-use decisions on our federal lands. In our July 2000 four-governor agreement on salmon recovery we noted the interior Columbia River Basin needs a balanced strategy that can provide for stable and predictable multiple-use management on federal lands for fish and wildlife and other purposes while permitting needed flexibility, particularly on private lands. The existence of such a strategy is long overdue.”

Former Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber stated, “I’m pleased that the strategy for federal lands in the interior Columbia River Basin is being finalized. Restoring the health of the eastside forests was a priority of mine throughout my administration. We learned a lot about how to do

this with good science and collaborative processes through numerous restoration projects over the last years. This strategy and the science from the Project will be valuable in the updating of the Forest Plans and furthering our efforts to restore forest ecosystem health.”

The Project, initiated in January 1994, addressed the landscape health issues facing the Columbia River Basin such as the threat of wildfire, noxious weeds, and the protection and restoration of habitat for fish and wildlife species. The Project also addressed the socio-economic effects of federal land management decisions.

Copies of the Memorandum of Understanding and *The Interior Columbia Basin Strategy* are available on the website, www.icbemp.gov.
