

Northwest Forest Plan Interagency Monitoring, 20-Year Report Socioeconomic Status and Trends

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Objective: determine the status and trends in social and economic well-being in the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) area. Key issues include: 1) the role and quantity of federal timber in the market; (2) federal agency obligations to communities near federal timberlands; and (3) the role forests play, especially federal forests, in local and regional economies.

What data did we use? We used existing social, economic, and Forest Service and BLM data to assess the status and trends in socioeconomic well-being in the NWFP area. This included data for population, ethnicity, unemployment, employment, and personal income. Data on quantifiable resource management activities on NFS and BLM lands that contribute to social and economic well-being were also tracked. These include timber, special forest products, grazing, minerals, and recreation. **Note:** The data are not suitable for a statistically valid cause-and-effect analysis linking trends in socioeconomic well-being to natural resource management activities on federal lands.

What is new about this report? A collection of reports was published in 2005-2006 on the 10-year anniversary of the NWFP. In 2006, the Regional Interagency Executive Committee (RIEC), which coordinates NWFP implementation, agreed to replace the socioeconomic monitoring questions posed for the 10-year report with a new one: What is the status and trend of socioeconomic well-being? To maintain consistency, the 20-year report uses the same methods as the previous report.

Key findings.

- **Employment associated with Forest Service and BLM programs contributes to socioeconomic well-being in the NWFP area.** Agency employment and jobs supported by agency timber harvest and recreational activities are especially important. Between 2001 and 2012, overall agency employment declined, while FS and BLM timber-harvest-related employment increased slightly (fig. 1).
- **Recreation visitor spending is the largest single source of economic activity associated with NFS and BLM management in the NWFP area.** The annual number of recreation visits is estimated at approximately 20 million – with 5.3 million to BLM-managed lands and 14.7 million to NFS lands in the NWFP area.

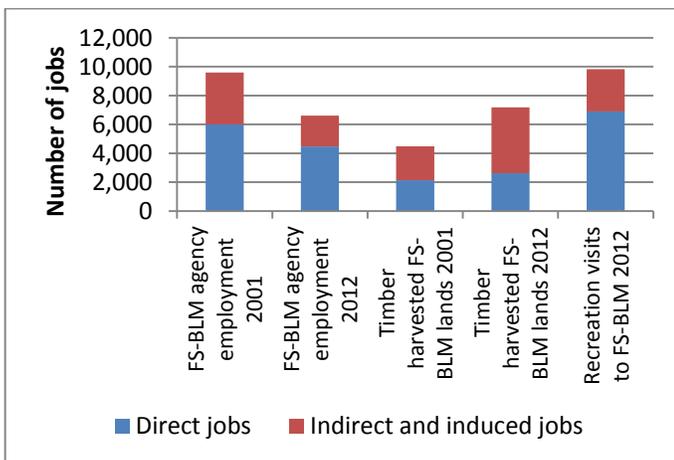


Figure 1 – Employment supported by FS-BLM activities, NWFP area

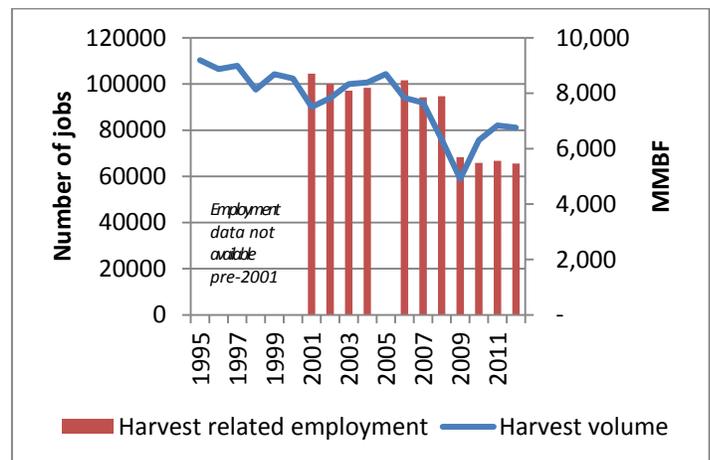


Figure 2– Timber related employment and harvest, NWFP area, all ownerships

- **Timber harvest, as well as total employment in forest products industries, including logging, primary and secondary wood manufacturing, has a history of increasing and decreasing in the**

NWFP area (fig.2). Timber harvest and related employment have been key issues in forest policy discussions since the early 1970s. Timber employment is closely related to timber harvest. A decline in timber harvest began in 2006, which escalated in 2008 corresponding with broader economic conditions including the national downturn in building construction. As the housing market recovered, timber harvests levels increased, but in 2012 still remain below the 20-year average. Timber harvest on NFS and BLM lands are often important to nearby communities, even though federal timber harvests account for only approximately 10 percent of total harvest in the NWFP area. Total employment in harvest related employment sectors has declined by thirty-seven percent since 2001.

- Volume offered from NFS and BLM lands has fluctuated, but has been on a general upward trend since 2000.** The volume of timber offered for sale on NFS and BLM lands is compared with the probable sale quantity (PSQ) anticipated under the NWFP. The agencies came close to producing PSQ volumes in the first few years of the Plan, but had a large drop in 1998 (fig.3). In 2012, volume offered was approximately 80 percent of PSQ, although much of the offered volume differed in land allocation and harvest method from what was expected as PSQ volume under the NWFP.

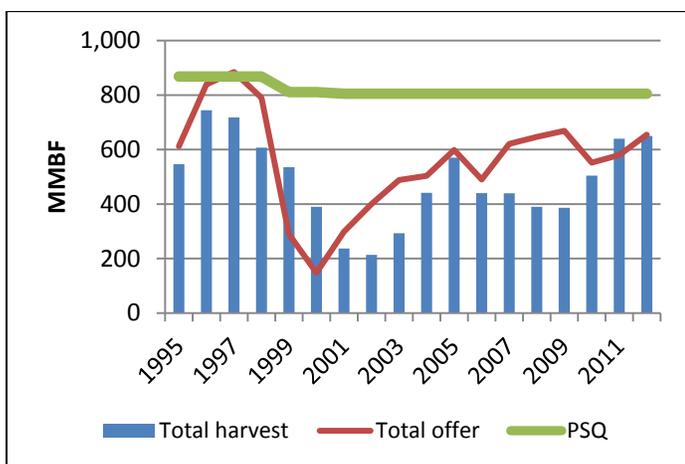


Figure 3 – FS-BLM timber offer and harvest levels compared to PSQ

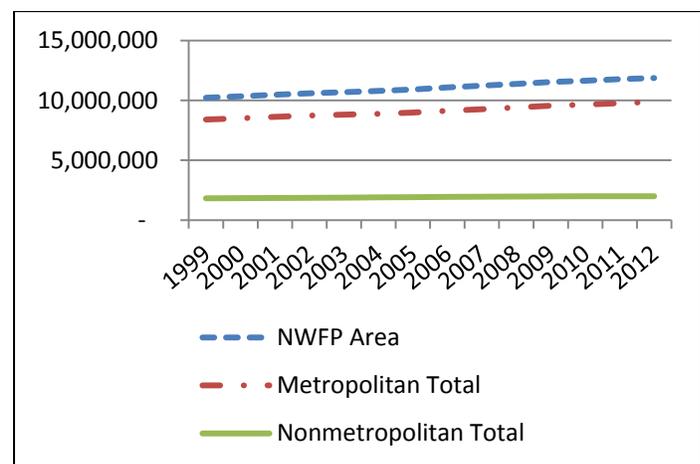


Figure 4 – Population change in NWFP area counties

- In the past decade, the population of nonmetropolitan counties has increased more slowly than metropolitan counties (fig. 4).** Population size is often an indicator of economic diversity. Most people in the NWFP area live in counties that the U.S. Department of Labor describes as metropolitan. These counties contain core urban areas with 50,000 or more people.
- In periods of economic hardship, such as the one that began in 2008, federal lands and federal agencies played especially important roles in contributing to socioeconomic well-being in rural America.** Nonmetropolitan counties are less diverse economically and more strongly tied to the wood products industry. Most of the timber harvested in the NWFP area comes from nonmetropolitan counties. Although forest products manufacturing employment is about equally split between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties, it accounts for roughly 10 percent of total employment in nonmetropolitan counties and only 1 percent in metropolitan counties. The effects of changes in timber harvest and related employment on well-being are likely more pronounced in nonmetropolitan counties. While timber harvested on NFS and BLM lands declined in 2008, the decline was modest compared to the change in timber harvested from non-federal lands. NFS and BLM timber harvests reportedly kept mills running during that difficult year.

Sharing the data. To respond to stakeholder requests for more transparency from the Forest Service, a webpage on reo.gov is now available that contains all of the socioeconomic monitoring data related to well-being.