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OREGON Fish & Wildlife JOURNAL

Furthering The Concept of Multiple-Use of Our Lands For More Than 35 Years!

What's Inside...

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Our cover photo shows the state of our public lands. Is this okay with you?

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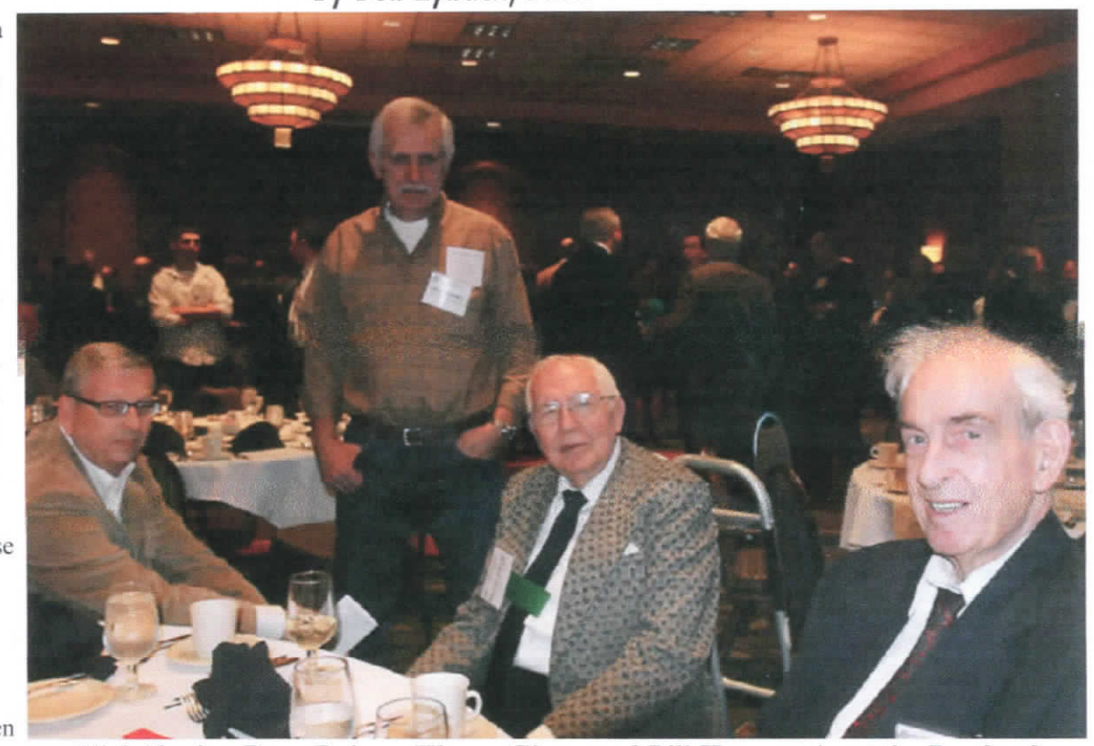
"THE OREGON PLAN"

An Oregonian's Solution to the Ongoing Forest Wars of the Western United States

By Bob Zybach, PhD.

I have been a friend and business associate of Wayne Giesy's for more than 25 years. During this entire time he has discussed with me (and anyone else who will listen) his ideas for resolving the conflicts surrounding the management of our nation's forests -- and particularly those forests in the western United States.



Nick Napier, Dave Rainey, Wayne Giesy, and Bill Hagenstein at the Portland Wholesale Lumber Association's 2010 annual meeting in Portland, Oregon. Giesy has promoted his idea for improved management of Oregon's federal lands to forest industry, environmental organizations, and elected officials for the past 30 years, during which time it has evolved into the "Oregon Plan for Federal Forests."

During the past 30 years conflicts between the timber industry and environmental activists regarding the management of our federal lands have become so well known they are commonly referred to as the "Forest Wars" a conflict in which opponents have taken sides as to whether our nation's forests should be principally managed for the economic and resource benefit of local and national interests, or whether they should be allowed to "function naturally" for intrinsic values and not necessarily be subjected to harvesting at all. These conflicts are not peculiar to just Oregon or to the western US, but have also been taking place in other countries as well, such as Brazil, Venezuela, Australia, and Tasmania.

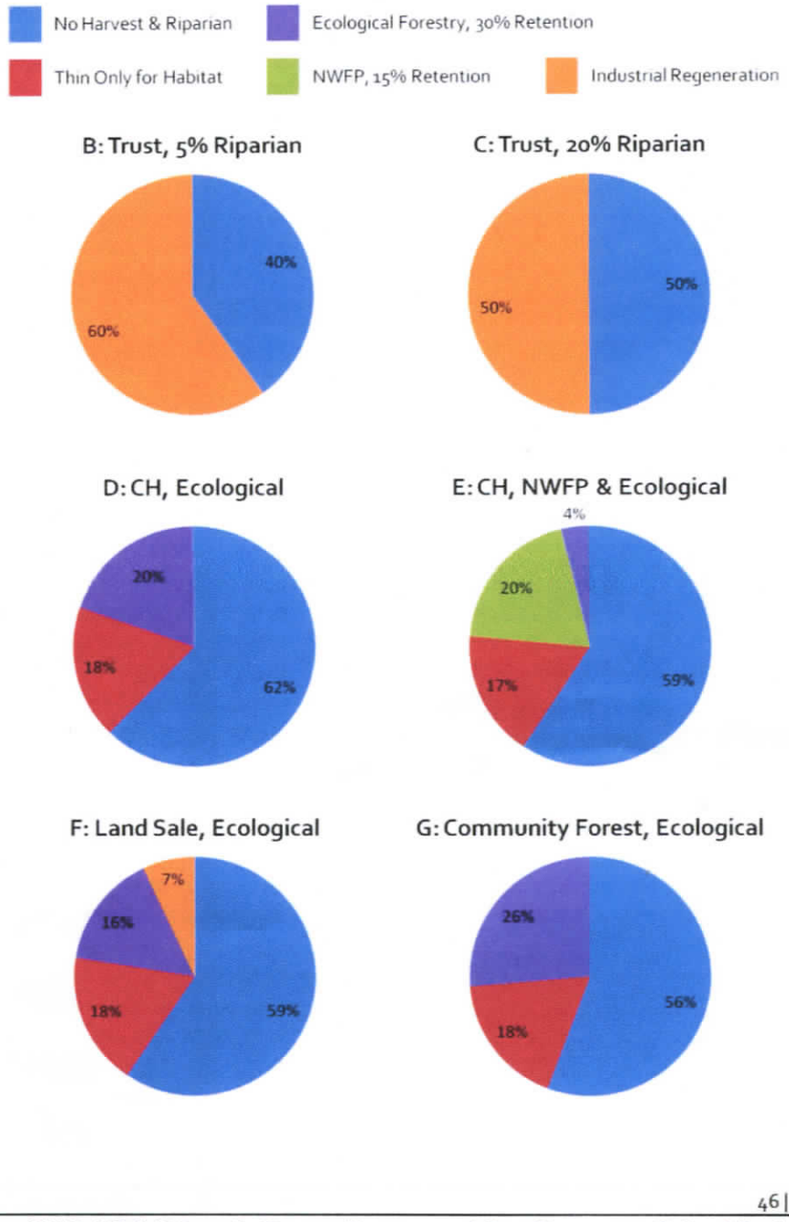
Giesy's proposed solution, commonly known as the "Giesy Plan" for many years because of its principal authorship, is to divide the lands into two parts: one to be managed for multiple use – with an economic focus -- along more traditional lines, and the other to be managed in accordance with environmental concerns. The former approach would be subject to existing state and federal laws and regulations regarding riparian areas, road construction, etc., and the latter would allow for whatever harvests were needed to maintain forest health, recreational uses, wildlife habitat, and other environmental concerns. These separate approaches would be taken for an 80-year period to fully test them out, and then reconsidered at that time based on existing results and perceptions.

After being discussed and reconsidered in detail with influential members of both communities, the plan has transitioned into a more representative "Oregon Plan,"

by which it is now known. This idea has been presented in many venues and with many individuals – industrial foresters, tree farmers, politicians, and environmentalists -- over the past 30 years (Wayne recently turned 94), and modified accordingly as it was being considered. In February Giesy even had a one on one meeting with Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber to discuss a possible presentation of this plan to the National Governor's Association Winter 2014 meeting in Washington, DC.

Is this really a possible solution to resolving past conflicts and moving forward with the management of our common forest resources? A growing number of people and organizations on both sides of the table seem to think so.

Figure R-2. Percent of Acres Under Different Harvest Regimes. Sustained Timber Base includes forests shown as Industrial Regeneration, NWFP, or Ecological Forestry. See Table A-16 in Appendix.



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The 2013 "O&C Lands Report" prepared for Governor John Kitzhaber displays these pie charts as possible options for management of federal BLM forestlands in western Oregon. Note that Option C is identical to the 50/50 management split first proposed by Wayne Giesy 30 years ago, and that other options simply constitute "variations on a theme."

Background

Sometime in 1983, shortly after Wayne first began work as an employee of Ralph Hull, of Hull-Oakes Lumber Co. in Dawson, Oregon, he approached Ralph with his concerns in regards to increasing environmental actions to restrict logging activities on federal lands. At the time Wayne thought that in order to secure a stable supply of logs from BLM O&C Lands — where Hull-Oakes then obtained most of its raw materials — a deal should be made between the forest industry and the environmental organizations to divide the disputed lands into two portions: 1/2 for environmental purposes and 1/2 for public product needs. After nearly a year considering this idea, Ralph gave Wayne the authorization, resources and encouragement needed to present this idea to other forest industry leaders, with full backing of Hull-Oakes Lumber Company.

When Wayne first presented his idea to a number of forest industry leaders he was openly laughed at, and accused of "giving away the farm" by other members of

these groups who couldn't conceive of the environmental organizations having enough power or credibility to obtain such a major commitment of public resources. At that time local loggers and sawmill owners had access to perhaps 85% of the standing federal timber in Oregon; today that number is much closer to 15% access, as the remainder has been dedicated to "critical habitat" for Threatened and Endangered Species, riparian "reserves," Wilderness, roadless areas, and other designated "set asides."

Giesy's idea first became publicly known through an editorial written and published by long-time and well-respected Albany Democrat-Herald editor, Haso Herring, in May 2003. Although Herring's editorial focused more on Wayne's suggestions regarding timber salvage from recent western Oregon wildfires rather than a basic division of all federal lands, he used the name "Giesy Plan" to label Wayne's thoughts: "The Giesy plan sounds visionary because it is based on common sense and assumes that obstacles can be overcome. That's the way most Americans used to think. Would that more of us did so now."

Current Iterations

Today the name "Oregon Plan" is used more often to represent Wayne's original proposal, as it had been considered for some time prior to Herring's editorial. Although its influence is generally not recognized or acknowledged in ongoing debates regarding the same forest management problems that existed 30 years ago, current proposals strongly mirror Wayne's original suggestions and certainly have their basis in his unvarying advocacy.

During the past two years, there has been significant political discussion concerning the need to resolve the long-standing debate between forest industry and environmental groups in regards to the O&C Lands in western Oregon. Every one of these efforts has focused on a division of public forestlands between competing timber production, environmental preserves, and riparian reserves — as first suggested by Wayne in the early 1980's, and actively advocated by him ever since:

In 2012 Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber formed an O&C Lands task force to address the problem of those forests to meet their federally mandated obligations. On February 6, 2013 the task force released a 96-page report that offered a series of options — each based upon Giesy's principal suggestion that the lands be divided between the opposing factions and managed according to their individual perspectives. A series of graphs on page 46 of the report illustrated a series of proposed options; with each one being based on Wayne's basic argument to equitably divide the land between resource production and forest preservation.

Also in 2012, Oregon Congressmen Peter DeFazio, Greg Walden, and Kurt Schrader developed a proposal, integrating the Kitzhaber report and based on the same concept developed by Giesy regarding the division of federal forestlands. The resulting proposed legislation, called the DeFazio-Schrader-Walden O&C Bill by fellow Congressman Doc Hasting, was included as part of the successful House Bill 1526. It has been generally supported by western Oregon members of the forest industry, but opposed by numerous environmental organizations, such as Oregon Wild, a long-time activist group based in Portland, Oregon.

Simultaneous to Governor Kitzhaber's efforts and those of Oregon's bipartisan Congressional team, Oregon Senator Ron Wyden — initially working with fellow Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley — had been fashioning a separate solution to the western Oregon O&C Lands stalemate, generally referred to as the "Wyden Bill." Senator Wyden's efforts began in 2011 and are based on a "legislative framework" he developed that features as its basis: "The legislation will create wilderness and other permanent land use designations whose primary management focus will be to maintain and enhance conservation attributes. This acreage will be roughly equivalent to lands designated for sustainable harvest"; i.e., the same approximate 50/50 split first suggested by Giesy more than 30 years earlier, and actively promoted by him to the Senator, his staff, and many others ever since.

Wyden's proposal was publicly released on November 26, 2013, and was immediately opposed by most environmental organizations, such as Oregon Wild, and by the major western Oregon timber industries in a co-sponsored press release. On the following day the American Forest Resource Council — which had generally favored the DeFazio Bill — even released a more critical response through their monthly AFRC Newsletter.

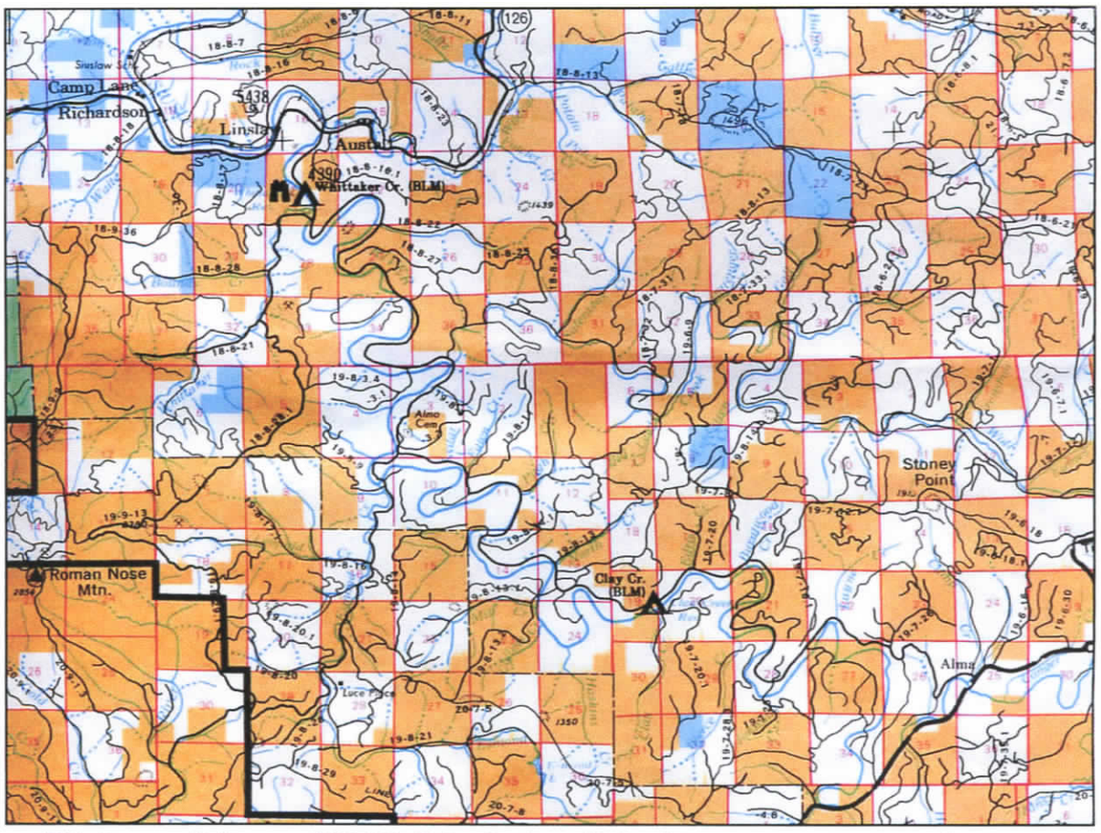
Oregon Plan Details

A more detailed look at the Oregon Plan — and the need for corrective management of federal lands in Oregon and in the remaining western States — illustrates the basic dependency of the Kitzhaber O&C Report, House Bill 1526, and the Wyden Bill on Giesy's original concerns and recommendations. The proposal is only six pages long, including four pages of supporting illustrations and statistics, and can be found online at: www.ORWW.org/Awards/2013/SAF/Wayne_Giesy/Oregon_Plan

The first page of the plan's summary contains most of Giesy's original proposal: a division of US Forest Service lands in the 11 western states as: 40% for environmental concerns; 10% for riparian protection; and 50% "to produce products for the American public," with certain conditions and restrictions. Ten "benefits" of adopting this idea are also listed, including: rural jobs, elimination of county payments, reduced imports, improved international balance of payments, reduced wildfire risk, enhanced wildlife habitat, and an elimination of existing "negative activities" by both sides of the debate.

The second page of the plan offers key modifica-

tions to the original proposal, following consultations with both environmental and timber management proponents, with management divisions being made along watershed boundaries. The key points include a stipulation to not designate any more Wilderness during the 80-year length of the proposal; to allow harvest and sales of products from lands other than Wilderness to provide a management income to the environmental side of the equation, and to allocate forestlands to each side along watershed boundaries, to allow for more efficient management of water, wildlife, and other intrinsic values to both sides.



This is a partial map of BLM's "checkerboard" land management patterns in western Oregon that are similar to other patterns of federal forest management in the western US. These square-mile segments represent arbitrary legal survey boundaries that do not follow more manageable watershed, ecological, or biological divisions across the landscape.

As the accompanying BLM ownership map illustrates, this latter approach would likely require an additional, preliminary step before much of the lands could be divided. In "checkerboard" ownership patterns common through much of the western US it would be necessary – and desirable – to use land sales and exchanges in order to consolidate interspersed ownerships into manageable subbasins before determining future management options.

Page three is a copy of a 2010 report using Oregon Department of Employment figures, showing 72,000 jobs lost in Oregon from 1989-2008 due to reduced forest management levels -- and compared to 88,000 Oregon government jobs created during the same time period; page four is a graphic illustration of the relative amounts of federal land contained in each of the eleven western states as compared to federal land holdings in the 37 eastern states (Hawaii and Alaska are not shown); page five shows two graphs depicting the increasing trends of both total wildfire acres burned annually in the US, and for average size of each wildfire during the 1960-2006 time period (with sharp increases in both trends beginning in the early 1990s); and page six is a bar graph comparing Net Growth of US Forest Lands compared to Product Removals for the same lands during the 1952-2004 time period -- 52 years in which forest growth has always exceeded harvests, and in which the greatest disparities between the two correlate strongly with the increased wildfire trends shown on page five.

Can the Oregon Plan actually work as it is envisioned? Obviously, there is no way to tell without trying it first. Have any other approaches worked in the past 30 years? The short and obvious answer is "no." At this juncture it appears as if there is nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain by opening these ideas up to public discourse and at least seriously considering their potential. Wayne Giesy remains committed to accomplishing that very result, and there are lots of compelling reasons to hope that he is right.