

Late-Successional Reserves What Are They About?

Late-Successional Reserves (LSRs) are areas on Pacific Northwest federal forests where the creation and maintenance of late-successional forest is the overarching management direction. The Klamath National Forest has about 100 LSRs that range in size from 100 acres to over 100,000 acres and total nearly 300,000 acres. The 13 or so larger LSRs on the Forest originated in earlier spotted owl management plans, including the northern spotted owl Critical Habitat designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1992. The larger LSRs are designed to be big enough to support roughly 20 interacting pairs of spotted owls. The network of LSRs (together with other land allocations such as Wilderness Areas and Riparian Reserves, and requirements to maintain some habitat characteristics even in the Matrix where most timber harvest occurs) provides for species dispersal and genetic exchange.

The LSRs are specified by the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP). The NWFP amended, or was adopted into, the Land and Resource Management Plans of the 29 National Forests and Bureau of Land Management Districts in western Washington, western Oregon, and northwestern California. The NWFP responded to the need to retain, improve, and protect a network of late-successional forests for species (such as the northern spotted owl) that depend on such habitat and to protect water quality for anadromous fish and other values. Designers of the NWFP identified over 1,100 species that are partially or completely dependent upon late-successional forests.

President Clinton initiated preparation of the NWFP in 1993. The NWFP was prepared by scientists and land managers from various federal agencies and departments, including the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration-Fisheries. This team considered all 24.4 million acres of federal land within the

Some Definitions

Late-successional Forests—Forest stands consisting of trees, structural attributes, supporting biological communities, and processes associated with old-growth and/or mature forests. Forest seral stages include mature and old-growth age classes (NWFP). Age is not necessarily a defining characteristic, but it has been used as a proxy or indicator in some usages. The minimum ages are typically 80 to 130 years, more or less, depending on the site quality, species, rate of stand development, and other factors.

Matrix— Refers to lands outside of reserves and other land allocations (see list below.)

Old-growth Forest—A forest stand that is usually at least 180 to 220 years old with moderate-to-high canopy closure; a multilayered, multispecies canopy dominated by large overstory trees; high incidence of large trees, some with broken tops and other indications of old and decaying wood (decadence); numerous large snags; and heavy accumulations of wood, including large logs on the ground (NWFP).

Riparian Reserve— Riparian reserves are zones along all perennial and intermittent streams where riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis (NWFP).

Seral Stages—The series of relatively transitory plant communities that develop during ecological succession from bare ground to the climax stage—that is, the late or final stage (NWFP). The term “seral” is essentially equivalent to successional.

Standards and Guidelines—The rules and limitations that govern actions, as well as the principles specifying the environmental conditions or levels to be achieved and maintained (NWFP).

Succession—A series of dynamic changes by which one group of organisms succeeds another through stages leading to a potential natural community or climax (final stage). An example is development of a series of plant communities (called seral stages) following a major disturbance (NWFP).

range of the northern spotted owl, including Mount Rainier National Park and Crater Lake National Park. The NWFP allocates these acres across seven land allocations:

1. Congressionally Reserved Areas (National Parks, Wilderness, etc.)	7,320,600 acres
2. Late-Successional Reserves	7,430,800 acres
3. Adaptive Management Areas	1,521,800 acres
4. Managed Late-Successional Areas	102,000 acres
5. Administratively Withdrawn Areas	1,477,100 acres
6. Riparian Reserves	2,627,500 acres*
7. Matrix	3,975,300 acres
Total	24,455,100 acres

Riparian Reserves protect all perennial and intermittent streams and overlay about 40 percent of all land allocations. To avoid double counting, the hierarchical listing of the acres above only includes Riparian Reserve acres within the Matrix. Additionally, about a third of the NWFP area is also designated as Key Watershed, where additional standards and guidelines help maintain or improve water quality for at-risk salmonids.

Regularly scheduled timber harvest (that which contributes to the NWFP's timber harvest goals) occurs only in the Matrix and Adaptive Management Areas. Volume realized as a result of thinning and other treatments in LSRs is incidental to, and does not contribute to, those targets. The NWFP permits timber harvest in LSRs only to:

1. Thin young stands to accelerate the creation of late-successional habitat;
2. Strategically treat fuels or thin to reduce an unacceptable fire or insect risk;
3. Salvage dead trees following large-scale disturbances such as large fires; and

4. Remove hazard trees threatening roads and other improvements and activities.

The interagency Regional Ecosystem Office in Portland, Oregon, reviews the first three of these to ensure they are beneficial to the creation and maintenance of late-successional forest conditions. Other LSR standards and guidelines govern other management activities. For example, the NWFP discourages road building through LSRs.

Late-Successional Reserve Assessments

An assessment must be prepared for all LSRs or groups of LSRs. The purpose of the Assessments is to provide the background and framework for making decisions about management and protection of each LSR. The Eddy LSR was included in the Klamath National Forest's 2002 Forest-Wide Assessment. Most of the treatments that might be proposed in the Eddy LSR would be driven by recommendations in that Forest-Wide Assessment. The Assessment was reviewed by the Regional Ecosystem Office and found to provide the background needed for making management decisions. Further, that review identified proposed treatments that, if conducted as described in the Assessment, would be exempt from future treatment-specific review. Any thinning treatments that might be proposed for the Eddy LSR would likely fall under that exemption.

We Want to Hear from You

Interested citizens can send suggestions and comments to the contractor (RED, Inc. Communications) conducting the planning and environmental analysis for the Eddy LSR Project. This is the email address: eddylsr@redinc.com. The project webpage is <http://www.eddylsrproject.com>.