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DEVELOPMENT OF A FORESTRY, FISH, AND WILDLIFE CENTER

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Biodiversity and Endangered Species

Editor's Note: Four papers were presented in the biodiversity and endangered species concurrent session, but only one paper was submitted for publication in the proceedings.

The following titles were presented in the session:

Ellen Lanier, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife—Teaming with Wildlife: The National Diversity Funding Initiative
Chuck Meslow, The Wildlife Management Institute—The Endangered Species Act: How Can We Improve It?
Edwin Jones, North Carolina State University—Development of a Safe Harbor Program and Future Management on Private Lands

DEVELOPMENT OF A FORESTRY, FISH, AND WILDLIFE CENTER

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INTRODUCTION

Public concerns for stewardship and conservation of biological diversity have caused a reduction in the timber supply in the Pacific Northwest on federal lands. This reduction in the availability of federal timber has resulted in an intensification of management activities on private forest lands. The reduced timber supply has also increased timber prices to the point that many nonindustrial private woodland owners, who previously were not interested in selling timber, have entered the market. This intensification of management activities on the private forest base has resulted in additional increased concerns for fish and wildlife species. Reliable and readily accessible information is crucial to the resolution of such concerns.

Elevated concerns for fish and wildlife species in forested habitats of the Pacific Northwest have resulted in considerable research and subsequent regulatory activity. However, forest managers, technical staff, policy makers, and the general public have difficulty accessing information concerning basic biology, habitat requirements, responses of fish and wildlife species to management activities, and implications of various strategies for regulating such activities. Although information is available from a variety of sources including libraries, research centers, unpublished reports, and databases, the fragmented nature of these sources restricts accessibility to information needed for management and policy decisions. Currently, centers that provide these publics with credible, comprehensive, information are not well-known or easily accessible. The Oregon State University Forest Research Laboratory has proposed the development of a Forestry Fish and Wildlife

Information Center (FFWIC) to fill this niche. The purpose of this paper is to present a plan for conducting a feasibility study for the FFWIC.

OUR APPROACH

The feasibility study will be conducted in four phases over a 2-year period. In order for the FFWIC to be sustainable, the correct niche and types of information to be offered must be identified. The four phases of the feasibility study include surveying current information sources, surveying potential clients, assessing opportunities and alternative approaches, and preparing sample outputs. The scope of the FFWIC will be primarily restricted to Threatened, Endangered, and sensitive species in forest environments of the Pacific Northwest. However, other habitats or nonsensitive species may be included depending on client needs.

Current Information Sources

Phase I of the feasibility study will have two objectives: (1) identify information sources regarding fish and wildlife in forested environments, and (2) identify potential models for the FFWIC. We will conduct Phase I during the fall and winter of 1995–96. The potential clients of the FFWIC will likely have varying levels of access to information from both traditional and nontraditional sources. Traditional sources include libraries, unpublished reports, and research reference services, whereas nontraditional sources might include research databases, information databases such as the Oregon Species Information System, and other information centers. We will complete the objectives of

Phase I by formal and informal surveys. Formal surveys in conjunction with Phase II will identify sources of information currently being used by the FFWIC's potential clients. We will conduct an informal survey of known information sources to identify types and formats of information currently available. Research and technical information centers will be informally surveyed to identify potential models on which to base the FFWIC.

Clients and Their Needs

Phase II of the feasibility study will be conducted concurrently with Phase I and will be completed by Spring 1996. The objectives of Phase II are to (1) identify the publics who are potential clients of the FFWIC, (2) determine their specific information needs, and (3) determine the preferred formats for obtaining information. We envision that the FFWIC would be an important source of information for many potential clients including forestry extension agents and specialists, small woodland owners, private and corporate forest managers, members of the Oregon Forest Industries Council, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, conservation and environmental organizations, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Oregon State Parks Department, consulting foresters, and policy makers. Mail or phone surveys where appropriate will be designed to query these potential clients regarding: (1) the types of information they need with respect to fish and wildlife in forested environments; (2) the formats that such information would be most useful in; (3) the regularity that they might use a center; and

(4) their willingness to support a center (i.e., what would they be willing to pay for information) in order that it become self-sustaining.

Opportunities and Alternative Approaches

We will conduct Phase III during the Summer, Fall, and Winter of 1996-97 using information obtained in Phases I and II. The objective of Phase III will be to identify the unique niche or niches that the FFWIC can fill. Phases I and II are likely to identify several potential models for the FFWIC ranging from totally electronic information sources (i.e., on-line searches, web-sites, and electronic publications) to a bibliographic information system such as the National Technical Information Service. These potential models will be paired with the information needs of our clients and their willingness to support the center to identify alternative niches that would make the FFWIC self-sustaining. Phase III will result in a report of the potential models that the FFWIC could adopt and possible products that the center could produce. The advantages and disadvantages of each model will be discussed, and an alternative will be recommended based on (1) client needs and access, (2) uniqueness, and (3) potential for the center to be self-sustaining. We will prepare an operation budget for the proposed alternative. This report will be completed by 30 June 1997.

Sample Outputs

During the final phase of the feasibility study (Phase IV) we will develop samples of center products. The objective in this phase will be to develop mock-up products with proposed layout and format designs rather than to develop the actual product. For example, if synthesis or white papers are products proposed for development by the FFWIC, our sample white paper might include a layout with the proposed format and text explaining what might be found in each section of an actual paper. We will prepare these sample products by 30 June 1997.