

FEDERATION OF WESTERN OUTDOOR CLUBS
2011 RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION 11: OPPOSE THE REMOVAL OF THE “SPECIES VIABILITY”
DIRECTIVE IN THE FOREST SERVICES’ PROPOSED REVISIONS OF THE 1976
NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT ACT (NFMA) RULES

BACKGROUND:

Currently the Obama Administration and the Forest Service are undertaking an attempt to revise the National Forest Management Act planning rules, which guide planning on all 155 National Forests. The 1976 NFMA required the Forest Service to maintain native species biodiversity in their planning process. This current proposal would remove this “species viability” clause from the revised rules.

Historically this clause was of critical importance for the protection of the Northwest temperate rainforests, which in the 1980’s were being rapidly liquidated without regard for applicable environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act. In 1987, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund filed a series of three “spotted owl lawsuits” on behalf of several environmental groups, including the Sierra Club.

The first two lawsuits challenged the Forest Service (SAS v. Robertson, SAS v. Evans) to enforce relevant environmental laws and protect the Northern Spotted Owl. This litigation resulted in Judge William Dyer’s famous 1991 injunction that stopped all logging in the Northern Spotted Owl’s habitat in the national forests in Washington, Oregon and northern California. This occurred before the listing of the Northern Spotted Owl as endangered under the Endangered Species Act; the third suit in 1992 was against the Fish and Wildlife Service for failure to list the owl as an endangered species

In 1993, President Clinton, Vice President Gore and five Cabinet members met at the Northwest Forest Summit in Portland to discuss forest planning for the region; the result was the Northwest Forest Plan. This plan requires the Forest service to use the “species viability” standard in its planning process.

The NFMA directive to the Forest Service to maintain species biodiversity in their planning is designed to prevent species decline that would require listing under the Endangered Species Act. In our current era of climate change, and the resultant changes in wildlife habitat, it is more important than ever that the Forest Service consider species viability requirements and adaptability in their forest planning process.

RESOLUTION: The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs opposes the removal of the “species viability” clause from the proposed National Forest Planning Act (NFMA) rules revisions. Submitted by: Raelene Gold, raelene@seanet.com