

*Oregon Eastside Forests Restoration, Old-Growth Protection and Jobs Act of 2011
(S.220.IS, 112th Congress)*

Acreage Treatment Mandate

Sec. 4(d)(5) of the revised legislation says:

(5) Restoration goals.—

(A) In general.—Within the covered area, consistent with the goals, and after considering the opportunities, described in subsection (b), the Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable, prepare, offer, and promptly implement projects, that—

(i) are predominantly comprised of mechanical treatment in the covered area that emphasize sawtimber as a byproduct; and

(ii) are conducted on—

(I) for the first fiscal year after the date of enactment of this Act, not less than 39,000 acres;

(II) for the subsequent fiscal year, not less than 58,000 acres; and

(III) for each fiscal year thereafter until the fiscal year in which at least 1 ecological restoration project for each National Forest is initiated under section [__08], not less than 80,000 acres.

(B) Annual goals.—

(i) In general.—Beginning in the first fiscal year after the date on which at least 1 ecological restoration project is initiated for each National Forest under section [__08] and each fiscal year thereafter until the date on which the Initiative is completed, the Secretary may, subject to clause (ii), set annual acreage performance goals for projects that are predominantly comprised of mechanical treatment in the covered area that emphasize sawtimber as a byproduct consistent with the goals, and after considering the opportunities, described in subsection (b).

(ii) Considerations.—In setting goals under clause (i), the Secretary shall consider—

(I) the restoration assessment;

(II) any specific recommendations of the advisory panel relating to acreage treatment needs; and

(III) advice provided by a collaborative group relating to acreage treatment needs.

The timber industry very much had to have quantitative goals for projects that included “predominantly” (i.e. “mainly; for the most part”) “mechanical treatments” (restoration thinning, but also includes non-commercial activities such as mastication) that “emphasize” (i.e. “gives special importance or prominence to”) sawlogs (for making lumber and plywood and a minimum of 7-9” in diameter at breast height) as a “byproduct” (i.e. “a secondary result”). Since these mandates both have adequate sideboards and are to produce scientifically sound ecological and hydrological restoration, the conservation community supporting the legislation were comfortable with such mandates.

Road decommissioning, prescribed fire and other non-commercial restoration will continue and expand.

The mandate requires that such projects comply with the large tree protection provisions (Sec. 4), the goals of the act (Sec. 4(b)), the limits on activities in riparian conservation areas (Sec. 5), the limitations on roads (Sec. 4) and the recommendations of the Science and Technical Advisory Committee (Sec. 6), other requirements of the revised legislation and all other provisions of law (statutes and regulations).

We can only forecast the amount of mechanical treatment acres. We know it would be “predominant” (somewhere between just over half to just short of all, so let’s estimate three-quarters) and there would be an “emphasis” on sawtimber (let’s estimate two-thirds). $80,000 \text{ acres/year} * 75\% * 66.7\% = 40,200 \text{ acres per year}$ of mechanical treatment with a sawtimber emphasis.

The Forest Service is averaging 28,000 acres per year of such treatments. If the amount of mechanical treatment emphasizing sawtimber is an average of 40,200 acres/per year for three years, it would translate to treating 0.9%% per year for 15 years (13.5% total) of the estimated 4.6 million acres of ponderosa pine-dominated forest outside of Wilderness and Inventoried Roadless Areas on the eastside of Oregon. If—against all likelihood—every acre was treated mechanically and yielded sawlogs, it would result in the mechanical treatment of 1.7% per year for 15 years (25.5% total) of the roaded ponderosa pine forests. Most scientists are comfortable with ecological restoration thinning on one-quarter (or more) of the roaded dry forest landscape.

The table depicts the amount of ponderosa pine-dominated forests by each national forest unit that is outside of Wilderness and Inventoried Roadless Areas. Such forests are either dry ponderosa pine or dry mixed-conifer forest types, for which there is a strong scientific consensus that supports mechanical treatment of much of these forests as part of a comprehensive restoration strategy that includes the careful reintroduction of fire.¹

Ponderosa-Pine Dominated Forest Outside Wilderness and Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Eastside Forests of Oregon				
National Forest	Total Acres	Total Eastside Acres*	Ponderosa Pine-Dominated Forest Outside Wilderness & IRAs*	
			Acres	Percent of Total Eastside Acres
Deschutes	1,596,899	830,769	554,000	67%
Fremont-Winema	2,252,587	1,917,587	1,237,000	65%
Malheur	1,465,286	1,465,286	1,093,000	75%
Ochoco	851,095	851,095	664,000	78%
Umatilla	1,095,804	1,095,804	364,000	33%
Wallowa-Whitman	2,259,992	2,259,992	736,000	33%
TOTAL	9,521,663	8,420,533	4,648,000	55%
* Portions of the Deschutes and Fremont-Winema National Forests are within the Northwest Forest Plan.				
Source: Erik Fernandez, Oregon Wild				

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¹ Examples: Brown, Richard T., James K. Agee and Jerry F. Franklin. 2004. Forest Restoration and Fire: Principles in Context of Place. *Conservation Biology* 18:903-912; Noss, R. F., J. F. Franklin, W. L. Baker, T. Schoennagel, P. B. Moyle. 2006. Managing fire-prone forests in the western United States. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 4(9): 481-487. (Ecological Society of America, Washington, D.C.). (The former paper is available from Rick Brown (rick@conservation-science.org) and with the permission of the lead author, the latter paper is available for download for limited educational purposes only at www.andykerr.net/downloads.)