

Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs 2008 Resolutions

RES. NO. 1: THE NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL RECOVERY PLAN

BACKGROUND: In 1990, the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) was listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act because of the loss of 60-80% of its old growth forest habitat from timber harvest. These temperate forests of western Washington, Oregon and northern California were then protected under the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan.

Since that time, the NSO has continued to decline especially in the northern part of its range. In 2006, the US Fish and Wildlife Service convened a multi-stakeholder group to develop a recovery plan, which recommended protecting owl habitat in a network of old-growth forest reserves, an approach first employed in the scientifically rigorous 1994 Northwest Forest Plan. The Bush administration then formed an "Oversight Committee" which produced an altered draft NSO Recovery Plan that attributed the NSO decline to Barred Owl expansion into NSO territory. Advocating removal as a management tool; this plan also resulted in the reduction of old growth habitat by up to 25%. In April 2007 comments at public hearings discredited this plan. A final NSO Recovery Plan was released that includes other causes for NSO decline, but was still felt to be inadequate to preserve the NSO.

The ESA requires FWS to designate critical habitat for listed species that is "essential to the conservation" of the species, based on the best available science. Recovery plans must use the best available science to fashion a path to recovery and eventual delisting of imperiled species.

RESOLUTION: FWOOC supports a Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan that puts primary emphasis on the preservation, restoration and enhancement of its old growth ecosystem critical habitat, rather than emphasizing Barrel Owl removal as a management tool, until there is rigorous research studies by a panel of independent scientists on Barrel Owl ecology and Barrel Owl-Northern Spotted Owl interactions to better inform management decisions.

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