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# The Northwest Forest Plan

## Interrelating Impacts of Science and Policy

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### Introduction

The President's Northwest Forest Plan was adopted in 1994 to break the gridlock that had brought federal timber sales to a standstill. It guides the management of 24 million acres of federal lands in Washington, Oregon and northern California. FS (Forest Service), BLM (Bureau of Land Management), and other federally-administered lands within the range of the northern spotted owl were allocated to one of six designated areas. From the 1970s to late 1980s social fractions, namely the timber industry and environmental advocacy groups, battled over access to old-growth forests on federal lands. At its peak 180,000 jobs were supported just in rural Oregon. Environmental groups were very successful in lobbying for prescriptive environmental laws. The most powerful environmental legislations were the Endangered Species Act, and in terms of the Northwest Forest Plan, also the National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. In their quest to protect old-growth forests, the environmentalists relied on federal courts, the media, and federal regulatory agencies. After a series of court cases in the late 1980s, a U.S. federal court ordered the government to stop logging in northern spotted owl habitat until a strategy was declared to sufficiently protect and restore the Pacific Northwest forests and aquatic ecosystems for the future, in other words, to comply with the existing laws. In 1993 President Clinton convened a Timber Summit to reduce frictions over social purposes and management policies for national forests and BLM-administered public lands. The administration and federal experts were asked to create a science-based forest management plan. The outcome, the so called FEMAT report (Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team), is considered to be the foundation of the Northwest Forest Plan. After 15 years of implementation, the Northwest Forest Plan was successful in protecting old-growth forest along the coast and western Cascades, some listed species' habitat, and aquatic ecosystems. On the other hand it failed to serve ecological values like dry and fire-prone forests and associated wildlife in the range of the northern spotted owl. Moreover, the potential for adaptive management areas has not been fulfilled. Expected harvest levels of 20% compared to the 1980s have never been reached. This study should answer the question "how did politics and science influence the development of the NW Forest Plan"? External factors—such as funding, political requirements and public expectations—will also be explored in terms of its impact on the scientific discourse.

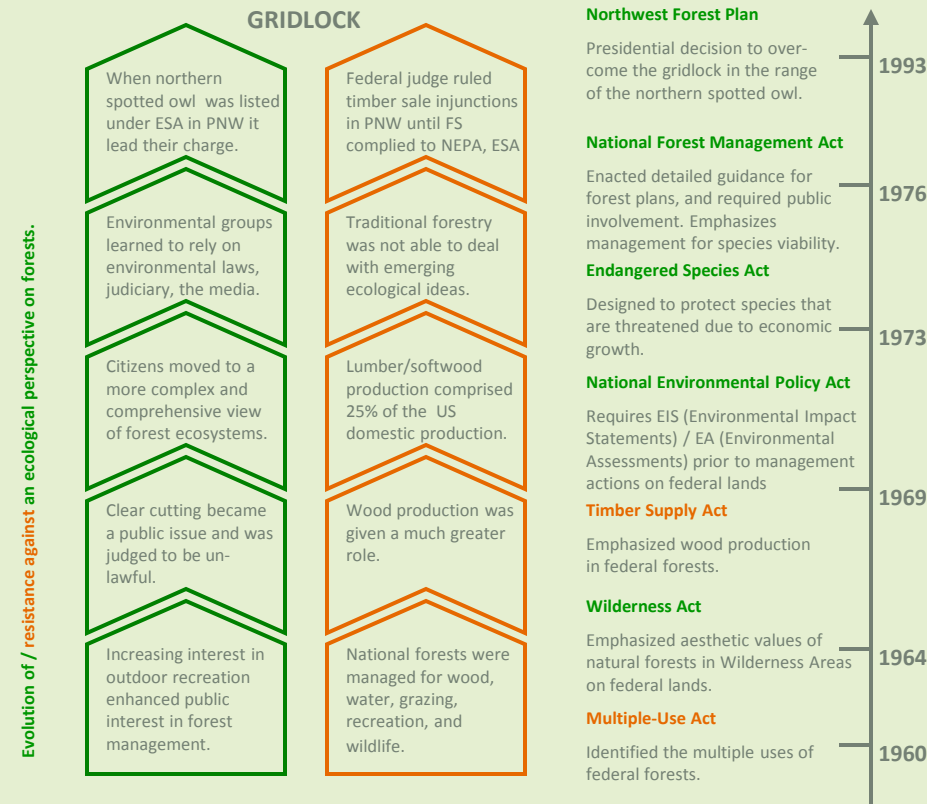
### Study Methodology

The questions will be approached on the foundation of text analysis and interviews. On the one hand, the analysis will focus on publications of different types of analytical reviews which are concerned with the role of forest related research and the question of policy advice in terms of the Northwest Forest Plan. On the other hand, analysis and interviews will focus on the discourse, its context of development and on concrete actions of actors. Interviews, which will only take place in the US, will be related to the practical level of interactions between policy and science (communication channels and types, actions patterns, organizational issues, official channels).

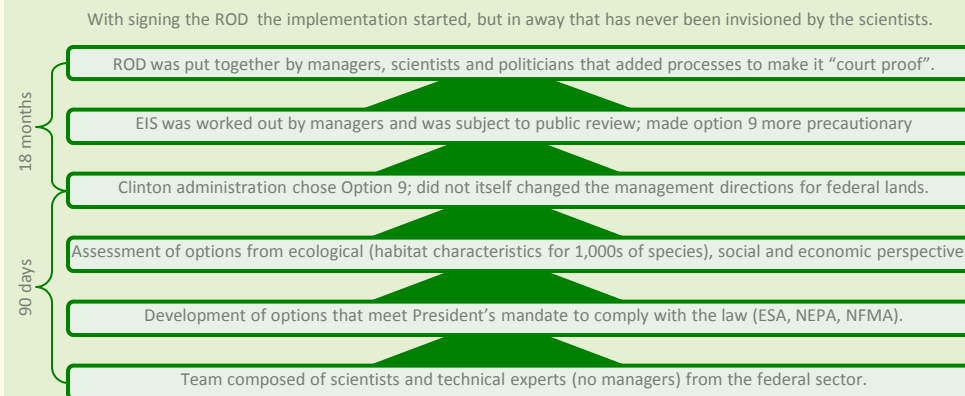
### Acknowledgements:

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### Drivers of the Northwest Forest Plan



### From FEMAT to the NWFP



\* ROD Record of decision; EIS Environmental Impact Statement

### Review

|                   | CAUSE  | EFFECT  |
|-------------------|--|---|
| <b>POLICY</b>     | <p>Enacted laws with conflicting goals, e.g., sustainable timber yield vs. endangered species</p> <p>Clinton raised issue to the Presidential level to carry Washington and Oregon in the 1992 Presidential election</p> <p>Added survey and manage protocols for timber sales to Option 9</p> | <p>Lack of clear direction for federal land management; foundation for gridlock</p> <p>Narrow decision space because the solution had to comply with the conflicting laws</p> <p>Required survey of the presence of rare organisms prior to ground disturbing activities (cost 20 Million USD/year)</p> |
| <b>SCIENTISTS</b> | <p>Identified management alternatives that attain greatest economic and social contribution and meet the law</p> <p>Time limitations</p> <p>Team composition</p>   | <p>First meet law then provide timber; expectations on timber yields where not binding.</p> <p>Challenged peer review process</p> <p>Limited range of perspectives shaped understanding of context and assignment and therefore development and assessment of options</p>                               |
| <b>MANAGEMENT</b> | <p>FEMAT was a top-down approach that excluded stakeholders</p> <p>Lack of accountability</p>  | <p>Lack of ownership; implementation funding was no issue in the planning process</p> <p>Interagency coordination and full-scale implementation failed greatly</p>  |

### Lessons learned

- Congress has to address its own conflicting directions to overcome the gridlock.
- Timber production and harvest (not from old-growth forests) is possible and necessary to
  - cover the costs of old-growth protection,
  - increase the adaptive capacity of those forest ecosystems in terms of global climate change,
  - afford the "creative" parts of the Plan (adaptive management, monitoring...).
- Scientists are not able to solve a public policy issue. Link science and the policy level as soon as possible (science informed policy). The careful design of a complex regional assessment is important due to the invested time, energy etc. More over, there is a risk of loosing scientific credibility, when expectations cannot be met. Be honest with expectations (e.g., timber yields).
- Centrally elaborated plans are not likely to be implemented by decentralized organizations.