

US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6)

Dry Forests and White-headed Woodpeckers are Forest Service Priorities within the Great Northern LCC March 2014

Region 6 recommends the addition of dry forest and the white-headed woodpeckers as conservation targets for the Great Northern LCC for the following reasons:

Restoration of dry forests is a high priority for the US Forest Service in Region 6.

- Mature, open, dry forests (primarily ponderosa pine) have declined more dramatically than any other forested ecosystem in the Interior Columbia Basin. These forests are at high risk due to drought stress on mature pine, insect outbreaks, and uncharacteristically severe wildfires. Climate change is likely to exacerbate the risk.
- Ecosystems most in need of restoration of landscape structure and natural functions in the Inland Pacific Northwest, are dry mixed conifer forests dominated by ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). Most of the R6 restoration and fuels reduction treatments occur in these forest types.

Monitoring key characteristics of these dry forest ecosystems and associated habitat attributes for key species is essential.

- Treatments have the potential for either beneficial or negative effects on woodpecker habitat.
- Research and monitoring will provide a better understanding of habitat needs to inform restoration projects and fuels prescriptions.
- One key monitoring component of Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Projects (CFLRP) is designed to address how well CFLRPs are meeting their forest restoration and wildlife habitat conservation goals ... "What are the effects on focal species (wildlife, fish, plants and invertebrates) habitat over time?"
- Managers need reliable information about climate-fire-vegetation interactions to effectively achieve their goals of forest restoration, while maintaining wildlife habitat and other sensitive resources.

The white-headed woodpecker has been identified as a focal species for dry forest habitat.

- This woodpecker may be particularly vulnerable to environmental change because it occupies a limited distribution and has narrow habitat requirements. They are closely tied to late-seral fire-dependent forests, nesting in open stands.
- They are dependent on large, old, ponderosa pine trees, and snags. Nest survival is higher in areas with lower shrub and down wood cover, historically maintained by frequent fire
- White-headed woodpeckers are relatively easy to monitor. A monitoring strategy and protocols have been developed and implemented in cooperation with US Forest Service Region 4 and the Rocky Mountain Research Station.
- Additional monitoring and research are critical to providing landscape and stand management guidance on restoration projects and fuels prescriptions under current and future climate scenarios, and identifying potentially vulnerable habitat areas.

Contact: Kim Mellen-McLean, Regional Wildlife Ecologist, US Forest Service, phone: 503-808-2677, email: kmellenmclean@fs.fed.us



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