

Statement of B. Bruce Bare
Board of Natural Resources
Olympia, Washington
September 7, 2004

Today is a historic day for all citizens of the State of Washington.

With approval of the Preferred Alternative described in the Sustainable Forest Management FEIS of July 2004, we embark on a new and exciting course of land stewardship on our state's forest trust lands in western WA. Guided by environmentally and economically sustainable forestry policies and practices, we initiate a new style of active stewardship to meet the needs of society today, as well as for the generations to follow.

Equally significant, the Preferred Alternative retains the framework of the multi-species HCP to provide increased conservation benefits for threatened or endangered species that occupy the forests of western Washington.

I wish to acknowledge the bold leadership provided by Commissioner Doug Sutherland who championed the adoption of the sustainable forestry principles that are embodied in the Preferred Alternative and which will guide the stewardship of our forest trusts in the future. I also wish to acknowledge the outstanding job of many staff within the Department who accumulated the information, ran the models, synthesized the results and prepared countless memos and reports.

The Board recognizes that, unlike federal or privately owned forests, Washington's state forests are trust assets - to be perpetually managed for the benefit of designated beneficiaries, such as schools and universities as well as other public institutions. State law holds that so long as all applicable federal and state laws are satisfied, fiduciary responsibilities are paramount in the management of the trusts no matter how laudatory other state goals or public benefits may be. And, the Board also recognizes that protection of the forest trust asset to benefit future generations must be balanced against the ambitions of present generations.

Adoption of the Preferred Alternative and its associated policies enables the professional natural resource managers of the Department to properly manage and protect our forest trust assets. To facilitate changes to the Preferred Alternative, each year, the Department will be required to report to the Board on how well the Preferred Alternative is performing as measured by a balanced mix of environmental, economic and social indicators.

No one is claiming that the Preferred Alternative is perfect. In fact, we all know that uncertainties inherent in managing complex natural resource systems do not allow this luxury. Rather, guided by the latest and best science at our disposal, we chart a future direction that we believe is in the best interests of the trusts and the people of Washington.

Much has been said today about the pros and cons of adopting the Preferred Alternative. Clearly, given the complexity of the issues involved, there is ample room for people to draw differing conclusions – and they have. My endorsement of the Preferred Alternative (PA) as described in the FEIS is

influenced in part by the following results I expect from implementation of same:

- 1) Each year in the first decade, only about 1.5% of the 1.4 million acres of forest land in western WA are impacted by a regeneration harvest, thinning or partial harvest (includes both upland and riparian acres).
- 2) The inventory of standing timber volume grows by 45% over the next 64 years from that present today – from 31 to 45 billion bf.
- 3) The total timber harvest over the next 64 years averages 543 mmbf/year. This is less than 1.5% of the average inventory volume.
- 4) In the first decade, the PA produces 636 mmbf/year.
- 5) Under the PA, 83% of the forest trust land base is available for active management -- a significant increase over today's allocation.
- 6) The average rotation age under the PA is 84 years.
- 7) Biodiversity of the forest trust improves over the next 64 years as the percentage of the land base covered by structurally diverse forests increases to 29% (now 24%) while the percentage of overly dense competitive exclusion forests decreases to 60% (now 68%).
- 8) Under the PA, 10-15% of each HCP planning unit is maintained in structurally old forests with priority to retain existing old natural forests. This meets the requirements of the HCP while working to sustain species dependent on such habitats.
- 9) Forests in the riparian areas are managed using innovative biodiversity regimes to aid restoration of ecological functionality as soon as possible.

These examples illustrate that the PA is sustainable and that it will improve the health of our western WA forests. The timber harvest vs. inventory

statistics alone should convince the most skeptical critic that the Preferred Alternative is sustainable. But, more importantly, the improving distribution of stand structures leading to more complex forest structures to provide habitat for species requiring old forest conditions, improved forest practices such as variable density thinning and partial harvests to speed the development of competitive exclusion forest structures to more complex structures, and the protection of riparian and wet lands to aid recovery of important aquatic resources lead me to support the Preferred Alternative.