

Science and Values Discussion Forums at ODF

ODF Executive Team Offsite at OSU/Siuslaw National Forest in January

ODF Executive Team members participate in complex natural resource policymaking efforts which often involve evaluating and incorporating relevant information from the scientific community. As such, they and their staff often find themselves fully engaged at the interface of science and values in policy discussions.

Effectiveness at this interface has often been characterized as focusing on relevant policy questions, conducting science in a communicative and collaborative manner, and engaging in the policy making processes with the scientist in the role of informing the public and decision-makers, but refraining from advocating particular policies.

The topic and panel discussion for the ODF Executive Team was intended to explore the role of science in forest policy development, and more specifically how ODF can be more effective as they engage at the Science-Policy Interface. Executive Team members were joined by Siuslaw National Forest Supervisor Jerry Ingersoll and members of his staff. Panelists included:

- Thomas Maness, Dean, OSU College of Forestry
- Craig Shinn, Professor and Program Manager, PSU Hatfield School of Government
- Steve Fitzgerald, Director, OSU Research Forests
- Sherri Johnson, Research Ecologist, USFS PNW Research Station
- Denise Lach, Director, OSU School of Public Policy

Panelists were selected to provide a breadth of experience in three aspects of this issue, 1) the researcher perspective, 2) the perspective of the practitioner or applier of scientific information, and 3) the public policy development perspective. Panelists were asked to develop their comments with the following questions in mind:

- What are your thoughts about effective ways to acquire science-based knowledge and make it useful to policy-makers and the constituents they serve?
- What are some challenges or successes you have experienced with integrating science and policy in an adaptive management context?
- What pitfalls or traps have you experienced in processes that attempt to incorporate scientific information into policy development?
- What are your thoughts on how best to communicate uncertainty and risk associated with scientific information being provided to policy-makers?
- What are your thoughts about how best to define what we need so that research provides useful information for policy development?
- What principles would you suggest applying to the challenge of incorporating science into policy decisions?

ODF Technical Specialist Workshop in July

One of the action items identified at the Corvallis workshop was the idea of convening a group of ODF Technical Specialists to further explore this topic and continue work on a set of guiding principles for considering science and values in agency policymaking.

With assistance from Denise Lach, this workshop occurred in July and was attended by over 40 technical staff from the agency. Participants included technical specialists from all three operational Divisions (State Forests, Protection and Private Forests), the Resource Planning Program, and several field offices. Case studies from past policy making efforts were utilized to help illustrate where science and values had come into play during those processes. Several participants in the workshop commented about their experiences with the challenge of separating scientific information from value-based information in policy discussions before the Board, and suggested that this would be a good topic for discussion with the Board.