

Science and Policy Guiding Principles for Oregon Department of Forestry

ODF personnel participate in complex natural resource policymaking efforts which often involve the challenging tasks of evaluating and incorporating relevant information from the scientific community, while concurrently seeking input from stakeholders with a broad range of values and beliefs in relation to natural resource management. As such, Department leadership and staff often find themselves fully engaged at the Science-Policy Interface, where differences in how scientific information is viewed can be difficult to separate from the differing core values of participants in the process. To be most effective at creating successful outcomes, the following principles should guide these efforts.

Effectiveness at the Science-Policy Interface

- Consideration of the relevant science is a critical element of sound public policy formulation.
- Recognize that public values change and come in different forms, and that values may or may not be negotiable.
- Public policy decisions are informed by both human values and scientific information. In light of that, decision processes must be open, transparent and adaptive.
 - Processes should be designed to provide forums for diverse public and stakeholder viewpoints and a broad range of values.
 - Processes should be designed to expand the peer network in a way that incorporates a broad range of scientific viewpoints.
- Decisions based on an integration of both science and values are often “clumsy” and should be viewed in the adaptive management context, to be monitored and re-evaluated at appropriate times.
- Be mindful of how “normative” science can influence policy decisions and seek to minimize those influences where possible. (*Normative science is defined as a type of information that is developed, presented, or interpreted based on an assumed, usually unstated, preference for a particular policy or class of policies*).
- The extent to which we focus on scientific information versus values information may depend on what point we are at in the policy development process.
- Time considerations in policy development processes may influence the extent to which science informs the process. In determining the quantity and quality of scientific information needed for a particular policy decision, there needs to be a consideration of the associated workload and resource impacts.
- Recognize that the stock of scientific knowledge is ever-changing and incomplete, and therefore it is necessary to extrapolate and make reasoned judgments on how best to move forward.

Monitoring and feedback elements are essential components where science is informing policy choices.

- In assessing the stock of scientific knowledge on a particular topic, give preference to the systematic evidence review approach.
- To the greatest extent possible, seek to shape and direct research questions to better support policymaking efforts.