

Public Lands Forest Management

The public forests provide us with invaluable sources of recreation, wildlife, biological diversity, high water quality, peace and quiet and numerous other values found nowhere else. The Sierra Club values and defends the great natural processes that govern these forests. The public forests must be managed on sound, demonstrated scientific principles to ensure the sustainability of all forest resources. Forest management shall incorporate natural processes and shall be based on the fullest possible knowledge of such forest resources as soils, timber productivity, wildlife populations, forest ecological requirements, water quality and recreational values.

Due to the variability in forests across the continent, the regions and chapters are encouraged to adopt more specific policies, provided that they are not inconsistent with the national policy, which shall be determined by the Regional Vice Presidents Forum.

1. Productivity of the Land -- Public forests must be managed to maintain the long-term productivity and fertility of the soil. Where logging or other soil disturbing activities are permitted, land managers shall select the method of operation that causes the least short-term change to soil productivity and the least amount of short-term environmental pollution.
2. Biological Diversity -- The ecological structure, biological diversity and sustainability of the forest must be maintained. Biological diversity occurs at many levels; within stands, forest habitats, plant communities, landscapes, ecosystems and biomes. The ecological structure and processes needed to maintain or restore sustainable, viable and healthy populations of all naturally occurring native species and communities must be protected in each level. The relative abundance of native species and communities should be maintained on an ecologically sound basis, according to natural processes.
3. Old-Growth Forests -- The remaining old-growth forests must be preserved. Development of linkages with full biological diversity between existing old-growth fragments must be a prime goal of forest management.
4. Watershed Management -- Forest watersheds shall be managed to preclude any long-term degradation of water quality, to minimize short-term effects on water quality, and to maintain natural hydrologic structure. No existing beneficial use will be impaired or reduced.
5. Riparian Areas -- In riparian areas, the natural vegetative composition and structure shall be maintained and restored, and commercial logging will not occur.
6. Cost Efficiency. Economic benefit-cost analysis is one component to be considered in making decisions, while recognizing such primary values as viable wildlife habitat, clean water and sustainable recreation.
7. Public Benefits -- Forests must be managed to maximize net long-term public benefits.
8. Logging -- Timber harvest, on the public forests where it is appropriate, shall ensure reforestation and restocking with a species composition that approximates the natural vegetation of the area. Selection cutting systems shall be used, unless the biological requirements of the forest dictate otherwise.

9. Type conversion, the production of monocultures and the large-scale creation of even-aged stands where they did not naturally exist are all inappropriate activities on public forests. Natural regeneration is preferred, but it can be supplemented by reforestation efforts with local provenance stock to achieve more natural vegetative patterns.
10. Cutting Cycle -- The harvesting of trees, where appropriate, shall not be based solely on the quantity of fiber produced. Such factors as wood quality, stand structure, and the impact on other ecological characteristics of the site should also be considered. Lands harvested shall not be scheduled for new harvest until disturbances caused by the previous harvest, which might reduce long-term sustainable productivity, have, at a minimum, recovered to preharvest levels.
11. Public Involvement -- Forest planning, management and the monitoring of activities must be based on sound science, open decisionmaking, and the full and regular involvement by the public, from the earliest planning function through the complete management process.
12. Payments in Lieu of Taxes -- When a local government is paid funds in lieu of taxes for public lands within its jurisdiction, these payments shall be based on the amount of land involved, not the commercial uses of that land.
13. Recreation -- The Sierra Club supports the maintenance of varied recreational opportunities, including campgrounds, but opposes development at the expense of wildland preservation or wildlife habitat. Leases or permits to private parties should not be located on sensitive lands (such as lakeshores and streams), nor should they unduly hinder public access to lands and waters. Monitoring the continued recreational needs of the nation is of utmost importance in determining the proper supply of recreation coming from the public forests. Revenues derived from recreational uses shall remain with the public lands agencies.
14. Transportation -- The Sierra Club believes that the present system of roads on the public forests is more than adequate for all legitimate uses of these lands, and that it shall be considered essentially complete. The remaining forest roads shall be maintained to a standard that will cause minimal impacts to wildlife, watersheds and recreation. The continued need for the presence of each forest road shall be periodically evaluated, and unneeded roads closed and obliterated.
15. Forest trails shall be designed and maintained to provide an integrated system that provides access without degradation to the lands traversed, and without reducing the values of silence and solitude often present on these lands.
16. Monitoring -- A systematic monitoring program which meets professional research standards shall be a part of all management activities, including evaluations of cumulative effects on both public and adjacent private lands. No activities shall be allowed without a fully funded monitoring program and adjustments to activities indicated by study findings must be done expeditiously.

Adopted by the Board of Directors, March 14, 1992