

SUMMARY OF 1994 AMPHIBIAN TRAINING SESSIONS IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON

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During May of 1994, six training sessions were held on amphibians of Oregon and Washington. The sessions were associated with the joint effort by the U. S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop the "Field Manual of Oregon Amphibians." Char Corkran and Chris Thoms from the Northwest Ecological Research Institute are under contract to complete the manual and were the instructors for this training. There were two objectives for the training sessions. The first objective was to provide agency biologists and other staff with basic knowledge and skills to survey and identify amphibians. The second objective was to test the 1994 draft version of the amphibian field manual and to solicit reviews from people doing amphibian surveys in their districts.

At least 307 people attended the sessions. On the west-side, 207 people (67% of the total) attended at Eugene (99), Olympia (56), and Medford (51). On the east-side, 100 people (33% of the total) attended at Burns (37), Wenatchee (35), and Baker City (28). Of the 307 who signed in, there was the following representation of agencies:

- 40% - U. S. Forest Service
- 29% - Bureau of Land Management
- 17% - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- 5% - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- 5% - U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, tribal natural resource agencies, colleges, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Department of Ecology, public utility districts, individuals, no affiliation listed

Of the people who specified on the sign-in sheet, there was the following representation of positions and areas of expertise:

- 67% - wildlife (biologists, technicians, habitat biologists, program managers)
- 17% - fisheries (biologists, technicians, habitat biologists)
- 4% - ecologists, soils scientists, geologists, natural resource specialists, park rangers, environmentalists
- 4% - volunteers
- 2% - hydrologists, watershed specialists, stream surveyors
- 2% - foresters
- 2% - students

Each one-day classroom session included a 3 or 3 ½ hour morning with 2 brief breaks, and a 2 hour afternoon. After an outline of the schedule for the day, a quick and silly skit and self introductions loosened up the group for good participation. Most of the morning involved showing slides defining "amphibian," reviewing typical development stages, and illustrating how to find and identify amphibians. Emphasis was placed on non-destructive techniques for both surveying and identification. Species found in Oregon and Washington were grouped by major

habitat type: stream, talus, down wood, large pond, small pond, and east-side pond. The morning wrapped up with group questions and discussion of techniques, identification problems, declining amphibian species, and other issues raised by the participants. The afternoon was spent showing people how to use the manual and having people work singly or in pairs going through the keys to identify live specimens of larval amphibians. At the end of the day, attendees were asked to turn in a brief comment on the training session, and were requested to return the manual evaluation form by the end of the summer.

The 1994 training sessions were a first introduction to amphibians for many participants. The volume of material covered in the morning may have been overwhelming to some, but the hands-on work in the afternoon was apparently valuable for many. This training and manual are providing biologists and others with skills and knowledge that are critical to Forest Plan implementation, including the Survey and Manage species, special status species programs, and watershed and habitat analyses. The interagency aspect further enhances consistency and communication between agencies.

Follow-up training in 1995 is being considered, for example similar sessions for new staff and as a refresher course. In addition, smaller field sessions may be scheduled that would provide hands-on experience in recognizing amphibian habitats and in locating and identifying individual species.