

DECISION CRITERIA
BENTON COUNTY FORESTLAND CLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE

General Parameters

- The primary mission of the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) is protecting forest resources (ORS 477.005). The definition of “forest resource” in the law includes vegetation and harvested products besides trees and wood. ODF’s forest protection role in the law is not strictly to protect trees.
- The ODF mission also includes protection of forestland, as defined in ORS 477.001. Grazing land included in a district is forestland. It is acceptable to include existing Class 3 land (already in the district) with structures where the structure density and characteristics of the vegetation meets criteria to be established (see below) and consider it as "forestland-urban interface".
- ODF has a role in structural protection in the forestland-urban interface within an established district boundary. One of the tasks for the Benton County Forestland Classification Committee, and this classification effort, is to define the point at which structure density and vegetation characteristics indicate that ODF should not be responsible for providing fire protection. The exact density of structures that constitutes this point will likely vary depending on a number of situational factors.
- ODF and the Benton County Forestland Classification Committee should not move to protect additional lands without forest cover (i.e. trees) where the primary value at risk is life and personal property. There is a mechanism in the law (ORS 476.310) for the counties to do this with assistance from ODF and the Office of State Fire Marshal. There is also the option of establishing a rural or municipal fire district under ORS Chapter 478.
- The agency should only move to include lands into the ODF protection system with forest tree cover when addition of those lands would improve its ability to protect timberland with commercial forest product value, not when the primary value to be protected is life and property.

Specific Criteria

- All parcels within an ODF Protection District should be examined for classification.
 - Give each classification type, including “non-forestland” lots or areas within a lot, a code for use by county assessor’s offices in their respective databases.
- There should be no minimum size lots for ODF assessments.
- A forest protection district or classification committee should review lands within the county or district by ¼ of ¼ legal section “blocks” to evaluate appropriate classification of forestland.
- Exemptions (non-forestland classification) should not be allowed on an individual lot basis within a sub-division or area of like fuels. Subdivisions or areas of like fuels and probability of fire suppression needs should be classified alike.
- All lands within a forest protection district should be reviewed at a minimum of every five years.

Instructions for Forestland Classification WUI Flowchart

This “Forestland Classification WUI Flowchart” is to be used only in assisting Forestland Classification Committees or others, in determining which Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) lands should be included as “assessed” land within the protection of the Oregon Department of Forestry, and part of the statewide “complete and coordinated” fire protection system.

The following instructions are to be used with the WUI Flowchart.

A. Review ¼ of ¼ legal section

Classification Committees should review lands within the WUI by the quarter of the quarter section (an area approximately 40 acres in size) as determined by the Public Lands Survey. Some committee may choose to evaluate entire subdivisions rather than 40 acres.

1. Is it in the West Oregon Protection District?

You must first determine if the lands are within the West Oregon District. If the answer is “no” then the land is **not to be classified**. If the answer is “yes” then go to #2.

2. Is it owned by the USFS?

If the land is owned and protected by the USFS it is **exempt**. If the answer is “no” then go to #3.

3. Does it meet the definition of Forestland?

You must first determine if the lands meet the definition of forestland* (see definition of forestland below). If it does not meet the definition then the land is **not to be classified**. If the answer is “yes” then go to #4.

* Forestland Definition ORS Chapter 477.001: “Forestland” means any woodland, brushland, timberland, grazing land or clearing that, during any time of the year, contains enough forest growth, slashing or vegetation to constitute, in the judgment of the forester, a fire hazard, regardless of how the land is zoned or taxed. As used in this subsection, “clearing” means any grassland, improved area, lake, meadow, mechanically or manually cleared area, road, rocky area, stream or other similar forestland opening that is surrounded by or contiguous to forestland and that has been included in areas classified as forestland under ORS 526.305 to 526.370.

4. Is the area contiguous to or a threat to Forestland?

In other words if a fire was to occur, would that area be threatened by a perimeter type fire or if a fire was to occur within the evaluation area would it threaten other forestland or lands protected by ODF? If the answer to the question is “No”, then go to #5. If the answer to the question is “Yes” then go to #6.

5. Is the area inside of a city or organized structural department?

This is fairly straight forward. If the area has structural fire suppression protection, the answer is “Yes” and goes to #9. If no structural suppression protection is provided, the answer is “No” and it is recommended that the area be classified as forestland.

When the answer is “Yes” and the Classification Committee considers local concerns and situations, it is possible that with input from the fire department, or landowners, that there would be good reason to classify as forestland.

6. Is it inside a City Limits?

Minimize wildland protection by ODF within city limits. However, it is appropriate for ODF to provide wildland fire protection in certain areas within city limits, provided that the ODF forest protection district, local classification committee, and the city all agree that wildfire risk there warrants such protection. These will typically be high fire danger areas with a potential for expenditures from the Oregon Forestland Protection Fund (OFLPF).

7. Does the area have improved infrastructure? (Multiple lane-paved streets, standard fire hydrant systems)

This is to help the Classification Committees evaluate the infrastructure in the area. There are many physical features to be considered when evaluating areas for classification. Infrastructure such as two lane paved streets with sidewalks, hydrant systems for structure suppression/protection are just a couple of factors to consider when evaluating the land. If the answer to the question is “No”, then go to #8. If there is an improved infrastructure then the answer would be “Yes” and go to #9.

8. Are forest fuels the primary carrier of fire?

This helps clarify what the primary carrier of the fire will be in the event of a fire. If the area has a home/structure density greater than 4-6/acre then the primary carrier of the fire will likely be structures, and not a perimeter control type of fire. The answer would then be “No” to this question and you would go to #9. If the primary fuel type would be forest type fuels and the fire would most likely be a perimeter control type fire, then the answer would be “Yes” and the area should be classified as forestland.

9. Recommend “No” classification, with input from Forestland Classification Committee and fire jurisdictional agency.

Those lands that evaluate to #9 should not be classified as forestland. The exception to this recommendation would be if the local fire agency and the Forestland Classification Committee, as well as ODF, feel that there are significant reasons for ODF to protect these lands. These will typically be in high hazard areas with a potential risk to the Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund and areas with large fire potential.

Example: Not contiguous – inside a city

Benton County Forestland Classification Flowchart (Fire Risk)

