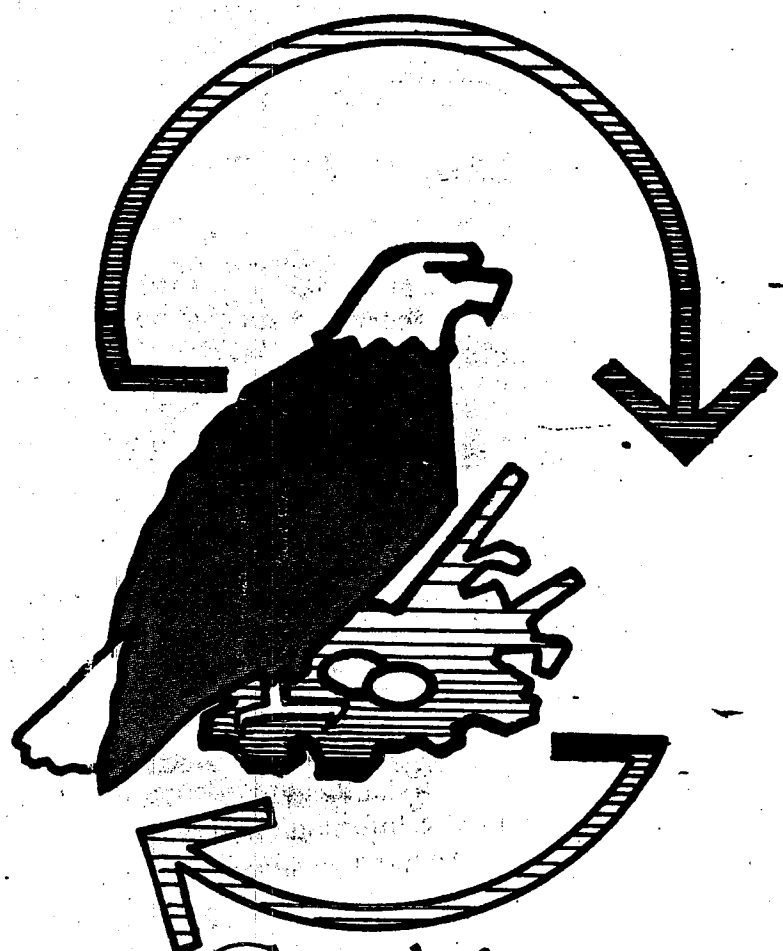


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BALD  
EAGLE

Management Guidelines -  
Oregon - Washington

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# BALD EAGLE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

## Oregon-Washington

**GENERAL:** The purpose of these guidelines is to maintain the environmental conditions that are required for the survival of bald eagles in the Pacific Northwest. The emphasis will be on preventing human disturbance to eagles, particularly during the nesting season. The ultimate objective is to preserve at least present populations of eagles in Oregon and Washington.

Thus, certain human activities which are likely to disturb eagles are specified in the following sections as recommended restrictions. Although these guidelines are based on available ecological information, one cannot predict with certainty the effects of a given amount of disturbance on a particular pair of eagles. Therefore, even strict adherence to these guidelines does not guarantee continued eagle use of an area. Whoever makes specific land use decisions will need to take into consideration variations in topography and the behavior of individual eagles, so that these general management guidelines can be tailored to suit local conditions.

For management purposes, the following guidelines are divided into sections on Nesting, Feeding and Roosting. Except as otherwise noted, the guidelines apply to both public and private lands.

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1. NESTING. Bald eagles often use alternate nests in different years. The following guidelines apply equally to all nests used by any particular pair of eagles, even though a nest may not have been used for raising young for one or more years. These guidelines would apply also to any tree-nesting golden eagles in the forested parts of Oregon and Washington.

Eagle-nesting territories are here divided into primary and secondary management zones, within each of which certain human activities have been found to disturb the nesting process. Such disturbance is defined by the restrictions recommended for each zone.

a. Primary Zone: This is the most critical area immediately around the nest.

(1) Size: Except under unusual circumstances (e.g., where a particular pair of eagles is known to be tolerant of closer human activity), the boundary of the primary zone shall not be less than 330' (5 chains) from the nest. The size should be adjusted by the actual use of the area around the nest tree, to include frequently used perch trees. Where isolated groups of trees are likely to blow down, the primary zone should not be less than 20 acres, and the opinion of a qualified forester should be obtained in order to take measures to minimize that likelihood.

(2) Recommended Restrictions:

(a) The following human activities are likely to cause disturbance to eagles and, therefore, should not occur within the primary nesting zone at any time:

1. Major land uses such as logging; the development of new commercial and industrial sites; the building of new homes; road and other construction; and mining.
2. Use of chemicals toxic to eagles. These include DDT, other persistent organochlorine pesticides, PCB, mercury, lead.

(b) In addition, certain human activities are likely to disturb eagles during the critical period. The critical period is the time between the arrival of adults at the nest site and three weeks after the fledging of any young. In the Cascade Mountains, the critical period will usually fall between March 1 and August 15; in the valleys and along the coast, between February 1 and July 31; and in the Klamath Basin, between January 1 and July 31. During the first twelve weeks of the critical period, eagles are most vulnerable to disturbance.

The following human activities, therefore, should be restricted during the critical period:

1. Human entry into the primary nesting zone.
2. Low level aircraft operations.

However, if a pair of eagles chooses to establish a new nest in an area already receiving human use, the human activities occurring at that time can continue, except the use of toxic chemicals. Any expanded human activity should be avoided.

(3) Additional Management Recommendations:

- (a) On public land, close land and water access to nest. Post the boundary only if necessary to reduce travel near the nest. Signs should not mention eagles or eagle nesting.
- (b) On private land, the landowner might voluntarily agree to protect the primary zone; or, if the integrity of the zone cannot be otherwise preserved, the area should be acquired in fee, by easement, or by exchange--by either a private or public conservation agency. Easements should be for ten years and be renewable.

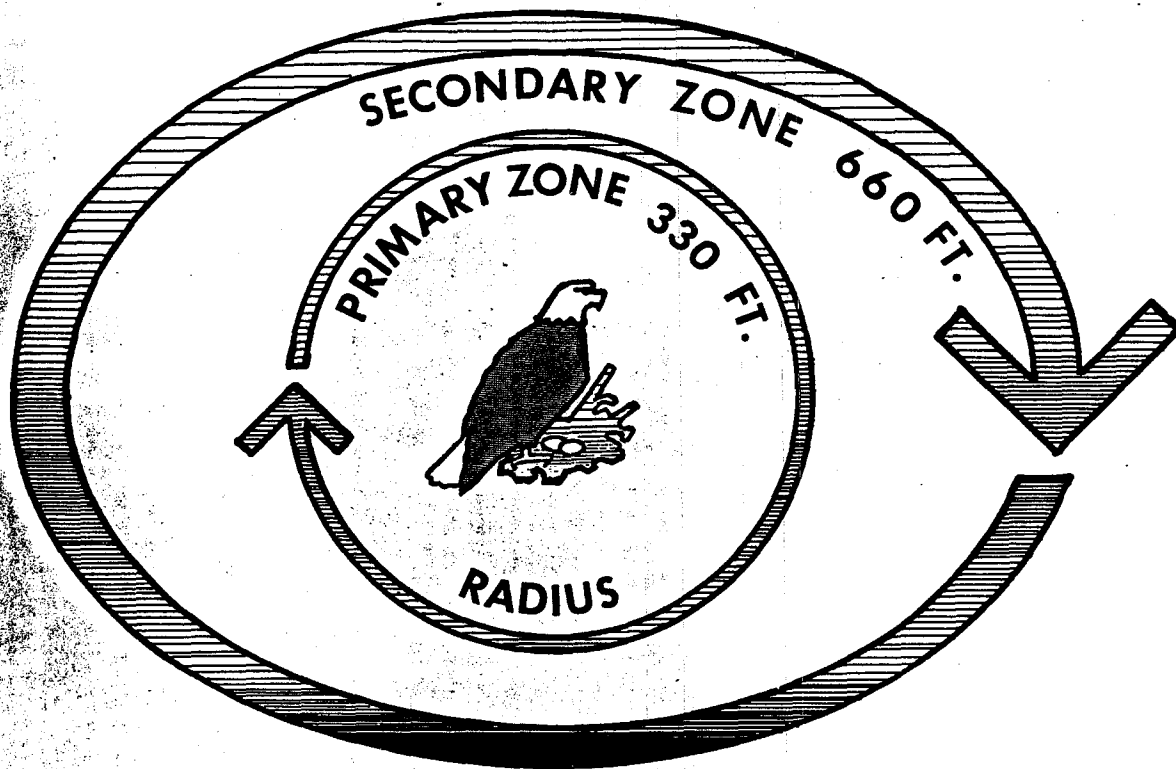
b. Secondary (Buffer) Zone: The purpose of this zone is to further minimize disturbance.

- (1) Size: The size of the secondary zone will be determined by local topography and resulting visibility from the nest. It shall lie outside the primary zone and be approximately circular, with a minimum boundary of 660' (10 chains) from the nest. If disturbance would be clearly visible from the nest in a particular direction, the secondary zone should extend  $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile (20 chains) in that direction.

(2) Recommended Restrictions:

- (a) Certain human activities of a permanent nature are likely to disturb eagles, and they should not, therefore, occur within the secondary zone at any time. These include the development of new commercial and industrial sites, the building of new homes, the building of new roads and trails facilitating access to the nest, and the use of chemicals toxic to eagles (see above).
- (b) Certain human activities have time-limited effects but are likely to disturb eagles when eagles are nesting. Therefore, human entry into the secondary zone should be avoided during the critical period. Examples of this kind of disturbance are logging (including selective cutting), mining, low level aircraft operations, use of firearms, camping, and picnicking. Occasional and limited human intrusion, such as solitary hiking, bird watching, and fishing, will not be disturbing in most cases.

If a pair of eagles chooses to establish a new nest in an area already receiving human use, the human activities occurring at that time can continue, except the use of toxic chemicals. Any expanded human activity should be avoided.



(3) Additional Management Recommendations:

- (a) On public land, close land and water access to nest. Post boundary only if necessary to reduce travel near the nest. Signs should not mention eagles or eagle nesting.
- (b) On private land, the owner might voluntarily agree to protect the secondary zone; or if the integrity of the zone cannot be otherwise preserved, it should be acquired by easement or by exchange, by either a private or public conservation agency. Easements should be for ten years and be renewable.

c. Potential Nest Sites: A small but significant percentage of a bald eagle population nests in new habitat every year. Therefore, to satisfy the future nesting needs of bald eagles, it is essential to preserve suitable habitat in addition to that which is being presently used. Therefore, the following guidelines are recommended:

- (1) In potential or traditional eagle nesting habitat, where no nest now exists, for every 320 acres less than  $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile from a river, lake larger than 40 acres, or tidewater, leave 4 to 6 over-mature trees in the stand with an open view of and clear flight path to the water, in an area free of human disturbance. These should be the largest trees in the stand and preferably have dead or broken tops. In addition, 4 to 6 mature (80-year old) trees should be left to provide nesting sites over the long-term (50 to 100 years).
- (2) Old Nests: Since eagles have been known to reoccupy a nest unused for several years, do not remove old nest trees, even though they have been seemingly abandoned. Trees in the surrounding primary zone should also be protected until the nest is destroyed by the elements.

2. FEEDING. The objective of this section is to allow eagles access to and use of feeding areas by instituting measures to eliminate or minimize human disturbances which prevent eagles from using such feeding areas. The following measures should be instituted by public land-managing agencies and are recommended for use on private lands:

- a. Eliminate the use of chemicals toxic to eagles in the watersheds of lakes and rivers where eagles feed. These include DDT and other persistent organochlorine pesticides, PCB, mercury, lead.
- b. Prohibit clear-cut logging within 200' of the shoreline of such feeding waters.
- c. Discourage the construction of buildings within ¼-mile of the shoreline of feeding waters.
- d. Maintain, restore if necessary, or manage fish populations or other primary food supplies to sustain eagles.
- e. Limit fishing, recreational boating, water-skiing, and other human disturbance if adversely affecting eagle use of the feeding water.
- f. Along rivers where water flow is controllable, maintain flow rates which will not cause the loss of shoreline roost or perch trees through shoreline erosion.

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3. ROOSTING.

- a. Within ¼-mile (20 chains) of existing nests, outside the primary and secondary zones, save 3 to 5 old-growth trees for potential roost and perch trees during the breeding season.
- b. Any winter eagle roosting concentration should be brought to the attention of the landowner or land-managing agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or State Wildlife Department, so that a public or private conservation agency can preserve the roost, by purchase, easement, or land exchange if necessary, subject to the availability of funds. There should be no logging within a communal roosting area. There should be no other human activity during the period of eagle use until specific management recommendations have been made.
- c. Along rivers where water flow is controllable, maintain flow rates which will not cause the loss of shoreline roost or perch trees through shoreline erosion.

**LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS:** The preceding guidelines are advisory. The law on this subject is set forth in the Act for the "Protection of Bald and Golden Eagles" (16 USC 668-668d) and the regulations that have been derived therefrom (Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations). The Act states in part that no person "shall take...any bald eagle...or any golden eagle, alive or dead, or any part, nest, or egg thereof..." (16 USC 668). The Act further states that "'take' includes also pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb..." (16 USC 668c). Whoever violates any part of the Act could, under certain conditions, be fined up to \$10,000 and imprisoned for two years.

Compliance with or disregard for these guidelines does not, of itself, show compliance with or violation of the Act or derived regulations. It is advisable that Law Enforcement, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon be contacted if there is any question about an activity to be conducted in the vicinity of an eagle nest, or the nest of any other large bird. The mailing address is: P.O. Box 3737, Portland, OR 97208; telephone - A/C 503-234-3361, extension 4087.



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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