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Riparian Condition - “Acceptable”

Indicator: Percent of riparian in “acceptable” condition by BLM field office. This indicator is based on the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) rating, described in BLM Technical Reference 1737-9 (1993). As applied here, it is limited to areas associated with running water (rivers and streams vs. lakes and ponds). The rating includes three main categories: PFC, functional-at-risk (FAR), and nonfunctional (NF). The FAR category is further subdivided by trend: up, not apparent, or down. An additional category denotes the amount of riparian that is unrated. This map combines the miles in PFC and FAR with trend up. This represents the number of miles that are already in or are approaching an “acceptable” condition.

Key Findings: Riparian condition data can be compiled in several ways. Expressed as a percentage of total riparian miles (including unrated miles), the average over the eleven western states is 51 percent. Expressed as a percentage of assessed miles (excluding unrated), this value increases to 56 percent. Comparable values for Alaska are 91 and 99 percent, respectively.

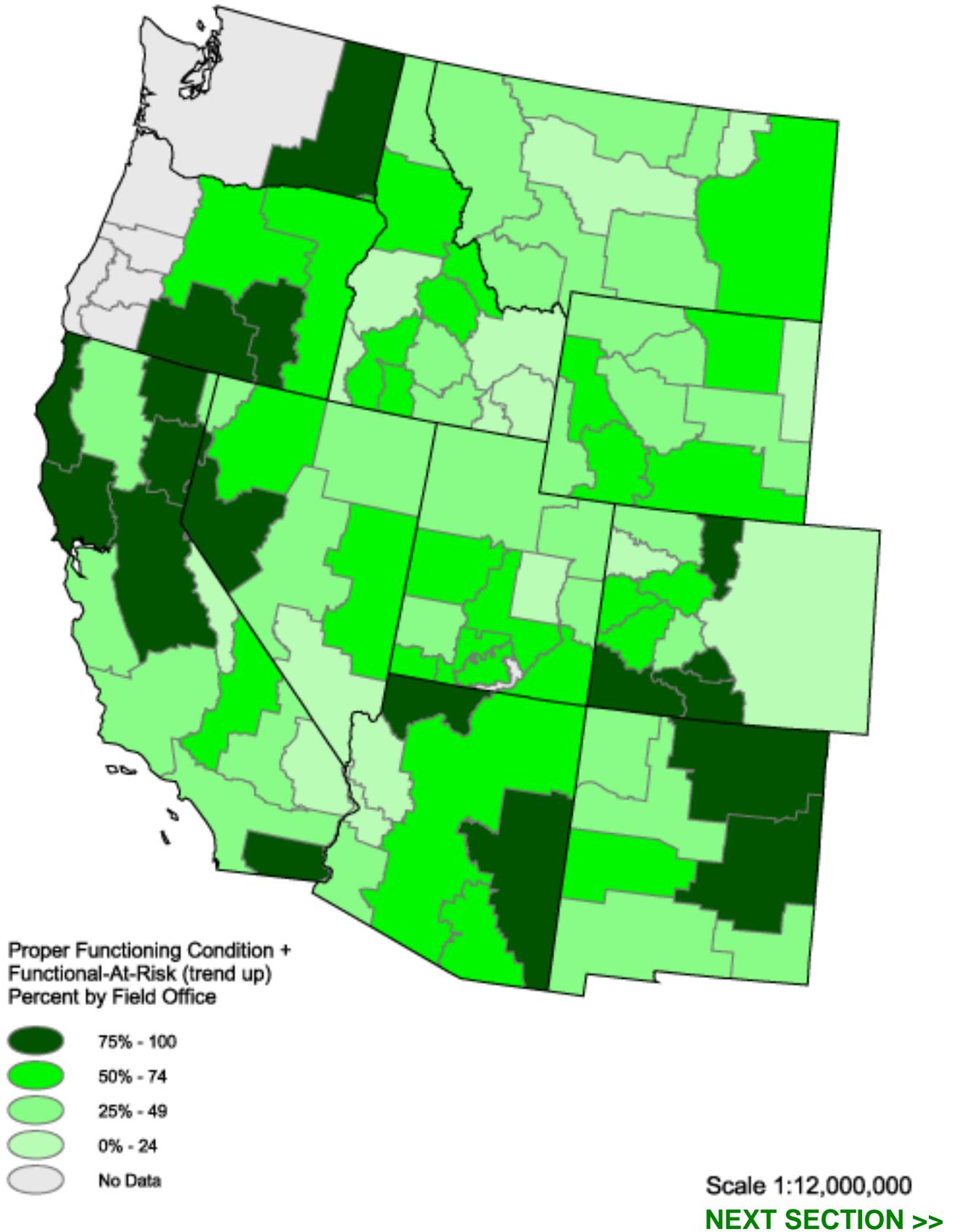
On this map, with unrated miles included, nineteen field offices meet or exceed the 75 percent. If unrated miles are excluded, three additional offices (Buffalo, Wyoming; Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, and Palm Springs-South Coast, California) are added. Comparable PFC ratings for western Oregon are not available. However, riparian areas in these field offices are already subject to intensive management under the aquatic conservation strategy in the Northwest Forest Plan. State summations by field office for California and Montana are significantly lower than the state totals reported in Public Land Statistics. In Montana, this is likely due to a data entry backlog in the centralized system maintained at the University of Montana. These data should be updated by the end of September 2000. The discrepancy in California has not yet been resolved.

Limitations: The PFC rating is based on several physical and vegetative features. Other biotic characteristics that may be important in characterizing overall condition (e.g., specific animal presence and abundance) are not now included although an interagency effort is currently underway to do so. The benefits of these additional elements will have to be weighed against the added time and expense to gather associated data. The PFC rating by itself does not necessarily highlight those areas with the greatest opportunity for improvement. Such determinations must be made by on-the-ground managers and specialists with more detailed knowledge of public land distribution and pattern, site capability, other resource and adjacent land conditions, available partnerships, etc.

Source: BLM field office records. These data represent an initial riparian assessment completed over a period of several years. Randomly selected sites are currently being reassessed to determine change and the effectiveness of applied management.

Comments: The PFC rating is considered a good indicator of riparian conditions when applied consistently. It has a standardized protocol that is accepted and used by other agencies, watershed councils, and universities. Its utility will grow as data are digitized, allowing riparian condition to be portrayed more meaningfully by smaller geographic units (e.g. subbasins, watersheds.)

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