

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT OR-07-21
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BLM Announces Unique Public Involvement Tool

PORTLAND – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Oregon has announced the release of a unique website designed to help the agency develop and refine web-based public involvement tools to be used this summer with the BLM’s western Oregon plan revisions process. The BLM is currently revising all of its resource management plans in areas covered in Oregon by the Northwest Forest Plan.

“It’s our hope that these new tools will assist us in getting a better sense of the public’s interests,” said Dick Prather, Project Manager for the BLM’s plan revision process. “This web site will help us build those tools in preparation for the formal public review of the draft plan and environmental impact statement later this summer.”

“As we moved forward with this forestry planning process I wanted to make sure that we really made an effort to reach everyone in western Oregon – not just the people at either end of the debate,” said Ed Shepard, BLM’s new State Director for Oregon and Washington. “These new web tools are a great opportunity for everyone to participate in this process. They will allow the public to explore the planning documents as much or as little as they want. But more importantly, it’ll help the public get a full sense of the complexity of the issues that we currently face.”

This web site, called the Web Forum, contains links to important background information about the plan revision process and will allow users to comment on the usability of the web tools. One of the tools, the interactive Map Explorer, will allow users to explore maps of the planning area and tie comments directly to places on the ground. After public review of the web site, it will be improved and expanded to be ready for this summer’s formal public review of the draft resource management plan and environmental impact statement.

The new public involvement tools can be accessed through the BLM’s web site at:

<http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr>

“This plan revision process will set the future course of the BLM-managed lands in western Oregon,” said Shepard. “Experience under our current plans illustrates how important it is to explore new approaches to providing for the social and ecological demands on these forests while at the same time meeting our legal obligations under the O&C Lands Act of 1937 for permanent forest production. For example, we’ve been unable to deliver on one of the

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primary goals of the Northwest Forest Plan – to maintain a steady and predictable flow of forest products to local communities.”

“For the last year and a half, we have engaged the public in a detailed dialogue about options for future management,” Shepard continued. “We’ve worked closely with the public and cooperating agencies to identify a range of management alternatives, and we’re currently determining the environmental, economic, and social impacts of each of those alternatives. This summer we’ll be asking the public to review our analysis of potential impacts under each of the various management alternatives. We’re hoping these new tools will help interested individuals and groups get to the important details in the analysis, and make it easy for them to provide input that will help BLM make final decisions.”

The BLM has also scheduled two public workshops to engage users in the refinement of the tools. These workshops will be held from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on June 1 at the Medford BLM office and on June 5 in the Salem BLM office. For more information on these upcoming meetings contact Alan Hoffmeister at (503) 808-6629, or visit the BLM’s web site at:

<http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr>

The BLM manages more land – 258 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western States, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1.8 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, and cultural resources on the public lands.

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