



# United States Department of the Interior



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Website: <http://www.or.blm.gov/Lakeview/kfra/index.htm>

October 1, 2014

**IN REPLY REFER TO:**  
1790 (ORL040)

## **To: All Interested Parties**

The Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA) is beginning preparation of the Oregon Gulch Fire Salvage and Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the effects of various post-fire treatments on wildlife habitat, soils, hydrology, timber, and other resources. The project area is located about 22 miles southwest of Klamath Falls, Oregon (see attached map).

## ***Background***

The Oregon Gulch Fire was ignited by lightning on July 31, 2014 and was contained on August 14. It was part of the Beaver Complex which included the Salt Creek Fire (20 miles northwest of Medford). The Oregon Gulch Fire began on Medford BLM lands and moved southeast from the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument into the Soda Mountain Wilderness Area, then from Jackson County into Klamath County, and then into California. The total land area damaged by the Oregon Gulch Fire was estimated to be 35,101 acres.

Within Klamath County, approximately 16,903 acres were burned. Of those acres, 4,870 are managed by the KFRA BLM, 82 acres are State-owned lands, and 11,951 acres are private land. The KFRA BLM lands consist of 4,052 acres of O&C lands (Oregon and California Railroad Act) and 818 acres of PD (Public Domain lands). The majority of those lands are in the Matrix land use allocation. Matrix (General Forest Management Area) lands have objectives to produce a sustainable supply of timber and other forest commodities to provide jobs and contribute to community stability. In addition to the Matrix acres, there are 419 acres of riparian reserves (RR), 220 acres of late successional reserves (LSRs), and 807 acres of Klamath River Canyon Area of Critical Concern (ACEC).

On BLM lands, vegetation was a mix of grassy flats, mixed species shrub fields, oak woodland, pine, and mixed conifer. The topography of the burned area is mostly a low to mid-elevation plateau ranging from 2,600 to 5,140 ft. elevation. The fire burned through two KFRA timber sales: Wild Gal (sold and operating) and Hayden Fox (advanced planning stage, decision document pending at time of fire), two range allotments (Dixie and Edge Creek), and the Pokegama Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA).

Burn severity on the KFRA lands was as follows: 243 acres very low; 1,456 acres low; 2,232 acres moderate; and 922 acres of high. This significantly impacted wildlife habitat, created soil stabilization issues, exposed cultural sites, created health and safety issues (snag formation and complete road sign obliteration) and left a landscape that will favor the colonization and spread of noxious weed populations. Fence structures were also burned and land ownership survey markers were destroyed.

### ***Purpose & Need for Action***

The purpose of this project is to implement objectives in the 1995 KFRA Resource Management Plan (RMP), which include the following:

- Produce a sustainable supply of timber and other forest commodities to provide jobs and contribute to community stability (page 22). Provide for salvage harvest of timber killed or damaged by events such as wildfire, windstorms, insects, or disease, consistent with management objectives for other resources (page 55)
- Late Successional Reserve objective: Protect and enhance conditions of late-successional and old growth forest ecosystems, which serve as habitat for old growth forest-related species including the northern spotted owl (page 18).
- Riparian Reserve objective: Manage riparian-wetland areas to protect, maintain, or improve riparian-wetland habitat for wildlife and native plant diversity (page 8).
- Where catastrophic events such as fire, flooding, volcanic, wind, or insect damage result in degraded riparian-wetland conditions, allow salvage and fuelwood cutting if required to attain Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives (page 13)
- Contain and/or reduce noxious weed infestations on BLM-administered land using an integrated pest management approach (page 73)

### ***Need***

There is a need for timely salvage harvest in order to capture merchantable timber values before further wood deterioration occurs. There is a need to provide a sustained yield of timber in addition to conserving and rehabilitating habitat elements.

There is a need for rehabilitation treatments in the two LSRs to accelerate late successional habitat development. The Dixie LSR (105 acres) and Long Prairie Creek LSR (115 acres) were designated to provide nesting habitat for the northern spotted owl and provide late successional habitat for other species. Both LSRs were burned at moderate to high severity. Few, if any, live trees remain in these areas.

There is a need for a healthy forest ecosystem with habitat that will support populations of native species and includes protection for riparian areas and waters.

### ***Proposed Treatments***

The following treatments have been identified as part of the proposed action for this EA. Note

that the acres are approximate and are likely to change based on factors such as scoping comments, internal input, funding, and field review.

- 2,300 acres of salvage harvest
- 2,800 acres of tree planting on Matrix lands
- 315 acres of tree planting in LSRs and RRs
- 370 acres of weed treatment (herbicide followed by native seed application)
- Up to one mile of temporary road construction/realignment to facilitate tree removal
- Closure of duplicate or unnecessary roads

A separate Categorical Exclusion and Decision Record for emergency stabilization treatments is expected to be issued in October of 2014 for immediate needs such as actions to minimize soil erosion.

### ***Public Scoping Input Requested***

The BLM is asking for your help in identifying issues and concerns regarding the proposed Oregon Gulch Salvage and Rehabilitation project. We are seeking your comments to assist in developing alternatives that would meet the above stated purpose and need.

**Please submit your comments by October 17, 2014** to be most effective in BLM's planning schedule. To submit issues or questions about the proposed treatments, I encourage you to submit them via email at the following address: [BLM\\_OR\\_KF\\_Mail@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_OR_KF_Mail@blm.gov) and identify your comments as being for the "Oregon Gulch EA." If you desire to send a letter via regular mail, please use the address in our letterhead, ATTN: Field Manager.

Once an Environmental Assessment has been prepared, the public will be notified again and will have an opportunity to review and provide comments on the proposed action and analysis.

**Note:** Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored by the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Richard White*

Richard White  
Field Manager

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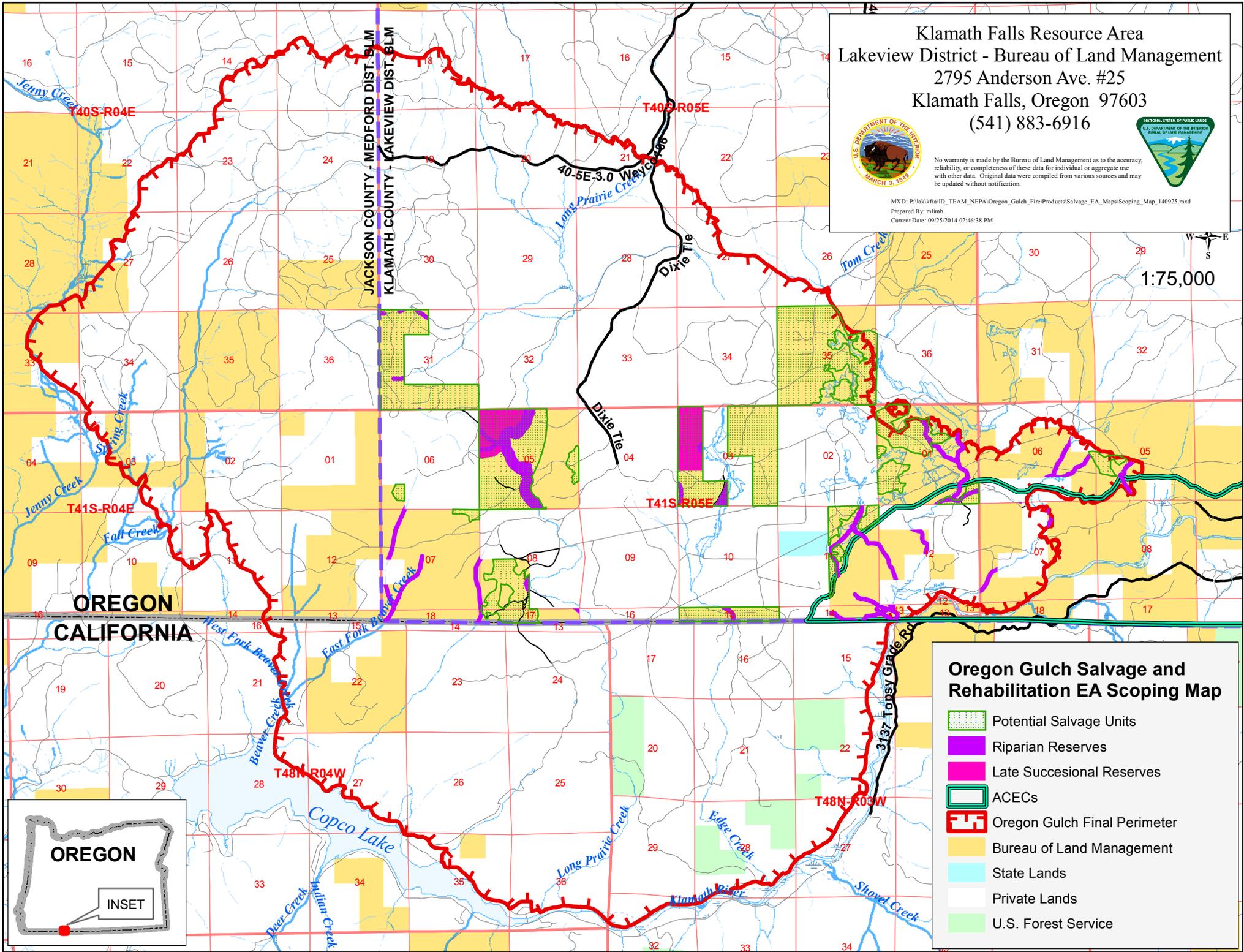


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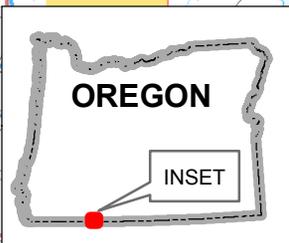
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 CALIFORNIA



**Oregon Gulch Salvage and Rehabilitation EA Scoping Map**

- Potential Salvage Units
- Riparian Reserves
- Late Successional Reserves
- ACECs
- Oregon Gulch Final Perimeter
- Bureau of Land Management
- State Lands
- Private Lands
- U.S. Forest Service