



United States Department of the Interior



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January 15, 2015

IN REPLY REFER TO:
1790 (ORL040)

To All Interested Parties:

The Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA) is preparing the Bryant Mountain Vegetation Treatment Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate proposed vegetation treatments on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered lands. The EA will analyze the effects of these actions on wildlife habitat, rangeland health, soils, hydrology, and other resources. The proposed project area's western boundary is located approximately 18 air miles southeast of the city of Klamath Falls, and the northern project boundary is approximately 1.3 miles from the town of Bonanza. The project area encompasses Harpold Ridge, Buck Butte and the majority of BLM lands on Bryant Mountain in Klamath County, Oregon (See attached map.) The analysis area includes 27,007 acres within the project boundary; 14,677 acres of BLM, 12,118 acres of private lands, 40 acres of Oregon State Lands, and 171 acres of Bonneville Power Administration lands. Actions are proposed only on BLM-administered lands.

Purpose & Need for Action

The KFRA resource specialists have identified several resource issues within the project area. These issues include: overstocked ponderosa pine and mixed conifer stands, loss of sagebrush steppe habitat due to an increase in western juniper, and the increase in the amount of weeds.

The BLM has a statutory obligation under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), which directs that "[t]he Secretary shall manage the public lands in accordance with the land use plans developed by him under section 202 of this Act . . ." The KFRA Resource Management Plan (RMP) of June 1995 is the current land use plan that guides and directs management on these BLM lands.

The purpose of this project is to implement objectives in the 1995 KFRA RMP to address the resource issues, which include the following:

- Conduct thinning of encroaching juniper to protect and improve forage for big game (Pg. 34 RMP). Past management has allowed juniper densities to increase in areas that were historically more open juniper woodlands or shrub-dominated communities causing a reduction in the abundance of native shrubs, forbs, and grasses. These treatments will protect old growth juniper.

- Conduct seeding and planting to improve wildlife habitat (Pg. 34 RMP).
- Provide a sustainable supply of timber and other forest products while maintaining a healthy functioning ecosystem (Pg. 55 RMP).
- Manage timber stands to reduce the risk of stand loss from fires, animals, insects and disease (Pg. 55).
- Reduce hazardous fuels through methods such as prescribed fire and mechanical manipulation of forest vegetation debris (Pg. 76 RMP).
- Contain or reduce noxious weed infestations (Pg. 73 RMP).

Proposed Actions

The following actions are proposed on BLM-administered lands within the project area:

- **Forest Thinning** – Mechanically thin ponderosa pine and mixed conifer stands (ponderosa pine, white-fir and western juniper) to improve forest conditions, as well as provide commercial forest products. Approximately 1,500 acres of mixed conifer stands have been identified for this type of treatment. The trees would be cut, skidded to landings, and utilized through timber sales and/or stewardship projects.
- **Juniper Thinning** - Mechanically and hand cut western juniper within shrub-steppe habitat or juniper woodlands to improve shrub-steppe habitat conditions and maintain old growth juniper woodlands. Approximately 1,790 acres of juniper would be cut with a mechanical shear and an additional 345 acres would be cut using chainsaws. Approximately 380 acres of the 2,135 acres would potentially be utilized as forest products (firewood, chips, logs, etc.). The remainder of the cut juniper is proposed to be burned in piles (1,545 acres) or left on site (210 acres).
- **Road Construction** – Approximately one and one-half (1.5) miles of roads may be constructed to reduce log skidding distances and associated impacts to soils and other resources. These roads would be closed once the project is completed. Existing roads would primarily be used during project implementation. The condition of the road system would be improved as needed for forest product removal.
- **Seeding** – Native grass and shrub seeding would occur in weed treatment areas and in juniper and forest thinning areas. Skid trails (disturbed areas) as well as areas that have a degraded understory due to juniper encroachment and competition would also be seeded with native grasses and shrubs.
- **Planting** – One year-old antelope bitterbrush and curleaf mountain mahogany seedlings would be planted on approximately 1,650 acres within the burn piles on juniper thinning units. The seedlings would be protected with vexar tubing.
- **Prescribed Underburn** –Forest thinning stands (1,500 acres) post-harvest, would be underburned as needed to reduce fuel hazards and the risk of stand loss from wildfires.
- **Weed Treatments** – Herbicide would be applied (6-pound Ester 2,4-D Formulation) to reduce rabbitbrush density within past (1960s and 1970s) chaining units, totaling approximately 775 acres. Imazapic (trade name Plateau) would be applied to reduce medusahead rye populations on up to 300 acres. One unit has been identified on the scoping map but there are additional small scattered infestations that would be treated within the analysis area. All weed treatment areas would be seeded with native grass and shrub species post treatment.

Public Scoping Comments Requested

The BLM is asking for your help in identifying issues and concerns that you may have regarding the proposed environmental analysis. We will use your comments to assist in developing the proposed action and possible alternatives. **Please submit your comments by February 17, 2015** 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 the email address in our letterhead and identify your comments as being for the "Bryant Mountain 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. For further information, contact Steve Hayner, Wildlife Biologist at 541-883-6916.

NOTE: Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Klamath Falls Resource Area Office during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, please be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. 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/ Donald J. Holmstrom

Donald J. Holmstrom
Field Manager

Scoping Map
Bryant Mountain Environmental Assessment
Klamath Falls Field Office
Lakeview District - Bureau of Land Management
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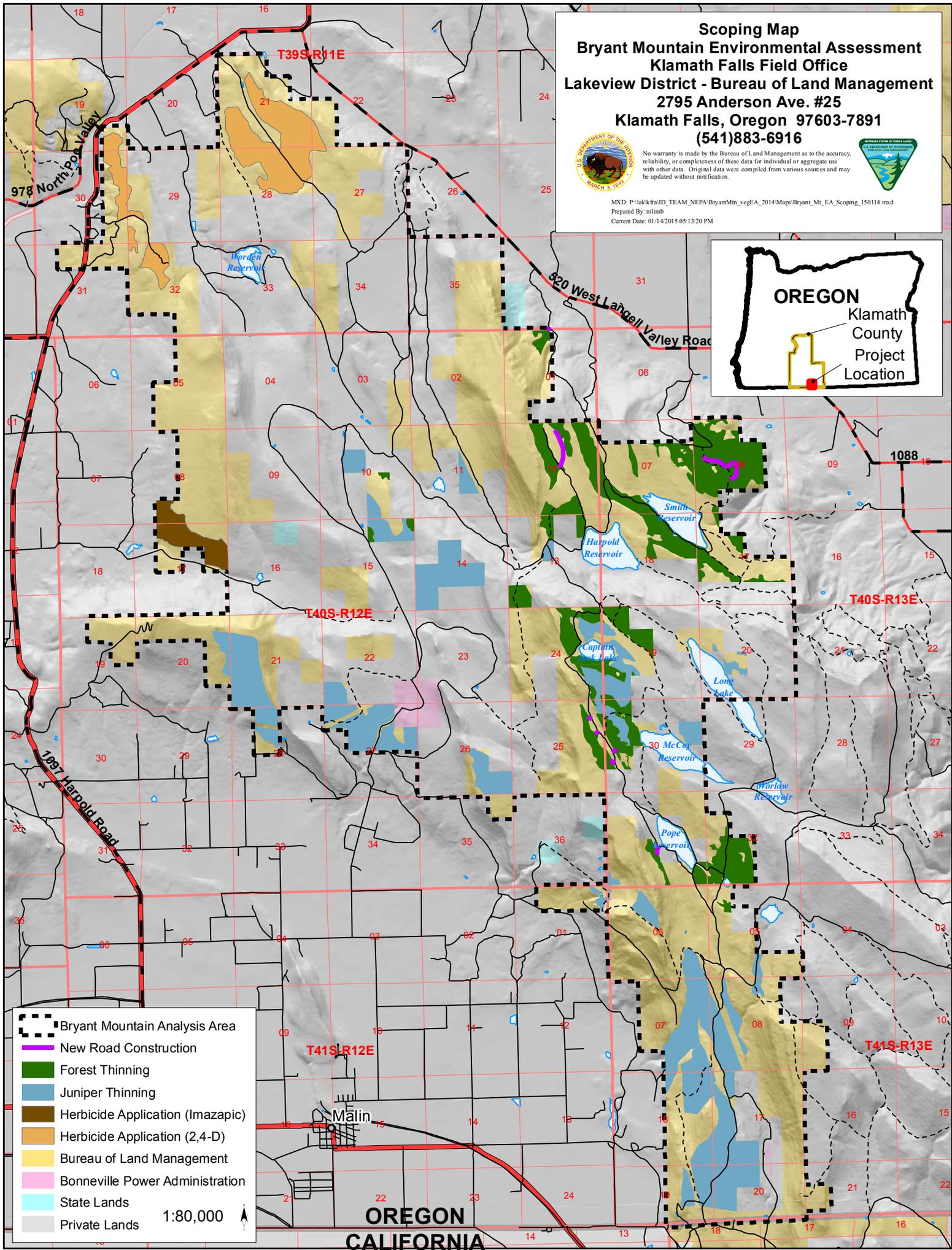
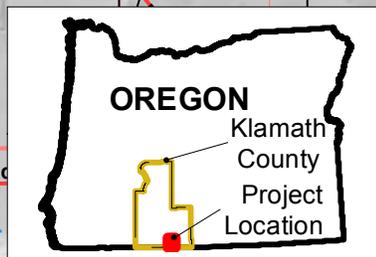


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- Bryant Mountain Analysis Area
- New Road Construction
- Forest Thinning
- Juniper Thinning
- Herbicide Application (Imazapic)
- Herbicide Application (2,4-D)
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bonneville Power Administration
- State Lands
- Private Lands

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