

# Big Butte Creek Forest Management Project

## Scoping Notice

Dear Reader,

November 7 2014

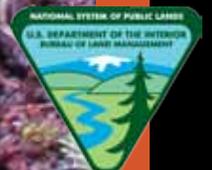
The Bureau of Land Management's Butte Falls Resource Area is beginning the process for planning and evaluating possible projects in the Clarks Creek and Eighty Acre Creek areas north of the city of Butte Falls. Proposed projects could include forest management actions as well as watershed restoration activities.

This handout provides an introduction to the BLM's proposed Big Butte Creek Forest Management Project. I hope you find it helpful in understanding the project and your part in shaping it. The handout contains a map of proposed locations for timber harvest, fuels reduction maintenance, and water source restoration. Project identification is ongoing; it is likely we will be adding road work and more restoration projects. This handout contains very preliminary acreage estimates. As project planning progresses and this project is further refined, I anticipate the acres proposed for these projects will change.

At this time, I am inviting you to submit any comments, issues, and concerns you have that will help shape or further develop this project. Comments clearly expressing site-specific issues or concerns are the most helpful. **Please submit your comments by December 8, 2014.**

Thank you for your interest in the management of your public lands. Your input plays an important role in our land management decisions.

Jeanne M. Klein  
Acting Field Manager, Butte Falls Resource Area



# Big Butte Creek Forest Management Project

## Big Butte Creek Project Area—Overview

The Big Butte Creek Project is located north of the city of Butte Falls, Oregon within the 157,000-acre Big Butte Creek fifth field watershed. The 28,275-acre Project Area includes BLM and private lands.

**The Big Butte Creek project proposals only apply to public lands within the Project Area managed by the Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District BLM.**

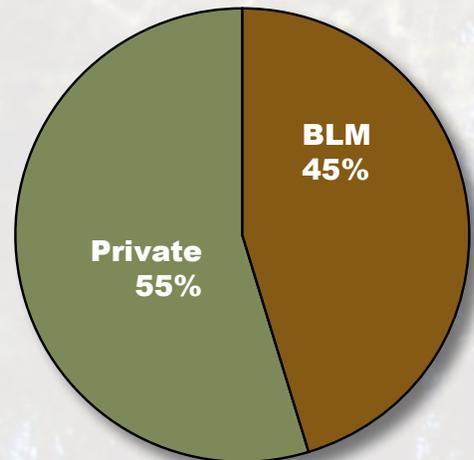
### Land Ownership in the Project Area

BLM . . . . .	12,842 acres
Private . . . . .	15,433 acres

### Land Use Allocations (BLM Lands)

Matrix . . . . .	11,442 acres
Matrix (Connectivity/Diversity Block) . .	1,400 acres

*Matrix* is one of seven land use allocations designated in the Northwest Forest Plan and the Medford District Resource Management Plan. It is the Federal land in which most timber harvest and silviculture activities are anticipated to occur. Matrix is divided into the northern and southern general forest management areas and connectivity/diversity blocks.



### Other Considerations

#### Clark Creek Drainage

The 7,483-acre Clark Creek seventh field drainage, located in the west half of the Project Area, was deferred from management activities on BLM lands in 1993. The BLM reevaluated the drainage in 2012 and removed it from deferral status. As a condition of removing the drainage from deferral status, management activities on BLM lands may occur with the implementation of special management practices such as maintaining at least 40% canopy cover; constructing temporary routes, instead of permanent roads, on stable locations such as ridge tops, stable benches or flats, and gentle to moderate side slopes; and using existing skid trails where possible.

#### Northern Spotted Owl Activity Centers

The Northwest Forest Plan designated 100 acres of the best habitat on Federal lands to be retained as close as possible to a nest site, or owl activity center, for all sites known as of January 1, 1994. This was intended to preserve an intensively used portion of the breeding season home range close to a nest site or center of activity. These known activity centers are managed as late-successional reserves.

## Project Summary

After an initial review of landscape conditions such as forest health, stand age, stand density, land-use allocations, and desired future conditions, BLM resource specialists determined the preliminary scope and scale of this project. The specialists identified acres in the Project Area as likely locations for vegetation management actions. Possible actions could include

- timber harvest (3,700 acres),
- fuels reduction maintenance (1,800 acres),
- water source restoration (4 sites), and
- meadow restoration and protection.

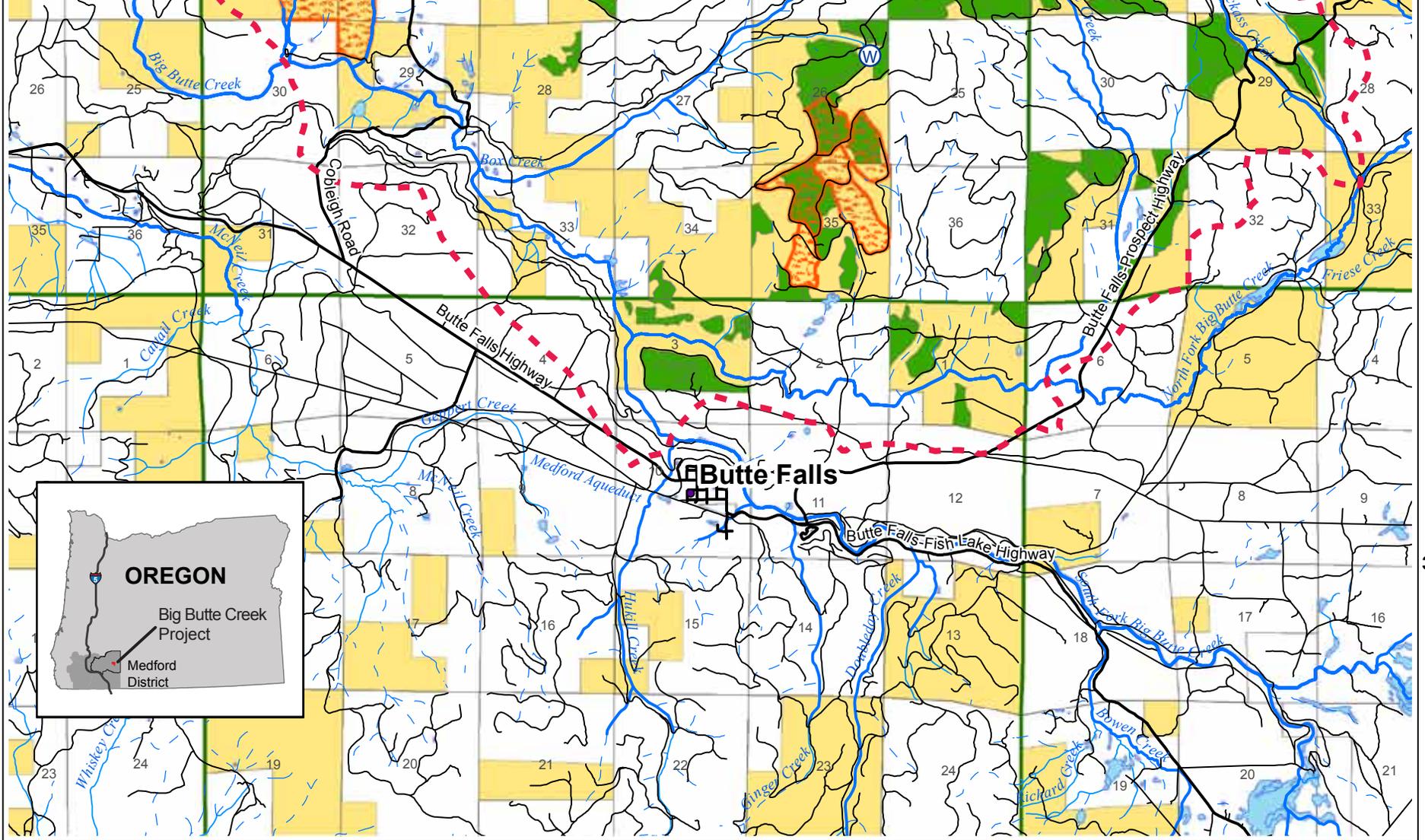
BLM resource specialists are continuing to assess watershed conditions to determine possible projects and locations. Other projects could include small diameter thinning, riparian thinning, road work (decommissioning, renovating, closing, reclosing), temporary route construction, reconstruction, and decommissioning; roadside vegetation management; and *Fritillaria* habitat enhancement.

## Objectives

To be given serious consideration as a reasonable alternative, any action alternative must meet the objectives/management direction provided in the 1995 Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) for projects to be implemented in the Project Area.

- Design and implement forest management activities to produce a sustained yield of products to support local and regional economic activity (RMP, p. 81).
- Design and implement silviculture treatments in stands that are in a condition, or that will soon be in a condition, that prevents management objectives from being achieved (RMP, p. 62).
- Protect and conserve Federal listed and proposed species, and manage their habitats to achieve their recovery in compliance with the Endangered Species Act, approved recovery plans, and Bureau special status species policies (RMP, p. 50-51).
- Reduce both natural and activity based fuel hazards through methods such as prescribed burning, mechanical or manual manipulation of forest vegetation and debris, removal of forest vegetation and debris, and combinations of these methods (RMP, p. 91).
- Minimize sediment delivery to streams from roads (RMP, p. 28).
- Locate and manage water drafting sites to minimize adverse effects on riparian habitat and water quality consistent with Aquatic Conservation Strategy and riparian reserve objectives (RMP, p. 90).
- Protect special habitats for plants and animals, such as meadows, cliffs, caves, and talus slopes, from disturbance as appropriate to the specific site (RMP, p. 49).





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Project Boundary

BLM

Private

**Proposed Projects**

Timber Harvest

Fuels Reduction Maintenance

Water Source Restoration

Paved Road

Forest Road

Fish-bearing Stream

Perennial Stream

Intermittent Stream



**Big Butte Creek  
Forest Management Project**



Medford District  
October 2014

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# Big Butte Creek Forest Management Project

## Proposed Projects

### ***Timber harvest:***

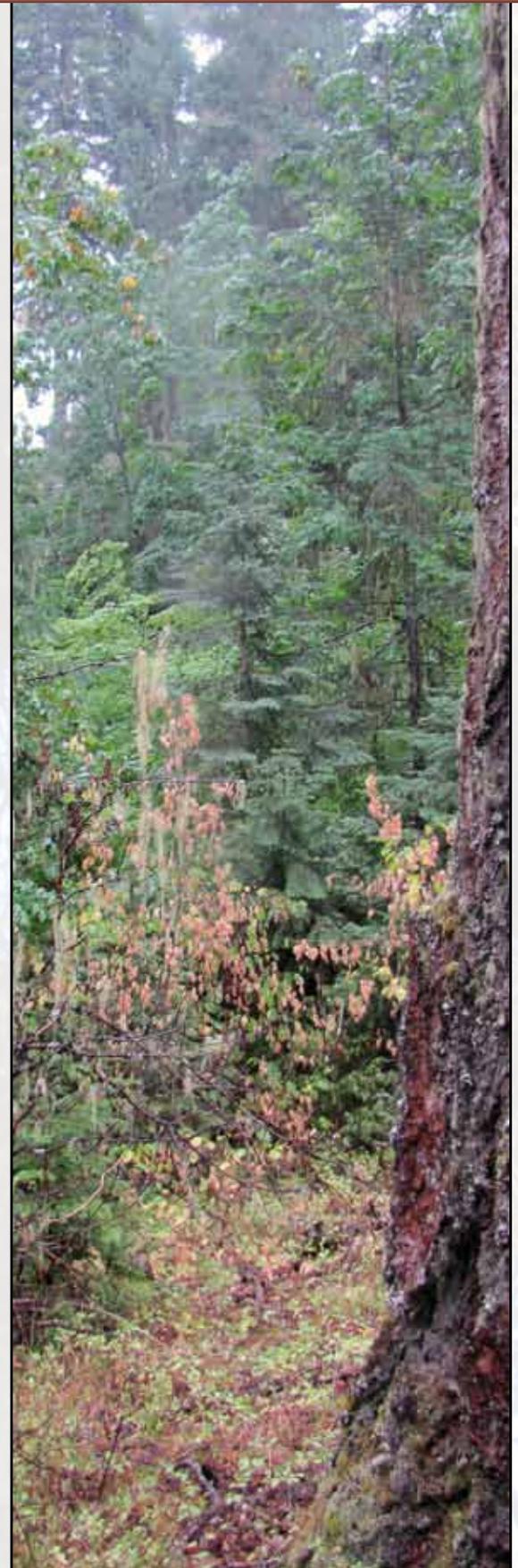
BLM foresters identified timber stands on matrix lands in the Project Area that currently have too many trees competing for limited site resources such as nutrients, water, and sunlight. Timber harvest, using a variety of silviculture prescriptions, would reduce stand densities and free up resources for the remaining trees. Harvest would also produce timber volume that would sustain local jobs and contribute to the local economy.

BLM wildlife biologists identified Northern Spotted Owl 70-acre nest patches and highly suitable, structurally complex habitat (Recovery Action 32) in all the stands under consideration for harvest. These areas were removed from further harvest consideration. In addition, areas will be buffered from harvest activities as botany, cultural, and wildlife surveys are completed.

### ***Fuels reduction maintenance:***

The BLM conducted numerous hazardous fuels reduction treatments 5 to 10 years ago within the Big Butte Creek Project Area. Past treatments included mechanical mastication (slashbuster), thinning/slashing, hand piling, and hand pile burning. Many of these areas are in need of follow-up treatment in order to maintain the benefit of these initial treatments.

Maintenance treatments could include manual and prescribed fire techniques. Manual thinning (thinning by hand with chainsaws) could include cutting brush pockets, small conifers, and hardwood/shrub species sprouts. Manual thinning areas would be “cured” before burning. Prescribed fire techniques include both understory and broadcast burning. Understory burning would occur in previously treated fuels units with timber overstories. Broadcast burning would occur in grasslands and brushlands. Burning would be implemented in the spring or fall when conditions would allow for fire use to achieve the planned resource objectives.



## Big Butte Creek Forest Management Project

Areas are analyzed for possible maintenance needs based on current/desired condition, past treatment, resource objectives, and strategic and logistical concerns (aspect, ridges, roads, proximity to other fuels treatments, values at risk, etc.). BLM fire and fuels management personnel would conduct post-treatment evaluations to determine the need for follow-up maintenance treatments.



**Completed water source restoration project on Jackass Creek.**

### ***Water source restoration:***

Water sources, strategically located throughout the Project Area, provide water for Federal, state, and private fire engines, water tenders, and helicopters for use during wildfire suppression. The BLM identified 4 water source sites that are currently difficult to access with fire fighting equipment or not usable for fire fighting. Existing water sources would be maintained or restored to a functioning condition by clearing brush and trees; removing accumulated sediment; installing, repairing, or replacing spring boxes and culverts; repairing or replacing

pipelines; installing, repairing, or replacing devices that impede water seepage; installing safety devices such as fences and exit ramps; or minor road work. The restored water sources would provide the additional benefits of drinking water, habitat, and foraging opportunities for wildlife.

### ***Meadow restoration and protection:***

Meadows provide special habitat for wildlife species. A large meadow near Big Butte Creek contains an unauthorized road that is being used by off-highway vehicles. This natural surface road (0.3 mile) would be decommissioned and a gate and rock barriers would be installed to block vehicle access to the meadow. This project would reduce human disturbance to wildlife, reduce the spread of noxious weeds, and return vegetation and soil conditions to a more natural state.



**Meadow proposed for restoration and protection.**

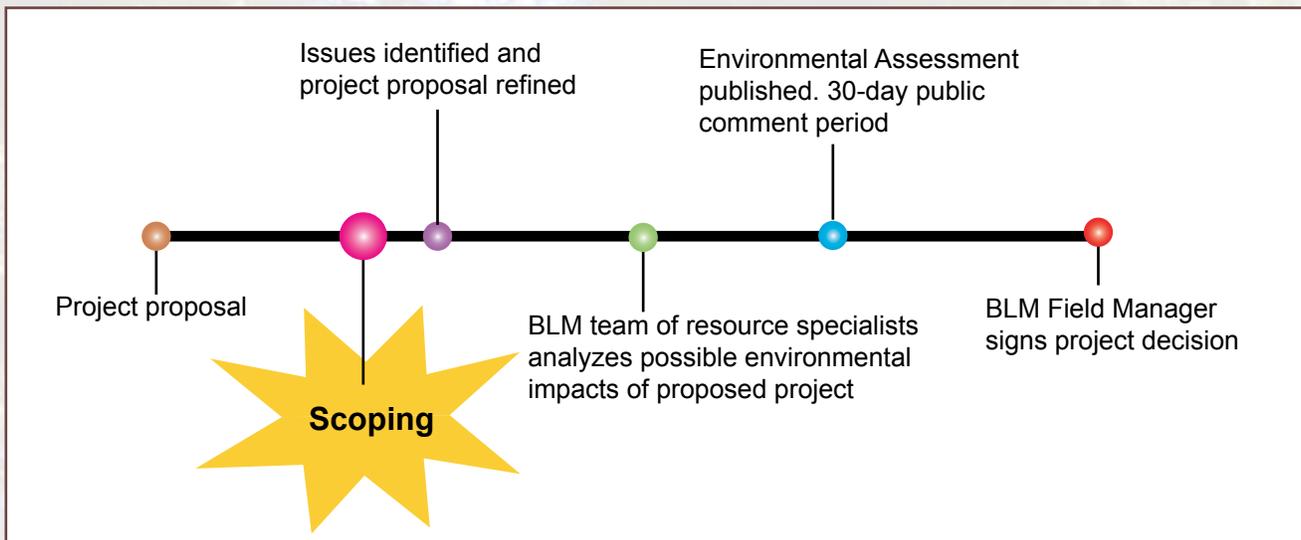
## How You Can Be Involved

Scoping is just the beginning!

We want to hear any issues, concerns, or questions you may have specific to the Big Butte Creek Forest Management Project.

We are just beginning to develop this project, so now is the best time for you to provide your input. Another opportunity for comments will occur at the completion of the environmental assessment; however, we welcome your comments at any time during the project.

## Project Timeline



*Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised 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 from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee we will be able to do so.*

## Contact Us!

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(include "Attention: Jean Williams" in the subject line)