

Double Bowen Forest Management Project Scoping Notice

Butte Falls Resource Area

BLM

February 19 2014

Dear Reader,

The Bureau of Land Management is beginning the process for planning and evaluating possible projects in the Bowen Creek and Doubleday Creek areas east of the city of Butte Falls. Proposed projects include forest management actions as well as watershed restoration activities.

This handout provides an introduction to the BLM's proposed Double Bowen Forest Management Project. I hope you find it helpful in understanding the project and your part in shaping it. The handout contains a preliminary map of proposed locations for timber harvest, small diameter thinning, meadow restoration, and water source restoration. 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 March 21, 2014.**

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

Karla Norris
Acting Field Manager, Butte Falls Resource Area



Double Bowen Forest Management Project

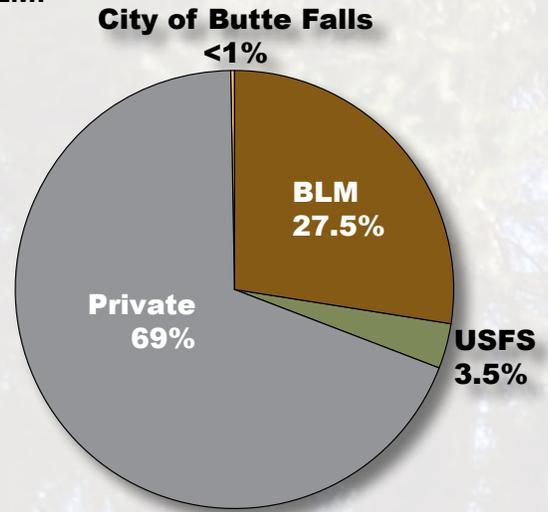
Double Bowen Project Area—Overview

The Double Bowen Project is located within the 157,000-acre Big Butte Creek fifth field watershed. The 12,774-acre Project Area includes local government, private, and Federal lands.

The Double Bowen Project only applies to public lands within the Project Area managed by the Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District BLM.

Land Ownership in the Project Area

BLM	3,513 acres
US Forest Service	447 acres
City of Butte Falls	7 acres
Private	8,807 acres



Land Use Allocations (BLM Lands)

Matrix	2,102 acres
Matrix (Connectivity Block).	630 acres
Riparian Reserve	781 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.

Ginger Springs Municipal Watershed

The Double Bowen project area contains 2,467 acres within the 3,990-acre Ginger Springs municipal watershed: 813 acres are managed by the BLM. This watershed serves the city of Butte Falls' municipal water supply. The BLM developed management recommendations in the 1998 *Ginger Springs Watershed Analysis and Management Plan* that would move the BLM lands in the municipal watershed toward a vegetative structure that would

- be stable in its ecological function, providing habitat for mature and late-successional forest species,
- be resistant to catastrophic fire,
- provide for a reasonable accommodation of natural resource products, and
- maintain the productivity and efficiency of the Ginger Springs watershed for the residents of Butte Falls.

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 997 acres in the Project Area as likely locations for vegetation management actions. Possible actions could include

- timber harvest (900 acres),
- small diameter thinning (75 acres), and
- meadow restoration (22 acres).

Other projects could include road work (decommissioning or renovating), temporary route construction and decommissioning, water source restoration, and restoration of unauthorized off-highway vehicle trails.

Objectives

- Supply a sustainable harvest of forest commodities from matrix lands to provide jobs and contribute to community stability.
- Restore ecological characteristics and sustainable conditions in the forests and landscapes in the watershed.
- Decrease the potential risk of wildfire.
- Reduce the potential for sediment production and sediment delivery to streams.
- Improve water sources available for wildfire suppression and wildlife.

Proposed Alternatives

The Trail Creek interdisciplinary team of resource specialists has tentatively identified three alternative ways of accomplishing the project's objectives while still meeting RMP objectives.

Alternative 1 is the No-Action Alternative. The proposed projects would not be implemented at this time and current management would continue.

Alternative 2 implements management direction from the Medford District RMP for general forest management areas and riparian reserves. RMP-prescribed management actions would be applied to matrix lands outside known active northern spotted owl sites.

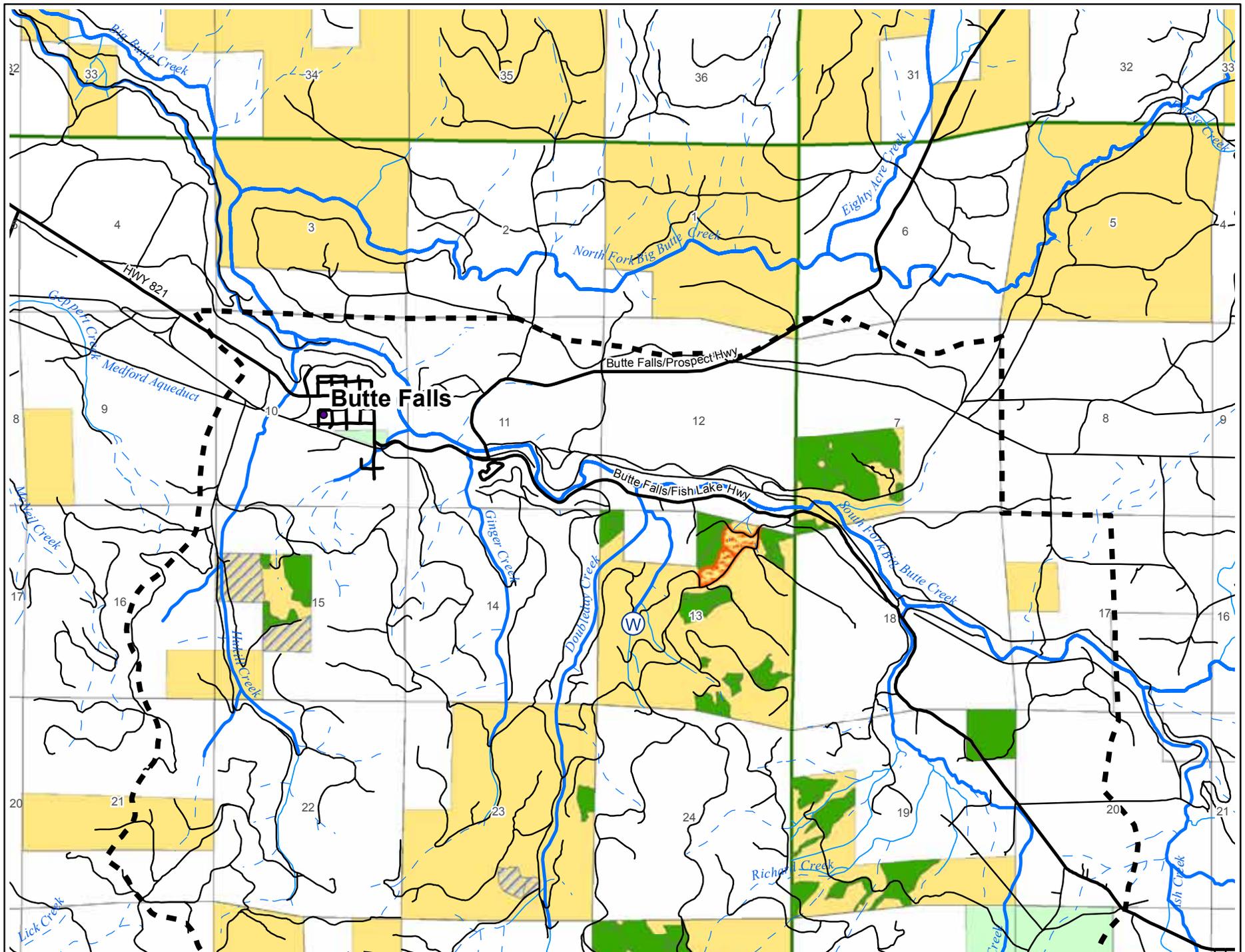
Alternative 3 emphasizes restoration thinning as described in the RMP and as informed by *Restoration of Federal Forests in the Pacific Northwest: Strategies and Management Implications* (Johnson and Franklin 2009).

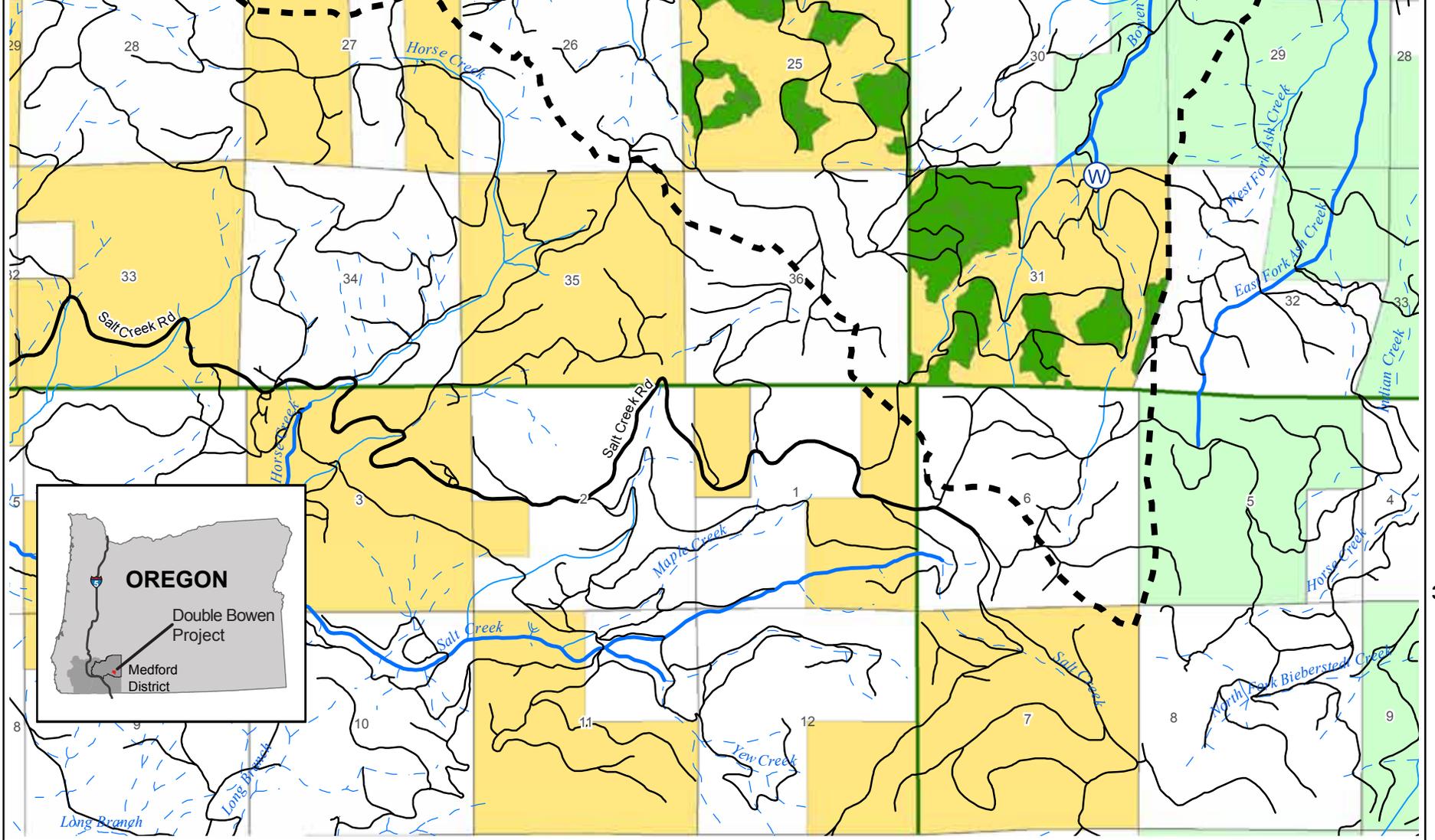
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R3E

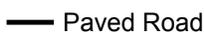
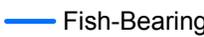
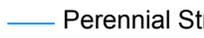
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Proposed Projects

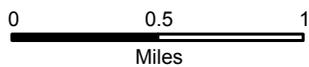
-  Timber Harvest
-  Small Diameter Thin
-  Meadow Restoration
-  Water Source Restoration
-  Paved Road
-  Forest Road
-  Fish-Bearing Stream
-  Perennial Stream
-  Intermittent Stream
-  BLM
-  Forest Service
-  Private
-  Double Bowen Project Area



**Double Bowen Forest Management Project
Environmental Assessment
Butte Falls Resource Area**



February 2014



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Double Bowen Forest Management Project

Proposed Vegetation Management Projects

Shelterwood Retention (Alternative 2): Shelterwood retention, a type of regeneration harvest, is proposed in stands with declining growth rates or experiencing deterioration from high stand density levels, insects, disease, or other factors. The minimum number of retained trees would be 12 to 25 green conifer trees per acre 20 inches or more DBH (diameter at breast height). Canopy cover would be 20 to 40% after harvest. Tree retention levels would provide protection for newly planted and natural seedlings in areas with growing season frosts. Units would be replanted after harvest.

Selection Harvest (Alternatives 2 and 3): Poor vigor trees would be removed from across *all* diameter size classes in overstocked stands. Stand densities would be reduced to the desired basal area. The stand structure after harvest would have multiple layers containing multiple-aged trees and canopy cover would range from a minimum of 40% to a minimum of 60% or more. Stands would contain the healthiest trees of all species and diameter size classes.

Density management (Alternative 2): Trees would be thinned from below to maintain or enhance forest health, stand vigor, and northern spotted owl habitat function. The residual stand would have multiple layers with a minimum 40% (dispersal habitat) or 60% (nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat) canopy cover, depending on the current owl habitat designation.



Double Bowen Forest Management Project

Restoration thinning (Alternative 3): Stand densities in overstocked stands would be reduced to increase landscape resiliency to environmental disturbances (e.g., fire, insects, disease, and climate change). Smaller trees and vegetation competing with the dominant and codominant trees would be removed. Restoration thinning would strive to retain trees 150 years or older and the largest hardwoods (greater than 12 inches DBH). Structural diversity within stands would be achieved by leaving small, unthinned patches and creating small openings. Canopy cover would be a minimum of 40% or a minimum of 60% after harvest, depending on the current owl habitat designation.

Small diameter thinning (Alternatives 2 and 3): Dense, younger ponderosa pine and mixed conifer stands would be thinned to increase species diversity and stand vigor, reduce mortality of desired stand components, and reduce susceptibility to insect and disease. Precommercial thinning and commercial thinning would be used to reduce stand density. Riparian areas located next to upland thinning units would be thinned using a similar prescription with an emphasis on retaining riparian species. A minimum canopy cover of 40% would remain in the upland areas and 50% in riparian reserves after harvest.

Riparian thinning (Alternatives 2 and 3): Overstocked riparian stands would be thinned to improve individual tree and stand health, reduce the risk for catastrophic wildfires, and restore ecosystem functions by accelerating the growth of healthier trees. Stands would be thinned from below; no trees 20" in diameter or larger would be removed. A no-cut buffer would be maintained within 35 feet of non-fish-bearing streams and 60 feet of fish-bearing streams. Canopy cover would be a minimum of 50% or a minimum of 60% after harvest, depending on the current owl habitat designation.

Meadow restoration (Alternatives 2, 3): A meadow in T35S, R2E, section 13 would be restored using a combination of manual cutting and prescribed fire. Small conifers and areas of older or decadent brush would be cut or burned to remove encroaching vegetation and rejuvenate brush species that are used as browse by wildlife.

Other Projects

Water source restoration (Alternatives 2, 3): Existing water sources would be maintained or restored to allow use by fire engines, water tenders, and helicopters for fire suppression and by wildlife for drinking water, habitat, and foraging opportunities.

Off-highway vehicle trail closure and rehabilitation (Alternatives 2, 3): Unauthorized, user-created off-highway vehicle trails would be blocked or reblocked by placing boulders, logs, and earthen barricades at strategic points. Trails would be rehabilitated through various levels of ripping, pulling back ruts, pulling slash and other material onto trails, seeding, planting, and mulching.

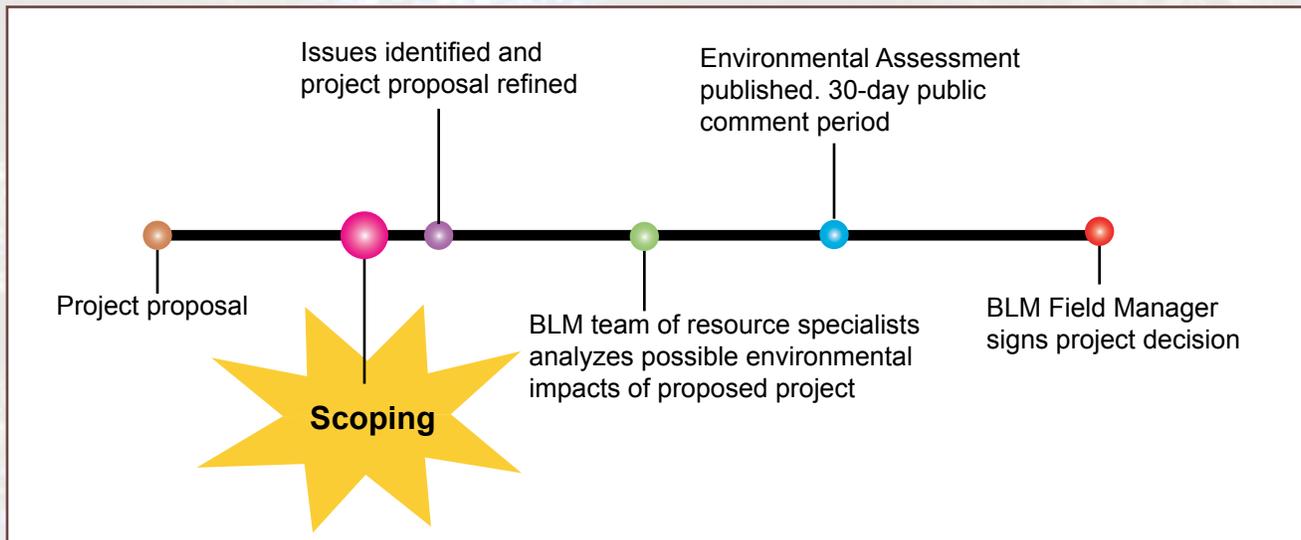
How You Can Be Involved

Scoping is just the beginning!

We want to hear any issues, concerns, or questions you may have specific to the Double Bowen 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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