



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Medford District Office
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, Oregon 97504
email address: Medford_Mail@blm.gov

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1792(ORM060)

APR 08 2011

Dear Interested Citizen:

The Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Ashland Resource Area, is proposing ecological restoration projects, one of which results in the removal of timber under the *Pilot Joe Timber Sale*. Additional projects may include noncommercial thinning in young stands, and biomass and timber removal under stewardship authorities. These are the initial projects under the Middle Applegate Pilot Project, and are located in the Middle Applegate Watershed in the vicinity between Cantrall-Buckley Park and Thompson Creek. While collaboration and public information events about the Pilot have been ongoing since October 2010, this Notice opens the formal scoping period under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The initial projects will be analyzed under the **Pilot Joe Environmental Assessment**.

Why is BLM Proposing Pilot Joe?

The Secretary of Interior designated a Pilot on the Medford District to demonstrate the application of ecological restoration principles developed by Drs. Jerry Franklin and Norm Johnson (*Restoration of Federal Forests in the Pacific Northwest: Strategies and Management Implications, 2009*). The general goal of the Pilot is to illustrate how forests can be restored to attain ecological goals as well as to promote resilience from fire, drought and predicted climate change. The Pilot will also help to inform how this type of management may aid in sustaining regional forest workforce and wood products manufacturing capacity. In addition, the Pilot provides opportunities to work closely with our agency partners, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries, to best implement restoration actions while meeting the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.

The Secretary also expects that the Pilot will provide collaborative opportunities for interested stakeholders. Significant collaborative capacity exists in this area. The Medford District has participated in long-term efforts with the Applegate Partnership and the Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative to increase public support for forest projects that are socially acceptable, ecologically appropriate and economically viable. Those community groups, as well as other interested stakeholders, will have substantial participation in the Pilot process. Public meetings, workshops and field trips have occurred in the past several months to inform interested stakeholders and the public about the Pilot, its goals, and its foundational principles.

In October 2010 the Applegate Partnership, the Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative, the BLM and other partners co-hosted a conference, "Solutions for Forests", to exchange thoughts and information about active management to enhance forest resilience through collaborative landscape-scale planning. Drs. Jerry Franklin and Norm Johnson presented their restoration principles at this conference and demonstrated them at a conference field trip.

On February 17, 2011 the Roseburg District BLM hosted a Pilot kickoff event. While the focus was on the Pilot in Roseburg, the history, need, and framework for the Pilots was discussed.

On March 1 and 2 the Medford District and our partners jointly hosted two public meetings in the Applegate to introduce the Middle Applegate Pilot to interested persons.

On March 8 the Medford District and our partners jointly hosted a public workshop to develop selection and prioritization criteria for stands needing restoration.

On March 19 the Medford District and our partners jointly hosted a public field trip to several stands in the Middle Applegate Watershed selected for restoration to review the treatment proposal (trees for removal). The field trip was also attended by BLM's State Director, Ed Shepard, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, Sylvia Baca.

Public events will be ongoing as implementation of the Pilot continues. Further information can be viewed at: <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/medford/forestrypilot/pilot-projects.php>

The Middle Applegate Watershed was chosen by the BLM as the site for this Pilot due to its relatively contiguous acreage of dry Douglas-fir forests; its substantial amount of data associated with past projects and collaborative efforts; the opportunity to capitalize on lands that have completed environmental surveys; and the landscape-scale size necessary for successful demonstration of the Franklin and Johnson restoration principles.

Dry forests managed by the BLM in southwest Oregon (including the Middle Applegate Watershed) - the resources they host and the values they reflect - are at significant risk. Past land use decisions, current conditions and expected future climatic and stand development trajectories create a scenario in need of concerted attention and action.

Pilot Joe addresses the need to demonstrate the restoration principles. The initial Pilot projects will provide a demonstration of the restoration principles for subsequent learning, discussion, and as appropriate, adaptation. Additionally, the Pilot will be implementing steps consistent with the recovery actions anticipated for the Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan (currently in draft). The Pilot will comply with the current Medford District Resource Management Plan.

Summary of BLM's Pilot Joe Proposals (Proposed Action)

This initial proposal was developed under the direction of Drs. Franklin and Johnson with the objective of restoration consistent with their principles of ecological forestry. The Middle Applegate Watershed is 80,000 acres, of which 50,000 are managed by the BLM. The Pilot Joe project is located within an approximate 5,000 acre portion of the BLM lands which also provides the landscape context for the first set of treatments. Drs. Franklin and Johnson worked with BLM staff over a number of months to guide the selection process for stands needing restoration. They also integrated public input in the final selection of stands for the initial Pilot projects.

Overall Objectives:

- Increase resistance/resilience of forest stands and landscape to wildfire, drought, insects, etc. (e.g., by reducing stand densities, ladder fuels, and increasing tree species diversity);
- Restore more characteristic structure and composition (e.g., reducing stand densities and enhancing tree diversity, including hardwoods, and desirable understory species);
- Accelerate development of structural complexity (e.g., development of larger tree structures and decadence);
- Contribute to development of spatial heterogeneity in stand (e.g, fine-scale structural mosaic); and,
- Reduce risk of wildfire reaching areas where late successional forest conditions are emphasized.

Under this initial phase, the BLM proposes to demonstrate the Johnson and Franklin restoration principles on approximately 600 acres of BLM managed land whose selection was guided by the following basic framework.

- Restoration needs were determined by considering:
 - Stands that are uncharacteristically dense;
 - Stands with trajectories that are unlikely to lead to retention or future recruitment of large, old trees;
 - Stands with legacy pines and oaks suffering from younger-tree competition;
 - Forest types that allow the demonstration of the ecological principles in a variety of settings; and,
 - Strategic treatment that can improve the survivability of core habitat for threatened species (such as the Northern Spotted Owl).
- The anchor of the restoration strategy for the Pilot is the retention of large blocks (generally 200-500 acres each) of habitat managed for late-successional, forest dwelling species.
- Generally trees over 150 years of age will be retained unless an overwhelming ecological need exists.
- No proposed restoration activity in “roadless” areas.
- While the production of timber as a byproduct is important, a fair portion of stands needing restoration are not going to produce timber volume to help offset costs of the restoration work. It is anticipated that restoration needs will far exceed funding to accomplish such work. Thus, prioritizing restoration work is important. Informed by community desires, the following were influential in prioritizing locations for restoration.
 - Stands uncharacteristically susceptible to fire, insects, or disease that would likely threaten the long-term sustainability of the untreated habitat blocks.
 - Areas with relatively good access and with ability to maintain restoration treatments over time.
 - Areas adjacent to private lands where fire risk is the greatest and values at risk (property and lives) are high.
- Forest restoration would be accomplished using a combination of timber sale, stewardship and service contracts.

Additional issues raised by the public and BLM staff include:

- Stands identified for restoration that do not have adequate access or include pockets of nesting, roosting, foraging (NRF) habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl;
- Inclusion (or lack of inclusion) of larger trees (generally defined as 24 inches diameter at breast height (dbh)): and
- Effects of logging systems implementation (such as cable corridors, permanent or temporary access roads).

These concerns are the subject of continued discussion in the collaborative setting with resolution toward greater consensus being the goal. If a lack of consensus on these issues results, the BLM will develop an additional alternative(s) to display consequences on the range of views.

As the prescriptions are being marked in the field, BLM will have more data on these issues. Additionally, a public field trip to review the mark will be held May 5, 2011. Thus, this information will become available over the next 6 weeks or so, but before any final decisions on the project are made.

The Public Land Survey System description for the proposed Pilot Joe Projects is: T. 38 S., R. 3 W., in sections 31 and 32; T. 38 S., R. 4 W., in sections 25, 26, 27, 34 and 35; T. 39 S., R. 3 W., in section 6; and T. 39 S., R. 4 W., in sections 1, 2, 3, 11 and 12; Willamette Meridian, Jackson County, Oregon (Enclosure 1).

How to Comment

One of the goals of this Pilot is to have as open and transparent a process as possible. As indicated above, there already have been numerous public events where concerns, issues and comments have been voiced. If you wish to submit comments on the project, please be as specific as possible. If you would like to provide input on potential alternatives to our proposed action that could meet the objectives described above, or provide information on potential issues or concerns that the environmental analysis should address, please submit your written comments to Stephanie Kelleher, Middle Applegate Pilot Project, Medford District BLM, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504. If you do not have comments at this time but would like to be kept informed as planning progresses on this project, please fill out the attached response form (Enclosure 2) and your name will be maintained on the mailing list. Additionally, you may use the Comment option on the Medford District Pilot website at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/medford/forestrypilot/pilot-contact.php>

To be most effective in helping shape the analysis, your comments to this Notice should reach us by **May 6th, 2011**. However, your comments are appreciated throughout the development of this project as transparency, collaboration, and adaptive management are integral components. Therefore, BLM will continue to accept your comments at any time. There will be another opportunity for public comment when the EA is published for public review (projected for June 2011). However, the relevance and timeliness of comments will determine their consideration for this initial project or for subsequent actions related to the Pilot. Therefore it is best to submit comments per suggested deadlines.

Those responding to this or other public notices concerning the Middle Applegate Pilot Project will be informed as planning continues. Before including your address, telephone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you are 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 your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

For more information, please contact Stephanie Kelleher at (541) 618-2205.

Sincerely,

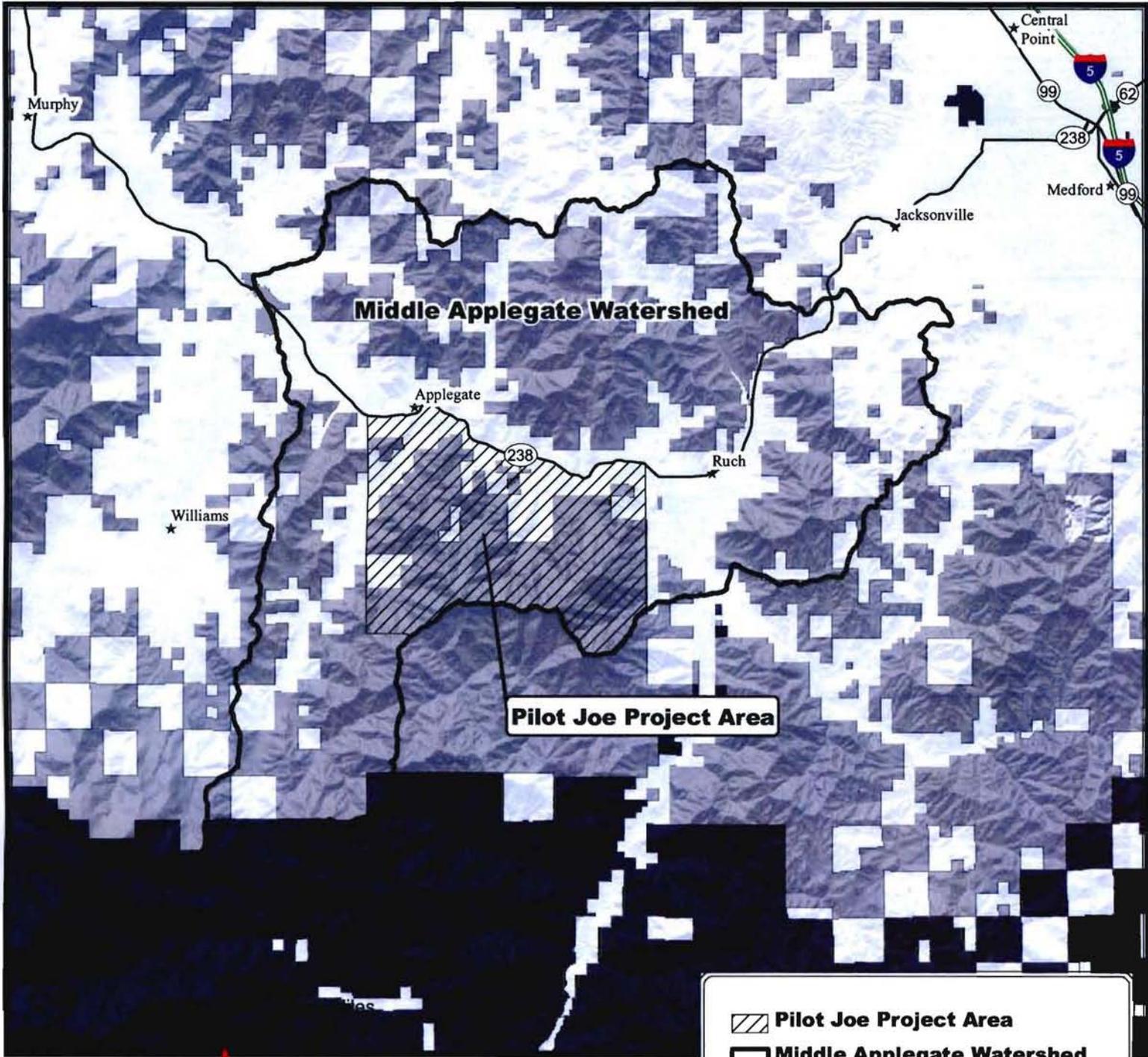


John Gerritsma
Field Manager
Ashland Resource Area

Enclosures

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Documents\Docs\Correspondence\Letters\Planning\Middle Applegate Pilot Scoping
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Middle Applegate Watershed Pilot Joe Project



Legend

- Pilot Joe Project Area
- Middle Applegate Watershed

Ownership

- Bureau of Land Management
- Private Individual or Company
- U.S. Forest Service
- Highway



April 2011



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Enclosure 2

INTEREST RESPONSE FORM

**Attn: Ashland Resource Area Planning
BLM's – Middle Applegate Pilot Project
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, OR 97504**

Please include me on the Middle Applegate Project mailing list:

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY:

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State Zip Code: _____

We are trying to save paper and conserve resources. Please respond if you wish to be kept informed.