

# Trail Creek Forest Management Project

## Scoping Notice

MARCH 29 2013

Dear Reader,

The Bureau of Land Management is beginning the process for planning and evaluating possible projects in the Trail Creek watershed. The Medford District BLM identified Trail Creek as a priority watershed where stand and vegetation management actions could be used to meet a combination of economic and ecologic objectives such as providing healthy, resilient forests; species conservation; and forest commodities. Proposed projects include forest management actions as well as watershed restoration activities.

This handout provides an introduction to the BLM's proposed Trail Creek 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, thinning, fuels reduction, meadow restoration, riparian restoration, quarry reclamation, public firewood cutting, 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 April 29, 2013.**

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

Jon K. Raby  
Field Manager, Butte Falls Resource Area



# Trail Creek Forest Management Project

The Trail Creek watershed was identified as a high priority watershed on the Medford District where vegetation management actions could be integrated to achieve multiple landscape and resource objectives. The Trail Creek project would apply vegetation management actions to sustain ecosystem health and also provide a reasonable flow of goods, opportunities, and outdoor experiences.

## Trail Creek Project Area—Overview

The Trail Creek Project is located primarily within Trail Creek watershed; although, small portions of the Project Area are in the Shady Cove/Rogue River, Elk Creek (South Umpqua subbasin), and Evans Creek watersheds. The Area includes state, private, and Federal lands.

**The Trail Creek Project only applies to public lands within the Project Area that are managed by the Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District BLM.**

### Fifth Field Watersheds in the Project Area

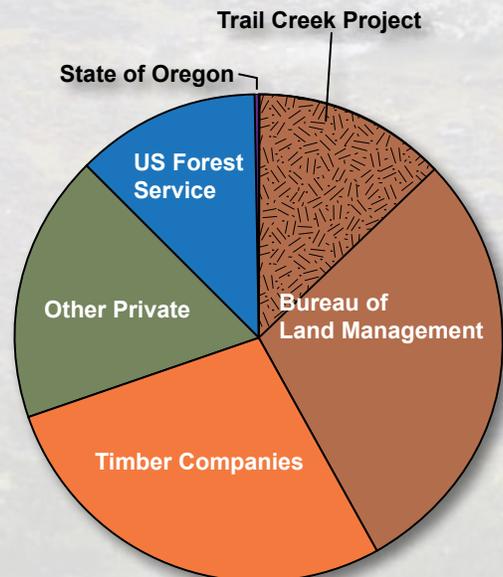
<b>Trail Creek Project Area</b> .....	<b>35,700 acres</b>
Trail Creek watershed .....	35,315 acres
Shady Cove/Rogue River watershed .....	178 acres
Elk Creek watershed .....	153 acres
Evans Creek watershed .....	54 acres

### Land Ownership in the Project Area

BLM .....	15,069 acres
US Forest Service .....	4,350 acres
State of Oregon .....	79 acres
Timber Companies .....	9,892 acres
Other Private .....	6,302 acres

### Land Use Allocations (BLM Lands)

Matrix .....	9,154 acres
Matrix (Connectivity Block) .....	772 acres
Late-Successional Reserve .....	997 acres
Riparian Reserve .....	4,146 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.

## 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 4,575 acres in the Project Area as likely locations for vegetation management actions. Possible actions could include

- timber harvest (1,310 acres),
- precommercial thinning (260 acres),
- meadow restoration (280 acres),
- small diameter thinning (400 acres), and
- hazardous fuels reduction (2,325 acres).

Only **5%** of all lands and **12%** of BLM lands in the Project Area may be commercially harvested.

Other projects could include road work (decommissioning or renovating), temporary route construction and decommissioning, stream habitat enhancement, riparian restoration, water source rehabilitation, and roadside firewood harvest.

## 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.
- Recover degraded riparian and stream habitat.
- Improve water sources available for wildfire suppression and wildlife.

## Proposed Projects

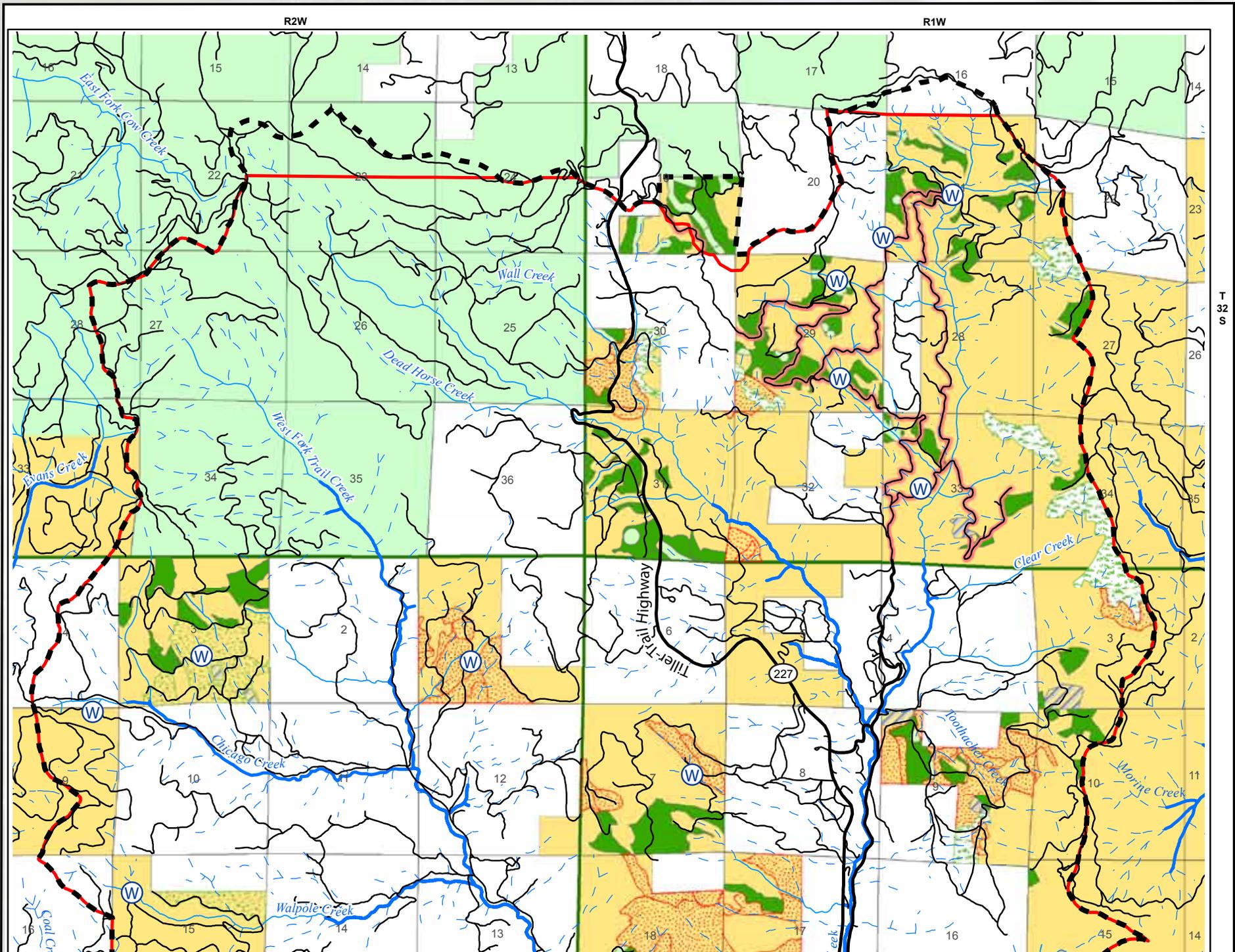
The Trail Creek interdisciplinary team of resource specialists has tentatively identified three alternative ways of accomplishing the project's objectives while still meeting RMP objectives.

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

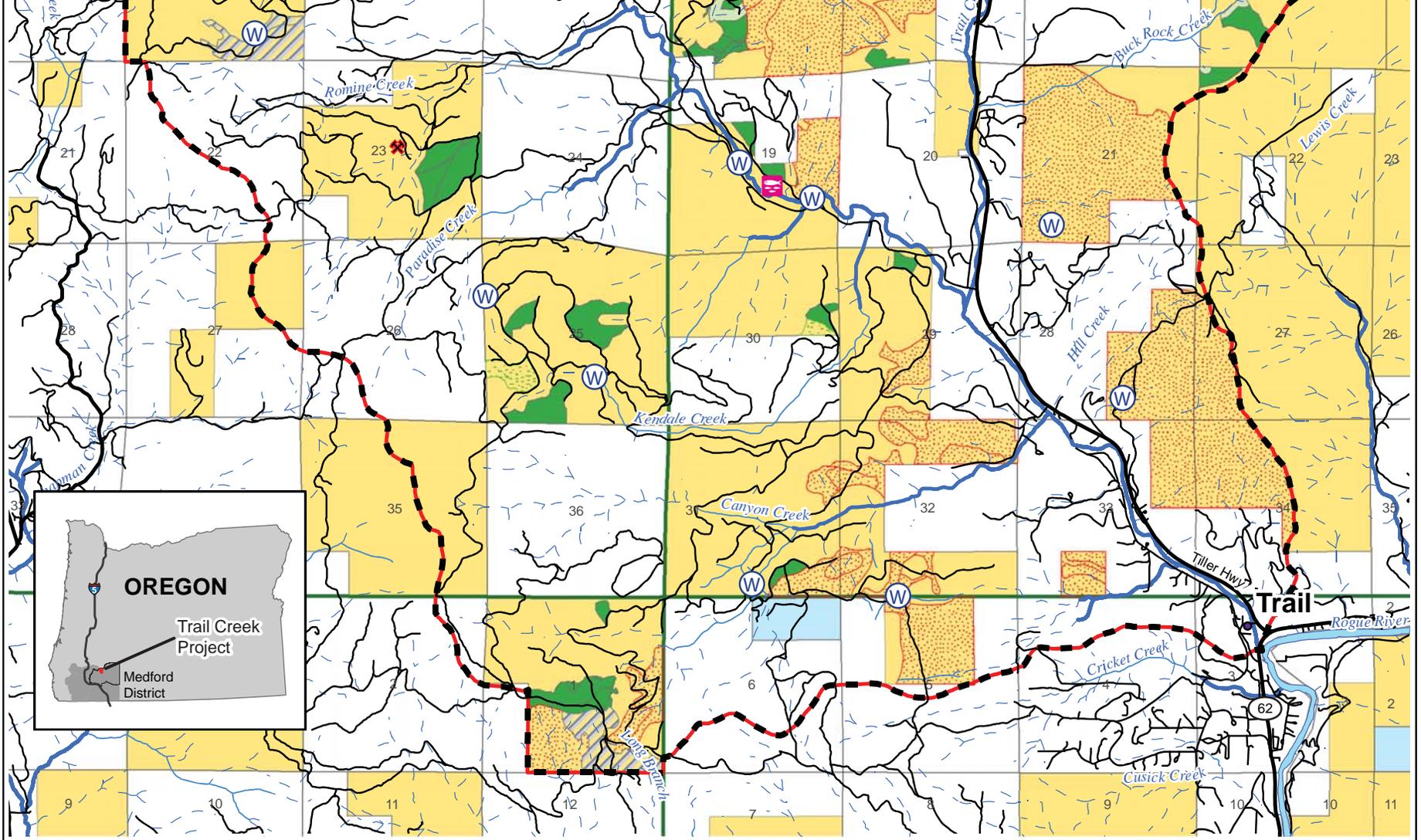
**Alternative 2** implements management direction from the Medford District RMP for general forest management areas and riparian reserves. RMP-prescribed management actions would be applied to matrix lands outside known active northern spotted owl sites.

**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). Alternative 3 would maintain the current owl habitat status.

**Alternative 4** also emphasizes restoration thinning and maintains northern spotted owl habitat; however, no new temporary routes would be constructed to access harvest units.

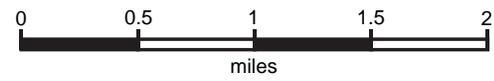


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- Timber Harvest Units
- Riparian Thinning
- Fuel Hazard Reduction
- Meadow Restoration
- Precommercial Thinning
- Small Diameter Thinning
- Roadside Firewood Area
- Riparian Restoration
- Quarry Reclamation
- Water Source Restoration
- Paved Road
- Forest Road
- Fish-bearing Stream
- Perennial Stream
- Intermittent Stream

- Private
- Forest Service
- BLM
- State
- Trail Creek Project Boundary
- Wildland Urban Interface



## Trail Creek Forest Management Project



US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Bureau of Land Management  
Butte Falls Resource Area  
Medford District

March 2013

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## Trail Creek Forest Management Project

### Proposed Vegetation Management Projects

**Regeneration harvest (Alternative 2):** Three types of regeneration harvest are proposed in stands with declining growth rates or experiencing deterioration from high stand density levels, insects, disease, or other factors: northern GFMA (General Forest Management Area), southern GFMA, and shelterwood. The minimum number of retained trees varies from 6 to 25 green conifer trees per acre greater than 20 inches DBH (diameter at breast height). Regeneration harvest units would be replanted after harvest.

**Commercial thinning (Alternative 2):** Smaller trees and trees in direct competition with healthy dominant and codominant trees would be removed to redirect the site resources toward the development and maintenance of large healthy trees. A minimum of 40% canopy cover would remain after harvest.

**Density management (Alternative 2):** Trees would be thinned from below to maintain or enhance forest health, stand structure, 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.

**Restoration thinning (Alternatives 3, 4):** Stand densities in overstocked stands would be reduced to increase landscape resiliency to environmental disturbances (e.g., fire, insects, disease, and climate change). **Trees 150 years or older and the largest hardwoods (greater than 12 inches DBH) would be retained.** Structural diversity within stands would be achieved by leaving small, unthinned patches and creating small openings. Unthinned patches and small openings would range from 0.1 to 0.25 acres and occupy 10 to 15% of the stand acreage.

**Small diameter thinning (Alternatives 2, 3, 4):** 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.

**Riparian thinning (Alternatives 2, 3):** Overstocked riparian stands would be thinned to improve the habitat and function of riparian reserves for late-successional dependent terrestrial and aquatic organisms. Thinning would accelerate the growth of the remaining trees and maintain and restore species and structural diversity. A no-cut buffer would be maintained within 35 feet of non-fish-bearing streams and 60 feet of fish-bearing streams.



*A dense forest stand that could benefit from small diameter thinning.*

## Trail Creek Forest Management Project

**Hazardous fuels reduction (Alternatives 2, 3, 4):** Reduce vegetation to break up concentrations of fuel and remove ladder fuels. Vegetation would be less than 8 inches in diameter. Proposed areas are located in the more populated wildland urban interface.

**Meadow restoration (Alternatives 2, 3, 4):** Upland meadows would be restored using a combination of manual cutting and prescribed fire. Trees and brush that are encroaching into existing meadows would be removed.



Site proposed for hazardous fuels reduction.

### **Public roadside firewood cutting**

**(Alternatives 2, 3, 4):** Dead and down trees less than 16 inches in diameter and dead standing trees less than 12 inches in diameter would be made available to the public for firewood collection. Collection would be by hand within 100 feet of designated roads.

## **Other Watershed Projects**

**Water source restoration (Alternatives 2, 3, 4):** 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.

**Stream habitat and riparian restoration (Alternatives 2, 3, 4):** A combination of stream and riparian projects would be used to restore watershed processes along a section West Fork Trail Creek. Projects would include placing wood structures and rock jetties into the stream, decommissioning user-constructed roads, removing deteriorated fence and constructing new fence along a meadow, and planting seedlings between West Fork Trail Creek Road and the stream.



**Quarry decommissioning (Alternatives 2, 3, 4):** The Romine Creek quarry is depleted of rock and cannot be expanded. It is located close to a stream and erosion from the quarry is placing sediment into the stream. The quarry would be reclaimed by ripping, recontouring, planting, seeding, and mulching.

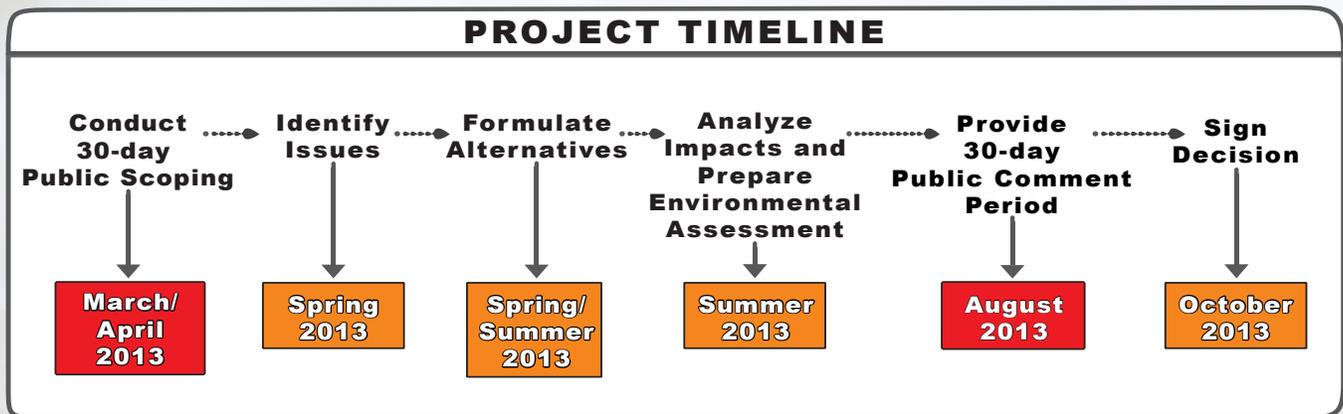


## How You Can Be Involved

Scoping is just the beginning!

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

There are several ways for you to contact us and we welcome your comments at any time during the project. The red boxes in the timeline below indicate the formal public comment periods for the Trail Creek Project. Remember, since we are just starting to develop this project, now is the best time for you to provide your input into its development.



*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 that we will be able to do so.*

## Contact Us!

### Mail or in person:

Bureau of Land Management  
Attention: Jean Williams  
3040 Biddle Road  
Medford, OR 97504

### Telephone:

541-618-2385

### Email:

BLM\_OR\_MD\_Mail@blm.gov  
(include "Attention: Jean Williams" in the subject line)

### Submit a comment from the project Web site:

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/medford/plans/trail/index.php>