

associated acres and AUMs is found in Appendix C. The total number of active AUMs is 28,500 . As with the acreages, the number of AUMs per allotment is generally small, 71 percent or 163 allotments contain 100 or less AUMs. Fifty allotments contain 10 or less AUMs.

The BLM Prineville District completed an Ecological Site Inventory of the public lands in the lower John Day River basin in 1982. This inventory identified ecological sites, delineated geographical areas across the basin on the basis of these ecological sites, and assessed the ecological condition of the geographical areas with respect to what was believed to be their potential.

The Two Rivers (USDI-BLM, 1986a) and the John Day (USDI-BLM, 1985) Resource Management Plans (RMP) prescribed monitoring, evaluation, and planning efforts to improve resource conditions in these scattered tracts. The RMPs prescribed priorities based on the presence of sensitive public resources, rating grazing allotments as "Improve" (I), "Maintain" (M) or "Custodial" (C). There are presently 79 Improve allotments, 25 Maintain, 125 Custodial, and three not assigned to a category. Generally, the resource conditions in the majority of allotments have been steadily improving. Grazing practices have changed for the benefit of vegetation, but juniper encroachment continues even with changes in grazing management.

A total of 100 allotments in the planning area have completed assessments, which is 44 percent of the total number. Out of the ones completed, 40 percent are meeting all standards and 60 percent are failing one standard or more. Of allotments that are failing, only 14 (23 percent) have livestock as a causal factor and 46 (77 percent) have some other factor(s) contributing to the failure. The main reasons for allotments not meeting standards, where livestock are not the cause, are increasing juniper stands, noxious weed infestations, and water quality. Overall it appears livestock are a primary contributor in a minority of the grazing allotments not meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health. In these allotments the BLM is required to take corrective action so livestock will not be the cause in the future. Once all the grazing allotments are assessed, there will be a clear picture of where problem areas exist and in most cases, why.

Urbanization and changes in ranch management are moving the emphasis on livestock grazing to one of hunting and recreation pursuits. More ranches are being acquired by individuals from large metropolitan areas who either hire a ranch manager, lease grazing to a neighboring rancher, or take nonuse. The trend is still small in the John Day Basin, but it appears to be growing.

FOREST PRODUCTS

To the casual visitor traveling through the John Day Basin forest resources on BLM lands are not immediately visible. And it true that commercially valuable trees are not as widespread on BLM managed lands as on some private and Forest Service managed lands. Nevertheless these resources are valuable. Forest vegetation has the potential to provide both biological/physical and socioeconomic benefits.

This section of the AMS will address Forest Products: timber production (sawlogs), biomass (wood chips and hog fuel), and small vegetative products (firewood, posts, poles, etc.). The size, location, accessibility, and type of material available vary throughout the analysis area. Based on these limitations generating Forest Products is not feasible on all areas of forest vegetation. Map 6: Key Vegetation Elements shows timber management zones. These zones have sufficient forested resources to provide forest products if production is consistent with management objectives.

Prior to the Oregon Land Exchange Act of 2000 the BLM managed forested stands were scattered parcels throughout all of Grant County, in the eastern portion of Wheeler County and in the southern portions of Umatilla and Morrow counties. Forest lands consisted of 44,465 acres approximately 32,323 in the John Day and Two Rivers areas respectively. Of these lands 30,962 acres and 11,010 acres of commercial forest land was designated for the management of timber production. (John Day RMP Draft, 1984 and pg. 40, Two Rivers RMP Draft, 1985). The largest acreages of forest lands occurred in the Rudio Mountain, Dixie Creek, Little Canyon Mountain and South Fork John Day River areas.

As a result of the Oregon Land Exchange act of 2000 7,567 acres of forest land were disposed and 11,994 acres were acquired; however not all lands disposed were within the planning area. Disposed lands consisted of scattered 40 and 80 acre tracts and larger blocks of forest stands were acquired. Most of the acquired forest stands are located along the North Fork of the John Day River.

The net change within the planning area amounted to an increase of 3,407 ac. of forest land containing 1,850 MBF. Total forested lands within the planning area before the Oregon Land Exchange Act of 2000 was 76,887 acres and is currently 80,294. Of the BLM managed forest lands within the planning area 47,679 acres (post Oregon Land Exchange Act Of 2000) have potential as commercial forestland.

Commercial forestland on BLM is very minor (less than 1%) in relation to the total commercial forestland within the Interior Columbia basin. Within the Interior Columbia basin the BLM oversees management of approximately six million acres of commercial forestland (Status of the Interior Columbia Basin, PNW-GTR-385, p. 56).

CURRENT USES

Prior to 1985 the forest vegetation was managed primarily for the production of timber while enhancing other resource values. It would be nice to know how many acres of forestland had been subject to harvest compared to what follows.

Within the John Day RMP area, between 1987 and 1997 a total of eleven timber management projects and four modifications to these projects were offered and sold. Total volume sold during this eleven year time span equaled 24,345 mbf (thousand board feet) which is an average of 2,213 mbf annually.

Since 1997, there have been four timber sales offered and sold. All four projects were timber salvage projects. All projects included the salvage of dead and dying trees but only two projects involved some commercial thinning of green trees in order to attain prescribed basal areas. None of these projects occurred within the area managed under the Two Rivers RMP during this same time span. During this nine year period (1997-2005) 8,604 mbf of volume was offered. That's an average of 956 mbf annually. According to the John Day and Two Rivers RMPs 32,220 mbf could have been sustainably offered during this same nine year period.

The average annual rate of 956 mbf is typically enough volume to supply local mills for a period of a few weeks. Even during the most active of timber sale years the BLM in the past had been responsible for 1/3 or less of the necessary volume to support local mills.

Demand for timber in the planning area will continue as long as there is a demand for wood products. If the current passive management trend continues, this demand will not be fulfilled.

FIREWOOD

The current availability of firewood meets or exceeds demand. In recent years BLM has been issuing permits for approximately 120 cords per year. Prior to 1985 there was a greater demand for firewood. At that time firewood from logging slash was considered a waste product and all permits were free use. More than fifty permits were issued annually within the John Day RMP area. In the early 1980s the BLM started selling firewood permits for two dollars per cord. The current cost for a firewood permit is five dollars per cord.

In addition to forest species, juniper slash is also made available for firewood. Occasionally slash piles have become available and the BLM issue free use permits in order to utilize the more undesirable material for firewood. In recent years there appears to be an increase in the amount of illegal firewood removal.

OTHER VEGETATIVE PRODUCTS

Demand for other vegetative products (post, pole, cones, juniper bows, biomass) has been steady. These products are made available upon request, generally 5-10 permits per year primarily for post and poles. Current supply meets or exceeds demand and is expected to remain adequate in the future.

The removal of forest biomass for energy production has been considered within the planning area. Although sufficient biomass exists on BLM lands for energy production many of these lands are scattered with limited access. This reduces the economic feasibility with current technology and infrastructure. There is a potential benefit to the wildland-urban interface (WUI) from removal of biomass; however, the amount of WUI in the planning area would not provide a substantial or sustainable amount of biomass.

Prairie Wood Products in Grant County has two cogeneration plants associated with its mills. While the area of forestland controlled by the BLM is small, future juniper removal could supplement energy production need at these plants. In 1988 Grant and Wheeler counties had juniper trees on more than half of their non-timber land area, indicating an expansion of juniper into many areas that formerly had little to no juniper (PNW-GTR-464, 1999).

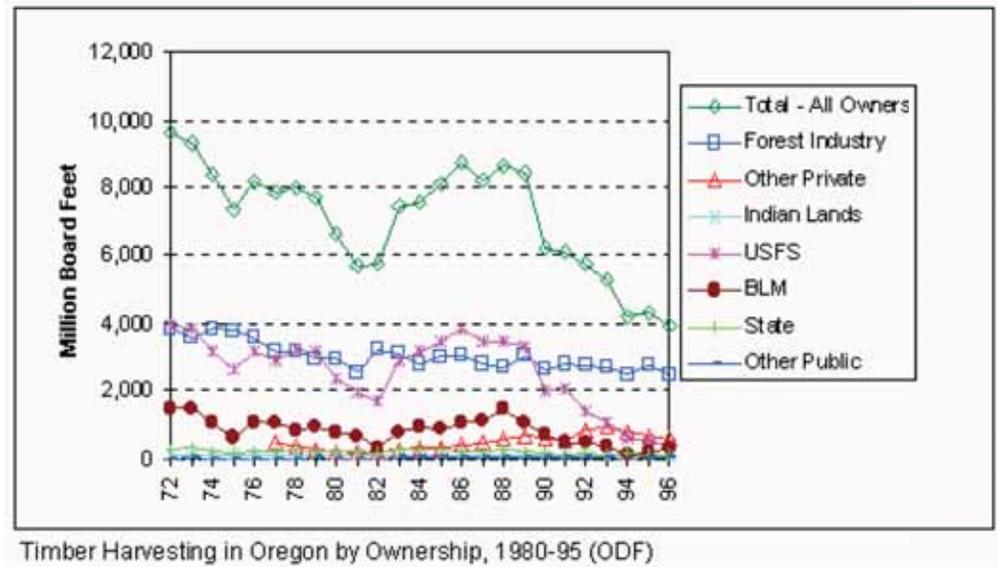
TREND

Timber harvest volumes have declined across most ownerships since the early 1990s. The decline has been the most pronounced on Federal lands during that time frame. Figure 35, represents statewide trends. Trends within the John Day Basin are similar.

The availability of firewood material is expected to continue to increasing. The increase of the material is a result of the increase in mortality due to insects and diseases. As stressed trees die they lose their commercial value and are often available for firewood. However, only a small percentage of these dying trees are within a reasonable distance of open roads and available for firewood use. Demand for firewood in the planning area has been minimal and is not expected to dramatically increase within the next 10 years.

As energy demands increase and additional technologies are developed, demand for biomass is expected to increase and become more economically feasible.

FIGURE 35: TIMBER HARVESTING IN OREGON BY OWNERSHIP



FIRE AND FUELS

Fire risk, priorities for suppression and fuels treatments, and operating procedures have been addressed 2004 Central Oregon Fire Management Service (COFMS) Fire Management Plan. The COFMS organization facilitates full collaboration among member Federal agencies and between the Federal agencies; and State, local, and private entities results in a mobile fire management work force available to the full range of public needs.

The Fire Management Plan designated six Fire Management Units throughout COFMS (see figure 36: Central Oregon Fire Management Plan—Fire Management Units)

Fire Management Unit 1 – Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

COFMS has defined WUI as a 1 1/2 mi area surrounding each designated WUI community as well as around each intermixed polygon mapped by Oregon Department of Forestry. The areas meeting these criteria include:

The Fossil Beds area is composed of the area surrounding the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. Vegetation is grass and shrub steppe.

The Monument area is located adjacent to the community of Monument and includes the communities of Kimberly, and Spray. Vegetation is primarily grass and sage with some timbered areas.

The Wheeler area includes WUI associated with the communities of Fossil and surrounding areas. Vegetation is dominated by grass and shrubs.

Other WUI communities include: Antelope, Anton, Arlington, Austin, Big Muddy Ranch, Biggs Junction, Canyon City, Clarno, Condon, Dayville, Grass Valley, John Day, Kent, Long Creek, Mayville, McDonald Crossings/Rock Creek, Mitchell, Moro, Mount Vernon, Prairie City, Seneca, Service Creek, Shaniko, South Fork John Day, Twickenham, and Wasco.