Thursday, May 14, 2015

Issue Paper: Fire and Fuels

Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon

Background: Fire has played a major role across western Oregon landscapes throughout history. Fire management, including fire suppression and fuels reduction, is vital to protecting and maintaining the health and viability of the forests the BLM administers. While the general approach to fire and fuels is common to all alternatives, differences in the land use allocations between alternatives affect vegetation structure, fuel dynamics, potential fire behavior, fire severity, and fire management opportunities.

Key Points:

- All alternatives would increase stand-level fire resistance and reduce wildfire hazard on BLM-administered lands compared to current conditions. Within the Harvest Land Base, there would be greater variation in these variables among the alternatives over time.

- In the absence of natural fire as a disturbance agent, management activities, including prescribed fire and mechanical management of vegetation, can serve as a partial surrogate for natural disturbance, and promote and maintain desired structural and compositional changes.

- The 50-year analysis period may be too short in length to show substantial shifts in growth stages (e.g. development of mid-growth closed forests into late-growth open forests).

- Compared to current conditions all alternatives would increase stand-level fire resistance within the dry forest and reduce wildfire hazard near Wildland Developed Areas on BLM-administered lands.

- All alternatives would increase stand-level fire resistance and reduce wildfire hazard on BLM-administered lands compared to current conditions. Within the Harvest Land Base, there would be greater variation in these variables among the alternatives over time.

- In the absence of natural fire as a disturbance agent, management activities, including prescribed fire and mechanical management of vegetation, can serve as a partial surrogate for natural disturbance, and promote and maintain desired structural and compositional changes.

The Resource Management Plans (RMP) for Western Oregon will determine how the BLM-administered lands in western Oregon will be managed to further the recovery of threatened and endangered species, to provide for clean water, to restore fire-adapted ecosystems, to produce a sustained yield of timber products, to coordinate management of lands surrounding the Coquille Forest with the Coquille Tribe, and to provide for recreation opportunities.

For more information, please visit the BLM's Resource Management Plans of western Oregon website at http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/rmpswesternoregon/index.php.