

John Day – Snake RAC Meeting Summary

Facilitator: Lisa Clark

The John Day-Snake Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was convened for its meeting at 8:00 A.M. on June 18, 2015 with a quorum, at the Quality Inn & Suites Lobby in Clarkston, WA.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public.

Council members present: Terry Drever-Gee (Energy/Minerals); Michael Hayward (Commercial Timber); Art Waugh (Developed Recreation/OHV); Kevin Peterman (Energy/Minerals); Jim Reiss (Dispersed Recreation); Tim Unterwegner (Dispersed Recreation); Chris Perry (Elected Official); Steve Lent (Archaeological and Cultural Resources), Randy Jones (State Agency Rep), Ben Gordon (Environmental Org), Erica Maltz (Tribal Rep), Greg Jackle (State Agency Rep) **Absent:** Berta Youtie (Environmental Groups); Patrick Dunham (Public-at-Large, Dispersed Recreation); Harry Dalgaard (Outdoor Recreation).

Federal Managers present: Carol Benkosky (Prineville District Manager); Don Gonzalez (Vale District Mgr.); Stacey Forson (Ochoco Forest Sup); Joani Bosworth (for Umatilla Forest Sup); Tom Montoya (Wallowa-Whitman Forest Sup); Audrey Matsumonji (for Malheur Forest Sup.), John Allen (Deschutes National Forest Sup).

For the record, it is noted that to avoid a conflict of interest, Council members absent themselves from the meeting when the Council discusses matters in which a conflict of interest may occur.

DAY ONE

The first day of the meeting was an all-day field trip to the Hells Canyon Recreation Area to discuss fee issues and visit sites. Although the public was welcome to attend, anyone outside of the RAC was responsible for providing their own transportation (vehicle to launch and jetboat).

DAY TWO the meeting convened at the Quality Inn and Suites, Sternwheel Ballroom Conference Center.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. and the group reviewed meeting logistics, approved the March minutes, and made any necessary introductions.

Prineville BLM District Manager, Carol Benkosky update:

John Day RMP

Prineville District Manager, Carol Benkosky, provided an update on the status of the JDB RMP. In particular, she reviewed the process for implementing the Interim Travel Mgmt Plan, and let members know that the Prineville District will be working on the final Travel Management Plan (TMP) over the next several years. At first glance, the Interim Plan appears to have an “alarmingly high” numbers of miles that many be closed. In the interim process:



- Residents affected by the Interim Travel Plan can apply for a Right-of-Way in order to reach their property.
- The RAC can form a subcommittee to work on the final TMP to increase public participation.
- BLM could also use the RACs help to help develop an implementation plan for the TMP.

In addition to a TMP, the JDB RMP creates some Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and has removed one ACEC.

Several questions were asked:

“In order for someone to appeal in the process—one must have had involvement throughout the process?” and the answer is “yes.”

“If during the planning process, circumstances change, is there an amendment?” and the answer is “yes, additional NEPA work will need to be accomplished.”

“Are there surprises that come along with the plans of this sort?” and the answer is “yes.”

Teaters Road

Carol provided an update on the status of Teaters Road in Crook County, Oregon, where local landowners believe BLM does NOT have a complete Right-of-Way and have gated the road to public access. These properties have been owned privately for a long time. The issue is that there are easements and access sought to access public lands via private property. In this case, unless BLM can prove a valid ROW, the property owner would have to grant an easement and it can be legally deeded, etc. This permission is needed for both public employees as well as members of the public to cross private land – whether working or heading to a mining claim, etc. BLM will look through records to see history of use and maintenance, etc. and work with the landowner to see about access.

REA refresher & Lower Deschutes River Business Plan Presentation/Fee Increase Proposal (Carol Benkosky and Heidi Mottl, BLM Rec Planner)

Prineville plans to ask the RAC to hear a fee increase proposal for the Lower Deschutes River. There are some differences between the Snake River (fee proposal already in process) and the Lower Deschutes:

- There are significant differences between the Deschutes River and the Snake in utilization.
- The Deschutes has far more development on the shores, including campgrounds and bathroom facilities.
- Some of these areas are accessible via the road, others only by boat.
- Permittees on the Snake total 30 – Deschutes has more than 70.
- Deschutes doesn't have as many historical sites as the Snake. Maintenance became unaffordable.
- The Deschutes has a complex management system. When it was designated as a Wild and Scenic River they identified the State of Oregon, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and the BLM.



- The managers include CTWS, Marien Board, State Parks, State of Oregon, BLM and others.
- Decisions are made on a consensus basis.
- Decisions are made on a 2 tier system. The first are technical experts and their suggestions are forwarded up to the second tier for decision.

Clarification: Does this RAC's responsibility cover the Deschutes River?

Answer: Yes. In fact the name may soon be changed to reflect the true breadth of geographical responsibility.

The BLM is operating (in the red) on the Deschutes River and tough decisions are being made. Cuts have been made and further cuts to services may be needed in the future. Historically, no fees have been charged outside of the weekend fees charged between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Fees are not on par with services, which are provided year round. Effectively weekend users are shouldering the burden for year round access and services.

In the meantime, the law allows our general RAC to act in the stead of a Recreational RAC when none is available, and the RAC can empower subcommittees to address the issue.

POWERPOINT PROPOSAL FROM LOWER DESCHUTES RIVER MANAGERS GROUP TO INCREASE AND CHARGE FEES FOR ALL USE:

The proposal is to create a subcommittee including participants outside of the RAC representative of heavy users of the Deschutes, including boaters, bicyclers, hikers, etc.

Question: What happens to the \$50 seasonal pass (Which does not apply to the peak season weekends). The answer is that that issue is in the hands of the RAC to propose alternatives.

Question: How are commercial user affected? The presentation shows that they will not be affected. Answer: Unfortunately, U.S. Congress does not grant the RAC the authority to decide on commercial fees for outfitters and guides; however, 3% of gross earnings from commercial endeavors go back to local BLM efforts.

Question: Going from seasonal to year round fees, what are anticipated law enforcement costs associated? Answer: No added cost of enforcement, enforcement is standard year round regardless of fees.

Question: How are other users (bicyclists, bank fishing, etc.) How are they accounted for? Answer: Complaints were made by paying parties (boaters, etc.) that non-paying users were occupying space and using facilities that are supported by fees.

Question: For the shortfall issues, is the goal to achieve balance, or is it to gain funds to expand services? Answer: The goal is to get the organization out of deficit spending, but if only enough is gained to eliminate the deficit, it would solve the deficit issue in the short term, but there would be eventually another shortfall.



Question: The user fee proposal, does it also aim to stabilize the user fee for a period of time, how much time does this buy the long-term feasibility of the finances? Answer: That will depend upon what is proposed by the RAC.

Question: Are there efforts to consider limited entry and limited permit issuing? Answer: Yes. This proposal considers that.

Question: Would it be impossible to implement this structure as it's so expansive? Answer: That would be a concern to address within the subcommittee.

Decision: Carol Benkosky proposes moving the decision on the fee structure until after the formation of a subcommittee and consideration of particulars—RAC members agree.

Subcommittee formation – based on interest and balance, the subcommittee will be made up of: Jim Reiss (Chair), Greg Jackle, Tim Unterwegner, Chris Perry and Harry Dalgaard.

Question: What happens with fees associated with Tribes? Answer: Under the current fee system a set amount specified within an agreement will go to the tribe, dependent upon particular use—in the case of tribal land and public land being used during the same activity.

Question: What is the goal of this fee structure and of the subcommittee? Is it to shift public use, increase funding or both? Answer: The use has only gone up, regardless of fee structure. There is little evidence that fee structure has any effect on the use of the river.

Question: What was the goal of the use shifting? Was the overuse damaging the resource? Answer: At the time they felt that the limits on use would preserve the characteristics of the river.

Public Comment Period

No comments or participation via telephone or in person.

Tom Montoya, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Blue Mountain Plan Update

At this point, the goal is public engagement. In January, there were numerous meetings with government, the public all of whom provided input. In some locations, there are different formats where there are collaboratives being used, user groups, etc. There has been an agreement with High County Partnership to facilitate the meetings. Next meetings are centered on:

- Access
- Discussion on Pace and Scale of Restoration
- Discussion on Grazing
- Also, maybe discussions on timber volume analysis

There have been efforts with residents of Wallowa County to coordinate meetings. There will also be efforts to publicize these meetings.



An Op-Ed was published encouraging participations in these meetings and with associated groups.

Question: How are you handling Baker County Commission? Answer: The FS reps are meeting with Bill Harvey. Baker County wants to do a “listening session” where they listen to the public.

Currently, the focus is fostering dialogue in order to present new ideas and problem solving. The receipt of approximately 1,100 comment letters with 30,000 comments were received and are currently being sorted and compiled.

Question: Have the forest collaboratives been successful? Answer: Absolutely—they have been helpful and products of the groups and been successful.

Snake River Wild and Scenic River Update

If there is an appropriate fee for an annual pass, the RAC’s input would be welcome. After the river tour, is the RAC still supportive of the idea of fee adjustment?

Question: Applying proposed fees, are other rivers involved? Answer: No.

Question: What fee is being proposed? Answer: \$5 per day.

RAC Comments:

- “The Forest Service made their case for the increase in fees.”
- “Historical and cultural preservation is an excellent reason for increasing fees and associated enforcement.”
- “It’s difficult to enforce charging of fees, it’s effectively on the honor system.”
- “In allowing collaboration with local and state law enforcement, shared responsibilities can be sought.”
- “Knowing where the money is going would help make a decision.”

Montoya, Cont. The Forest Service is presenting to the Marine Board on collaborative restoration and maintenance. And, Idaho power has committed \$25,000 to begin restoration and maintenance.

Question: When Idaho Power takes responsibility of public land, will they collect fees?
Answer: No.

Snake River Fee subcommittee.

- Art Waugh
- Tim Unterwegner
- Steve Lent
- Randy Jones – Chair

FEDERAL OFFICIAL UPDATES

Tom Montoya, Wallowa Whitman NF (see handout)



- Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision – update on progress. Still conducting public meetings, and working with local groups and commissioners.
- Eastside Strategy – Lower Joseph EIS has been released. Currently Forest is analyzing comments. Still working on Blue Mtn Resiliency Project.
- Invasive Plants Treatment – the supplemental EIS analyzes cumulative effects of treating invasives for the next 15 years.
- East Face – 3 million in funding via Joint Chiefs Landscape Initiative – project is in year two and will continue for several more years.
- Collaborative – the Collaborative has a new head, Karen Hardigg, who comes from Alaska Tongass
- Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line – the Final EIS is expected winter 2016
- Little Dean Fuels Project
- Lower Innaha Range Analysis – reauthorizing grazing on 4 allotments.
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Question: There was a lawsuit on a timber sale? Answer: It is on Snow Basin. It regards forest plan amendments. It's in litigation, so all that can be said is that it is ongoing.

Question: Did the timber sale go through a collaborative group? Answer: No

Don Gonzalez, Vale BLM District Manager:

Greater Sage-grouse plan update (see handout) - In the plan, there are focal areas that are supposed to be high quality habitat. Most grouse on the Vale District are defined as PAC-1, PAC-2, which is in Baker, is prioritized as PAC-2. June 30th, Union County Commissioners are sponsoring a public meeting in the style of a hearing, where Don Gonzalez and Tom Montoya will present on the plan.

Question: The area in Baker County is designated PAC-1? Answer: The thought is, improving good, existing habitat rather than trying to restore.

Question: Is the timeline for a September decision on the possible listing of the Sage-grouse still effective? Answer: Yes.

- Research is showing very low nest success for Sage-grouse that are maintaining fidelity to their established habitat. Research by ODFW and Oregon State University. – Greg Jackle

Grants Pass Issue - With respect to BLM conducting routine administrative business on a mining claim, the Oath Keepers have encouraged protest at their local BLM office. "Miners have expressed thanks for BLM Vale District's transparency." – Terry Drever-Gee

Carol Benkosky, Prineville BLM District Manager:

Also touching on the **Greater Sage-grouse RMP Amendment:**

- There is no established Sage-grouse priority area in the Prineville District.
- BLM is heavily engaged in protecting what habitat remains.
- Timeline for Invasive Species EA has slowed down. Restricting 11 herbicides down to 4.
- Timeline for comment period is anticipated to be October.



Sutton Mountain Wilderness – there is a Congressional Proposal to establish several areas on and around Sutton Mountain in Wheeler County as wilderness.

Question: How has Wheeler County responded to the establishment of Sutton Mountain as Wilderness? Answer: They have been supportive and have participated in the participation process.

“The establishment of wilderness would possibly promote the development of campsites in the area, which the area does not currently support.” – Harry Dalgaard

Question: On interim route designations, are they addressed throughout the planning process? Answer: Yes, it hasn't changed much in the last 3 years, with one small exception based on the County Commissioner's Input.

Question: Where does authority lie and what is drives the establishment of Wilderness?

Answer: It is entirely in the purview of Congress. They establish what land they want, though we do manage the Wilderness Study Areas the same as they would be if they were Wilderness.

Kevin Martin, Umatilla National Forest Supervisor (see handout)

Kevin Martin has been selected as the Director for Fire-Aviation Management for Regions 6 and 10. The Umatilla will have an acting Forest Supervisor, until the position is filled.

- Review of Ten Cent Community Wildfire Protection Project in the Granite Creek Watershed.
- Umatilla Veteran Crew – continues to work getting vets training and helping them qualify for more jobs with Federal Agencies.
- Umatilla Forest Collaborative Group – continues to meet monthly to develop and promote balanced solutions for the environment and economy in and near Umatilla NF.
- Granite Creek Mining Analysis – The Umatilla plans to release the draft of the Granite Creek Mining Analysis later in 2015. The document, when finished, could identify requirements for approving mining plans of operation.
- Tollgate Vegetation Project – identifies fuels reduction projects in this urban interface area. Two timber sales are currently in progress and the third should be sold in summer 2015.
- Tiger-Webb Fuels Reduction Project – protect multiple values at risk
- Blue Mountain Elk Initiative – celebrates 25 years. Celebration on June 30
- 5th Annual Natural Resource Camp for Young Women
- Recreation Funding Challenges – impacts ability to fund employees and maintain sites. Now at 2/3 of minimum.

Comments:

Berta Youtie requests copies of information related to the Umatilla NF in order to comment on the funding issues. “It seems like with recreation funding going down and use going up, maybe the RAC could support increased funding. “ – Berta Youtie



Steve Beverlin, Malheur National Forest

- Pace is increasing in restoration across the forest.
- Competed invasive plants EIS.
- In 2001 an EA was released to use herbicide on invasive. It was litigated by a group, Blue Mountain Biodiversity, which was lost. So, since 2002, there have been no herbicides used.
- In 2005 the region did an EIS on which herbicides could be used.
- In the last 2 years, the effort was resumed. The objections period ended June 8th. One objection was negotiated and resolved.
- There is a strong monitoring program to see if efforts were successful from the collaborative group's vision.
- Numerous partners have been engaged Oregon State University of Oregon, Research Stations and others. This model will hopefully be applied elsewhere.
- Continuing in 10 year stewardship contract, part of vegetation projects.
- In negotiation with the 3rd stewardship contract, expected to be complete this month.
- Implementing work on Summit Work EIS and another EA.
 - Engaging with permittees, to exclude habitat for Bull Trout
 - Objections have been resolved
- Another Management Plan is being released.

Question: When will weeds be able to be killed? Answer - Currently waiting on concurrence by USFW, hopeful for this summer, treatment can begin.

Question: How long did the treatment take to get processed? Answer: At least 20 years.

Question: How much of the forest is weed infested? Answer: State Noxious Weed List species are being targeted.

Shane Jeffries, Deschutes National Forest (see handout)

New Crescent Ranger Station – in the process of building new Ranger Station in Crescent.

New Cascade Lakes Welcome Station – on Cascade lakes highway, get info about the Deschutes and recreation.

West Bend Fuels Mgmt. Project – current project is 26,000 acres of thinning next to Bend.

Whychus Creek – long term project seeing some results

Volunteers – 700 volunteers help the forest do about 80% of trail maintenance

Newberry National Volcanic Monument – 25th anniversary

Invasive Plant – surveys and treatments continue

Climate Change – Deschutes, Ochoco and Fremont-Winema will engage in the South Central Adaptation Partnership to increase climate change awareness.

Children's Forest of Central Oregon – won the Chief's award for serving students. Expected to reach over 15K central Oregon students.

Question: How will the West Bend fuels project be paid for? Answer: Timber sales and other contracts generate revenue and thusly, this project will pay for itself.



Question: How are weeds dealt with? Answer: Deschutes NF has agreements with the Heart of Oregon, most youth crews are connected with Heart of Oregon.

Question: What are the plans for Phils Trail, are there plans for closures? Answer: Fire has affected the area. Prescribed fires and cleaning up fuels are priority.

Question: How are firewood permit costs determined? Answer: The costs are set locally, and certain amounts are retained for the forest to run the program, so it is determined by a formula which is different depending on circumstances.

Patrick Lair, PAO, Ochoco National Forest

Timber sale was completed for Bailey Butte Fire salvage at 4x the anticipated bid.

Question: How many acres were able to be treated at Bailey Butte Fire? Answer: 900 acres, total.

ROUNDTABLE/SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Jim Reiss:

- Biodiesel—goals and objectives
- Areas proposed for development have WSAs and Proposed Wilderness Areas.
- Discussions on taking fuels and thinning resources and using them as biofuels rather than burning or piling fuels.
- How does the RAC gain leverage to collect biomass and convert it into biofuel.?
- Level 2 roads changing to Maintenance Level 2 Custodial Care Roads.
 - This was bothersome
 - Travel Management wasn't discussed
- Travel Management Plan needs to be changed. Clarification is needed.
- Next meeting the Subcommittee on Blue Mountain Plan Revision will present—October 26th and 27th.
- Biofuel research is being looked into by the Forest Service; are they going to be able to produce at the pace and scale that makes that endeavor viable?

Art Waugh:

- OHV Subcommittee discussion is open to all members to participate.
- Drafting Wallowa-Whitman OHV Travel Management Plan comments once it is released.

Tim Unterwegner:

- No updates on JD Basin RMP and South Fork Fire Restoration.
- South Fork Fire Recovery is proceeding well.

Berta Youtie:

- No Updates on Noxious Weeds/Invasive Species and Sage Grouse Committees.
- Art Waugh is putting together a proposal for map updates related to TMPs.



Greg Jackle:

- ODFW has received approval for update model for fee increases.
- State is receiving less revenue from hunting and fishing fees.
- Oregon will likely be developing a funding committee for non-consumptive users in Oregon Public Lands.

Erica Maltz:

- Alert to be aware of licensing procedures going forward from Oregon DEQ.
- Proposing a RAC review of 4E authorities—proposal to provide key support for a 50-year license.
- Shoshone-Paiute tribe just received several hundred fish from Idaho Fish and Game and had successful fishing and spawning event.

Harry Dalgaard:

- Visitor spending surpassed \$10 billion in recreation spending.
- Spending supported over 100,000 jobs and is increasing.
- July, Sen. Ron Wyden will be taking a state recreation tour.
- Sen. Wyden is supportive of Oregon 7 Wonders campaign from Oregon Recreation.
- Oregon Recreation will be meeting with communities to discuss and develop 15-year recreation plans.
- Columbia River Gorge is experiencing an overabundance of traffic. Oregon Recreation is attempting to address this.

Judge Chris Perry:

- Drought conditions are likely making for a severe wildfire season.



John Day – Snake RAC Draft Meeting Agenda

Clarkston, OR

June 18-19, 2015

Public Call-in number: 1-877-989-1244 Participant Code: 3005406#

June 18, 2015

All- day Field trip to Hells Canyon Recreation Area; public is welcome to attend; however no transportation (vehicle or jet boat) will be provided.

Meet at: Quality Inn & Suites Lobby at 8:00 a.m.

June 19, 2015

Sternwheel Ballroom at Quality Inn & Suites Conference Center

- 8:00** **RAC Meeting Called to Order - Welcome**
Agenda Review/Logistics; Review and Approve Minutes from March 2015 Meeting;
Introductions
- 8:15 John Day RMP – Update and Next Steps
- 8:30 REA refresher & Lower Deschutes River Business Plan Presentation/ Fee Increase
Proposal
- 9:30** **Public Comment Period**
- 10:00 Break
- 10:15 Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision – Status Update
- 10:30 Snake River Fee Proposal Update
- 10:45 Manager Updates
- 12:00 Member Round Table
- 12:30 Sub-committee Reports
 Blue Mountain Plan Revision (Reiss)
 OHV (Waugh)
 JD Basin RMP (Unterwegner)
 Noxious Weed/Invasive Species (Youtie)
 Energy (Jackle)
 Forest Restoration (Hayward)
 Hells Canyon Rec RAC (TBD)
 Sage Grouse (Youtie)
 South Fork Fire Restoration (Wild Horse)(Youtie, Unterwegner)
- 1:00 Next Meeting Discussion (October 26-27; Joint RAC meeting)

Adjourn

Briefing Paper

Pacific Northwest Region – Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Forest Supervisor: Tom Montoya

John Day Snake RAC – June 2015

Forest Plan Revision Update

- Content analysis is still in progress. ID Team continues to work with contractor to resolve issues and move toward completion.
- Meetings and calls with numerous local groups such as county commissioners, access interest groups, environmental community, and the collaborative group have taken place.
- Public meetings are being scheduled in Wallowa, Baker And Union counties, more information about these meeting will be coming out soon.

For more information contact: Sabrina Stadler, Team Leader, 541-523-1264

Eastside Strategy – Accelerated Restoration Update

The Lower Joseph EIS was prepared and released by the Eastside Strategy Team. Comments were received through early February and are currently being analyzed to move the project towards a Record of Decision.

The Eastside Team is working on the Blue Mountains Resiliency Restoration Project, addressing larger landscapes on all four forests encompassing 2.3 million acres of both warm/dry and cool/moist forests looking at future conditions and values at risk. The timeline for a decision is December 2016.

Next Steps: The Blue Mtn Restoration ID team is intending to be transparent about the use and interpretation of science, policy, and social trade-offs within the NEPA process to foster effective internal and external collaboration.

For more information contact: Ayn Shlisky, Team Leader, 541-278-3762

Invasive Plants Treatment Project – Supplemental

The supplemental EIS re-analyzes and discloses potential cumulative effects of treating invasive plants across the Forest for the next 15 years, and clarifies and describes compliance with PACFISH/INFISH to address these two decisions.



for the greatest good

The SEIS will include new or modified information from the 2010 FEIS, and will result in a new Record of Decision (ROD) that will be signed by the Forest Supervisor (Responsible

BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

Official). A Draft SEIS is expected to be released this spring, and a Final SEIS and Draft ROD this summer.

For more information contact: Larry Sandoval, Natural Resources Staff Officer, 541-523-1242

East Face Update

The East face project has received more than \$3 million in funding via the Joint Chief's Landscape Initiative, which combines funding from both the Forest Service and NRCS to support fuel reduction work on federal, state, and private lands. The project began in 2014 and will continue for three to five years.

The main practices associated with the project are: commercial timber harvesting, pre-commercial thinning, slashbusting, and prescribed burning. These activities reduce the amount of "fuel" within the forest, which contributes to the spread of wildfire. Dense, overstocked forests pose a higher risk for catastrophic wildfire because the excess vegetation creates a fuel ladder; allowing fire to rise higher into the canopy with causes the most damage. Managing timber stand densities also improves resiliency and forest health.

A tour of the East Face project with Washington Office personnel, local landowners and local inter-agency contacts is scheduled for June 16, 2015.

For more information contact: Bill Gamble, La Grande District Ranger, 541-962-8582

Wallowa-Whitman Collaborative Update

Karen Hardigg has been tapped to head the Collaborative. Hardigg spent the last eight years working with communities in Alaska's Tongass national Forest on how best to manage the forest while representing a list of different values.

More information available at: <http://www.wallowaresources.org/index.php/what-we-do/stewardship-work/community-planning-process/forest-collaborative>

Granite Creek Mining Analysis DEIS released for Public Comment

The public comment period on the Granite Creek Watershed Mining Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) ended April, 6 2015. This is a significant step toward the Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla National Forests' approval of 28 mining Plans of Operations Plans (17 WWNF, 11 UNF) in the Granite Creek Watershed.

Next steps will be responding to comments received, release of a final Environmental Impact Statement and draft Record of Decision. Forest officials anticipate the draft Record of Decision will be releases this summer, followed by a 45-day pre-decisional objection period.

For more information contact: Jeff Tomac, Whitman District Ranger, 541-523-1301 or Ian Reid, North Fork Joh Day District Ranger 541-427-5316. Full documents / maps can be found at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=2209>

Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Powerline

Idaho Power Company is proposing to construct and operate a 500 kV transmission line from Boardman, Oregon to Murphy, Idaho. A segment of this power line will cross a portion of the La Grande Ranger District. BLM is the lead agency.

Draft EIS – March 2015 close of public comment period

FEIS – Winter 2016

For more information contact: Arlene Blumton, Wildlife Biologist, 541-962-8522 and

<http://boardmantohemingway.com/>

Little Dean Fuels Vegetation Management project

The project Involves commercial timber harvesting, non-commercial thinning, fuels reduction (pile burning slash), aspen restoration, and prescribed burning and underburning on approximately 17,000 acres of forest, including some riparian areas. A primary purpose of this project is to create sustainable, diverse and resilient forest vegetation across this portion of the watershed, reducing the risk of high intensity and high severity fire. The entire area is classified as Wildland Urban Interface. The project is expected to take approximately 5 years to fully implement.

For more information contact: Jeff Tomac, Whitman District Ranger, 541-523-1301

Lower Imnaha Range Analysis Update

The purpose of the project is to consider re-authorizing grazing on four allotments; Lone Pine, Cow Creek, Rhodes Creek, and Toomey. The analysis will evaluate adjustments to the season and timing of grazing use in the allotments, in order to minimize impacts to Spalding's catchfly, a threatened plant species, and to fragile soils.

The objection period has ended and the Objection review process is in progress through the end of June with a decision following that process.

For more information contact: Kris Stein, Wallowa Mountains Zone District Ranger, 541-426-5501

Miscellaneous:

Mushroom Season begins: Commercial permits are now available (\$2 per day-minimum \$20 permit or \$100 Seasonal) A permit is not needed for incidental personal use (1 gallon in Oregon and 5 gallons in Washington)

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/wallowa-whitman/passes-permits/forestproducts/?cid=stelprdb5212191>

Firewood season begins May 1: \$5 per cord, minimum \$20 permit, and maximum 10 cords per household per year. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/wallowa-whitman/passes-permits/forestproducts/?cid=stelprdb5212141>



John Day/Snake River Resource Advisory Committee

INFORMATION UPDATE New Information Only

Vale District Office

BLM

Baker Resource Area

Greater sage-grouse:

The final statewide Greater Sage-grouse Resource Management Plan Amendment (Grouse FEIS) was issued the last week of May. The Baker Field Office is looking at the Grouse FEIS to determine if a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Baker Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision is needed. The No Action Alternative in the final RMP will have to reflect the final decisions in the Grouse FEIS.

Boardman to Hemmingway Transmission Line (B2H):

The BLM is analyzing the comments received on the Draft EIS. Alternatives proposed during the comment period will be evaluated for inclusion in the Final EIS.

Mining:

The Baker Field Office completed analysis for the Paul Ada #2/Snappy Ben Plan of Operations on Clark's Creek. Operations have begun.

We are compiling information needed to develop the environmental assessment for the Don J Plan of Operations.

Balm Creek Abandoned Mine Lands project is complete. Surface and ground water monitoring will continue for three to five years. The surface and ground water monitoring results for heavy metals is very encouraging to the potential long term success of the clean-up efforts. Plant monitoring is also scheduled to occur this summer.

Lands and Realty:

Baker Field Office is working with Idaho Power to approve an upgrade of the "216 Line" which would provide a more consistent, reliable supply of electricity to the Halfway area. The environmental assessment will be signed this month.

Range Management:

The Powder River Canyon Geographic Unit (GU) environmental assessment regarding grazing permit renewal will be signed this month. Salt Creek is the only allotment being analyzed because the riparian rangeland standard is not being met.

The draft environmental assessment regarding the expanded use of herbicides for noxious weeds on the Vale District will be released later this summer.

June 2015





John Day/Snake River Resource Advisory Committee

INFORMATION UPDATE New Information Only

Forestry and Fuels:

The Dark Canyon Timber Sale was awarded in October of 2014. This project will result in the commercial thinning of approximately 60 acres of overstocked forest lands, reduce insect and disease infestation, and make stands more resilient to wildfire. Approximately 250 thousand board feet will be delivered to local saw and chip mills. The contractor is scheduled to begin work this year.

The Final Environmental Assessment should be out this month for the Mormon Basin Fuels and Forest Health Project. Comments were received regarding the proposed treatment of up to 15,000 acres of forest and rangelands in the Mormon Basin and Pedro Mountain areas. The proposed treatments would reduce fuels, improve habitat for the Greater Sage-grouse and improve the health of forested lands. The proposed treatments would also result in saw and chip logs as well as juniper wood.

Recreation:

The Baker Field Office continues to successfully compete for and receive Oregon State ATV Grant funding. This funding continues to enhance the field office's ability to disseminate information regarding OHV safety as well as information regarding respectful use of public lands, visitor services, and OHV rules.

The toilet at the South Fork of Walla Walla River parking area has been replaced.



Oregon

Facts and Figures for BLM Conservation Plans for Greater Sage-Grouse

About the plans: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is amending land use plans in Oregon to address threats to the greater sage-grouse and its habitat such that protections under the Endangered Species Act are no longer warranted. The BLM plan provides a layered management approach that focus protections on priority areas identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service where additional loss of habitat would reduce long-term viability of sage-grouse populations.

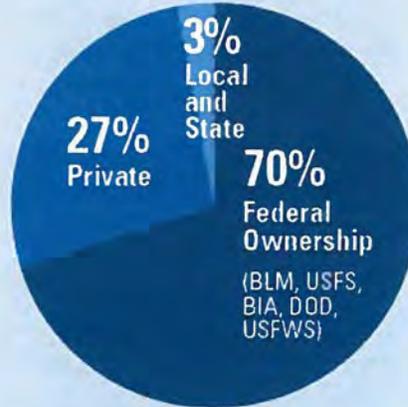
Management of Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat

Land Ownership

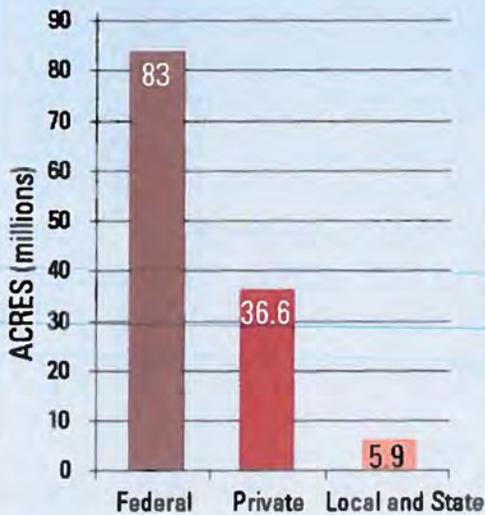
Range-wide (%)



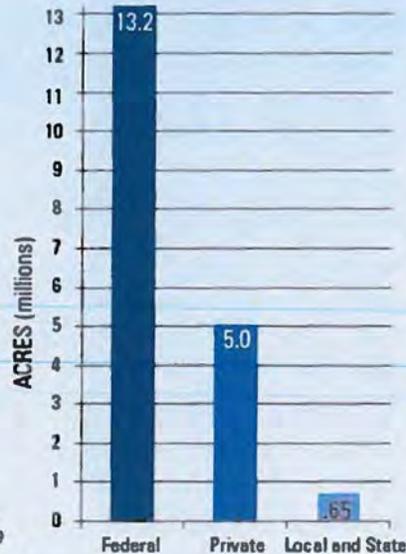
Oregon (%)



Range-wide



Oregon



Definitions:

- **Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA)**
 - **Definition:** BLM administered lands identified as having the highest value to maintaining sustainable greater sage-grouse populations. Priority habitat closely tracks Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs), identified in the Conservation Objectives Team report and based on state-mapped key greater sage-grouse habitats.
 - **Management approach:** The plans seek to limit or eliminate new surface disturbance.
- **Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA)**
 - **Definition:** Areas within priority habitat that have been identified by the Service as “stronghold” areas essential for the species’ survival.
 - **Management approach:** The plans offer the highest protections in these anchor areas, seeking to limit or eliminate new surface disturbance.
- **General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA)**
 - **Definition:** BLM administered lands where special management would apply to sustain greater sage-grouse populations, but that are not as important as priority habitat.
 - **Management approach:** The plans seek to minimize disturbance.

Habitat Management Areas in Oregon in Final Proposed Plan

Area	Acres	Percent of Oregon
State of Oregon	63,018,240	100%
BLM planning area	12,584,300	20%
PHMA	4,547,000	7%
SFA (within PHMA)	1,929,580	3%
GHMA	5,628,600	9%

Current Development - Statistics below demonstrate the extent to which federally managed Priority Habitat Management Areas have existing energy development. The plans recognize all valid, existing rights.

- **Overall:** Approximately 13% of PHMAs on federal lands and minerals are covered by existing leases and ROWs for coal, oil and gas, solar and wind energy.
- **Oil and Gas Leases:** Less than 1% of PHMAs on federal lands and minerals are leased, with none of these held by production.
- **Coal Leases:** There are no coal leases in PHMAs on federal lands.
- **Solar Rights Of Ways (ROW):** There are no approved solar ROWs in PHMAs on federal lands.
- **Wind ROWs:** Approximately 13% of PHMAs on federal lands are covered by approved wind ROWs.

Energy potential within priority habitat - Statistics below depict the amount of energy potential estimated to exist *within* federally managed Priority Habitat Management Areas.

- **Oil:** 100% of federal lands and minerals within PHMAs have low oil potential.
- **Natural Gas:** 100% of federal lands and minerals within PHMAs have low natural gas potential.
- **Wind:** Approximately 98% of federal lands within PHMAs are in low to medium wind speed categories.

Energy potential outside of priority habitat – Statistics below depict the amount of energy potential estimated to exist *outside* of federally managed Priority Habitat Management Areas.

- **Oil:** No lands have medium to high natural gas potential within the state.
- **Natural Gas:** No lands have medium to high natural gas potential within the state.
- **Wind:** Approximately 90% of lands in the high wind speed category within the state are outside of federal lands within PHMAs.

Hard Rock Mining Locations (A surrogate for hard rock mineral potential) outside of Sagebrush Focal Areas - Approximately 99% of hard rock mining locations within the state occur outside of federal lands and minerals within SFAs.

Analysis Details

PHMAs are summarized in this document for all topics except for mineral potential, which refer to SFAs. The extent of this analysis was defined by the area within the political state boundaries and the surface or subsurface estate as applicable to the subject as follows:

1. Oil, Gas, Coal and Minerals related analyses were limited to the federal subsurface estate within PHMA for MT, ND, SD, WY, CO, UT, and portions of ID. The federal surface estate (including BIA lands) was used as a surrogate for subsurface estate within PHMA for NV, CA, Northern ID and OR. Total oil and gas potential includes all lands within the political state boundaries.
2. Wind analysis was limited to the federal surface estate (including BIA lands) within PHMA and total potential for all lands within the political state boundaries.
3. Solar PEIS analysis extent was determined by the initial study, which included BLM administered lands within the political states of CA, NV, UT, CO, AZ, and NM. Only CA, CO, NV, and UT are summarized in these statistics.

Data Sources

1. **Oil and Gas Potential:** Inventory of Onshore Federal Oil and Natural Gas Resources and Restrictions to Their Development - Phase III Inventory – Onshore United States 2008. Detailed analysis was performed in defined basins, with an extrapolation model applied to all other areas.
2. **Solar PEIS Land Use Allocations:** Downloaded from <http://solarcis.anl.gov/maps/gis/index.cfm> and modified for analysis by the Wildlife Habitat Spatial Analysis Lab with input from Argonne National Laboratory in April 2015.
3. **Wind data:** AWS Truepower, LLC acquired from the BLM.
4. **Metallic Mineral (Hard-Rock) Locations:** Extracted from the USGS Mineral Resource Data System (2012) database.
5. **Oil and Gas Leases, Coal Leases, Wind & Solar ROWs:** BLM submissions compiled by the Wildlife Habitat Spatial Analysis Lab in 2012.

Prineville District – Issue/Project Briefing Paper

Bureau of Land Management

June 2015

Greater Sage-grouse RMP amendment

BLM released final environmental reviews for land use plans in Oregon that will help to conserve greater sage-grouse habitat and support sustainable economic development. The plans are now undergoing a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review period. Any person who participated in the planning process for this proposed plan and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the plan, may protest approval of this proposed plan during the 30-day protest period. The protest period runs through June 29, 2015, after which the Records of Decisions will be signed.

Invasive Species EA

The BLM proposes expanding its existing 2004 integrated noxious weed management program by increasing the number of herbicides available for use from 4 to 14, and allowing the use of herbicides on non-native invasive plants, not just State-listed noxious weeds. Use of the new herbicides was analyzed in the 2010 Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon, Final Environmental Impact Statement in 2010 (2010 FEIS).

Each District is completing a "step-down" EA to build on the existing information contained in the 2010 FEIS, and will analyze the herbicide and non-herbicide treatment methods used in an integrated management approach. The EA will address the potential direct, indirect and cumulative environmental impacts of the alternatives. Prineville is currently working on developing the Draft EA and anticipate having a 30-day public comment period in October 2015.

Wilderness Proposals

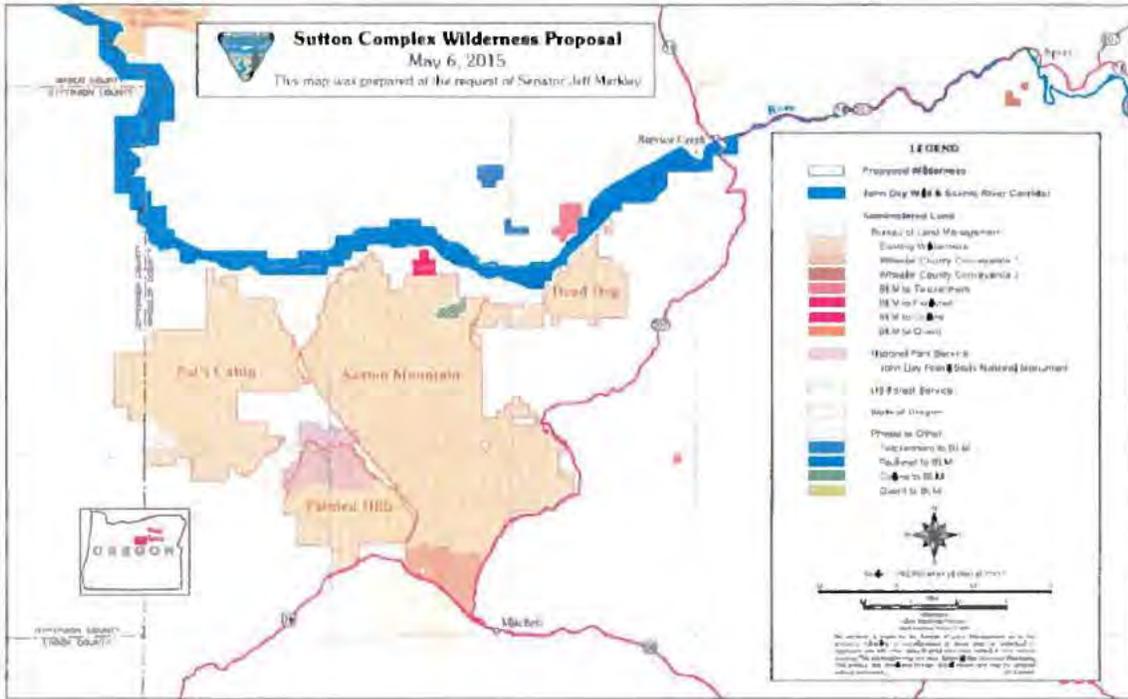
Cathedral Rock & Horse Heaven

The Oregon Natural Desert Association and adjacent landowners are working together to consolidate and permanently protect 17,000 acres located near Ashwood, Oregon. The Horse Heaven and Cathedral Rock wilderness proposal is described as improving "access to public lands, via river and road, add 4 miles of Wild and Scenic River frontage to public ownership, and create new opportunities for the public to hunt, fish, hike, camp and explore." At this point, although the proposal is getting more attention, and some county scoping meetings to gauge public sentiment and identify issues have been held, BLM has not been asked to provide input.

Sutton Mountain Wilderness

Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley has proposal the creation of 58,000 new acres of Wilderness covering the Painted Hills and Sutton Mountain. The area is located northeast of Prineville in Eastern Oregon. The *Sutton Mountain and Painted Hills Area Preservation and Economic Enhancement Act of 2015* would create the Sutton Complex Wilderness. The bill also proposes a 2000-acre land transfer from the Bureau of Land Management to Wheeler County. The Wheeler County Board of Commissioners and the Mitchell City Council endorsed the proposal because of opportunities for economic growth, in particular a proposed 1,959-acre transfer of lands that had been privately held, but were exchanged with the Bureau of Land Management in the early 1990s. By returning these acres, Wheeler County could pursue public uses such as a police facility, airstrip and county-owned RV campground.





Emergency Site Rehabilitation – 2014 Fire Season

The South Fork Fire Imazapic spray contract was awarded and BLM completed spraying of 13,500 acres of noxious weeds during March 2015. This compliments ODF&W 's 6,500 acre fall spraying of the Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Management area in the Murderer's Creek Watershed. Treatments were coordinated to maximize contiguous treatment of the area.

Other treatments include culvert replacement, sign posting, hazard tree removal, etc. Deer Creek Road remains closed pending hazard tree removal for safety.

Juniper Camp/Campbell Property Aquisition

For 2015, Prineville District submitted a proposal to Lands Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to acquire the Juniper Camp/Campbell Property from the Trust for Public lands (near Hay Creek/Gilliam County). The property covers about 450 acres on the Lower John Day Wild & Scenic River.

BLM initiated a Federal Appraisal of the land to determine Fair Market Value, and has identified several title discrepancies/issues regarding the upland acreage in this proposal. Unless the title can be cleared up, BLM will only continue pursuing acquisition of 45 river acres. If no additional issues arise, the acquisition should be complete by early 2016.



Barnes Buttes Mercury Removal

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Prineville District Office is removing remove soil and mine tailings from BLM-managed lands around the old Barnes Butte Mine in Crook County, Oregon. The original mine was located on private land; however, some mining and all the milling took place on BLM land. Although the site was only mined for mercury for a short period of time in the early 1940's a screening level study in 2013 showed that the site has areas of concern.

The project is expected to run from June 8-22, 2015; with material removed and shipped to a licensed disposal facility near Arlington in special, sealed containers. BLM contracted with NRC Environmental Services, a company with more than two decades experience cleaning up toxic sites, to remove the contaminated soil.

Cline Buttes Recreation Area

BLM continues to do trail maintenance with public groups for OHV, hiking, horse and bike trails in Cline Buttes. These areas are receiving more and more use – especially in the winter when these areas remain snow-free.

- We are continuing to build the trailhead and trails for horses/hikers/bikers in the non-motorized Tumalo Canal Historic Area. We have been working with students from Redmond HS, Central Oregon Trail Alliance, Oregon Equestrian, Oregon Military Dept/Youth Challenge for many trails in the area.
- We may put in one of the official trail crossings of Cline Falls Hwy this year (we have an approach/access permit from Deschutes County for this), and this work will be completed according to the Deschutes County Road Dept. schedule availability.

Newberry Geothermal

BLM is in the final stages of making a decision to offer approximately 6,174 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands for competitive geothermal leasing. The decision will adopt the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) October 2014 Final Environmental Assessment for the *Newberry Geothermal Consent to Lease Project* and fully incorporates the USFS' leasing stipulations for protection of other resources on the lands to be offered as identified in that Agency's Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) signed on October 9, 2014, signed by John Allen, Forest Supervisor for the Deschutes National Forest.

The lands to be offered for geothermal leasing are situated in Deschutes County, Oregon, within the USFS' Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District, approximately 15 miles nearly due east of the community of La Pine. The parcels are located outside the boundary of the 50,000 acre Newberry National Volcanic Monument (NNVM or the Monument), with seven parcels situated immediately adjacent to the Monument.

A new company, FORGE, and AltaRock have submitted an application with the Department of Energy to be the site for the new Frontier Observatory for Research in Geothermal Energy. This would be a national geothermal research facility operated by the PNW National Lab in Richland in conjunction with OSU. It would be funded at about \$30 million per year, and the company feels it has a good chance of being chosen. If selected, BLM would need to complete a new round of NEPA as this would be a new action not covered by the original EA.

At the end of May, a resolution in the Oregon legislature endorsing and supporting the FORGE effort, HJM19, passed the house and senate by unanimous vote.



Deschutes River Segment 3 Environmental Assessment

In recent years, extended whitewater rafting trips have floated Segment 2 (Harpham to Sandy Beach), portaged Sherars Falls, and then floated four more miles from Buckhollow to Pine Tree. This increased whitewater day use is taking a majority of allocated passes during Limited Entry weekends resulting in fewer passes being available for other uses in the remainder of Segment 3. Limited Entry implementation as called for by the Lower Deschutes Management Plan is continuing to reduce available passes by 10% per year.

BLM solicitors have advised that BLM seek multi-agency signatures on the decision in conformance with the Wild and Scenic River Act and Inter-governmental Agreement requiring the River to be managed under a Cooperative Management Agreement with the Tribes and State. As a result, a technical team of representatives from BLM, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Local Government have come up with alternatives and are drafting an effects analysis. The draft will be reviewed by the team and when complete BLM will share with the solicitor's office for review. After the solicitor review, the EA will go out to the public for a 30-day comment period, likely in July 2015 with implementation next calendar year.

John Day RMP

The RMP / Record of Decision was published June 12, 2015 and mailed to about 2,000 people on our mailing list. The planning level decisions in it are effective immediately and not open for appeal. There are six implementation level decisions that are open for appeal through July 13:

1. River Plan for existing designated Wild & Scenic Rivers (replaces 2001 River Plan)
2. River Plan for recommended "suitable" W&SR (north fork John Day)
3. Wilderness Plan for Spring Basin
4. Interim route designations (see Maps 9-14)
5. Seasonal route closures
6. Limits on decibels and hours of operation at Little Canyon Mtn

Each program area has a laundry list of "actions" that need to be prioritized and documented in an implementation plan, preferably within a year of signing the ROD. The RAC may wish to become involved in crafting this implementation plan.



Briefing Paper

Pacific Northwest Region – Umatilla National Forest

Umatilla National Forest

Forest Supervisor: Kevin Martin

John Day Snake RAC – ~~March 11-12, 2015~~

June



Forest Supervisor Selected as Director for Fire-Aviation Management in Regions 6 and 10

Kevin Martin, currently the Forest Supervisor on the Umatilla NF, was recently announced as the new Director for Fire and Aviation for Regions 6 and 10. His report date to the Pacific Northwest Regional Office has yet to be determined, but will be announced shortly. He brings senior leadership skill both as a tenured Forest Supervisor for 9 years and as an active member of the fire leadership community. Kevin has been a stable member of the National Line Officer Team for several years. He helped create and serves as a coach for Agency Administrators at S-520, and is currently the national lead for re-working National Fire Management Leadership. Kevin is fundamentally driven by relationships, his tenure as a Forest Supervisor is marked by outstanding and innovative relationships with states, counties, tribes and the public at large. Kevin values learning, and will be a strong proponent for integrating fire with other functions across both regions.

For more information, contact: Joani Bosworth, Forest Public Affairs Officer, 541-278-3722

Ten Cent Community Wildfire Protection Project

Located within the Granite Creek Watershed, the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests plan to finalize a Proposed Action for the project this summer. This fuels reduction project area is identified as a high risk area in the Communities at Risk Assessment in the Grant County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Numerous residences and the communities of Granite and Greenhorn are located adjacent to the two forests. A public meeting is planned in the community of Granite later this summer with plans to sign a decision in early FY2016. Proposed activities include commercial and non-commercial thinning, prescribed fire and the designation of firewood/post and pole permit areas.

For more information, contact: Ian Reid, North Fork John Day District Ranger (541) 427-5316.

Or visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=45203>

Umatilla Veteran Crew – Veteran Green Corps

The Umatilla National Forest has partnered with Mt. Adams Institute and AmeriCorps to assemble a 20- person crew comprised of military veterans to accomplish thinning and restoration work on the Forest. The purpose of the crew is a collaborative initiative that builds upon the knowledge, leadership experience and training of the men and women who served in the armed forces, by retraining them and providing a focused mission to protect and restore public lands. Leadership, supervision and housing of the crew are provided by the North Fork John Day Ranger District. Once their term of service with AmeriCorps is completed, they will be eligible for several non-competitive hiring authorities within the Forest Service.

For more information, contact: Kelly Hedgepeth, North Fork John Day Ranger District Fire Management Officer – (541)427-5357



for the greatest good

BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

Umatilla Forest Collaborative Group

The diverse group, with over 30 dedicated participants, formed in late 2011 and meets monthly. Their mission is to develop and promote balanced solutions from a diverse group of stakeholders to improve and sustain ecological resiliency and local community socioeconomic health in and near the Umatilla National Forest. The North Fork John Day Watershed Council, selected as the host organization, is currently seeking neutral facilitators, as well as logistical and administrative support.

The collaborative group chose to take on their own project proposals with the Forest Service fulfilling the role of neutral advisor. They are currently working on two project proposals;

Kahler Dry Forest Restoration: This vegetation management project on the Heppner Ranger District seeks to restore dry upland forest conditions throughout the Kahler Creek watershed through a combination of thinning and prescribed burning. The IDT expects to complete the Final EIS the Record of Decision this summer.

Thomas Creek Restoration Project: Located on the Walla Walla Ranger District, this project is focused on the restoration of off-site ponderosa pine plantations in cool/moist forest type. Commercial mechanical treatments and non-commercial small-diameter hand thinning are proposed. A Draft EA is expected early this summer, with a final EA and decision in early FY2016.

For more information, contact: Elaine Eisenbraun, North Fork John Day Watershed Council (541) 421-3018

Or visit: <http://umatillacollaborative.org/>

Granite Creek Mining Analysis

The release of the Granite Creek Watershed Mining Analysis Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and draft Record of Decision are anticipated later this summer, followed by a 45-day pre-decisional objection period. After the final Record of Decision is signed and issued, prior to commencement of mining activities, reclamation bonds and any 401 certifications and valid water rights determined necessary as a result of this analysis will be required before the Plans of Operations are approved (POOs expected prior to the 2016 season).

The Granite Creek Watershed is located in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon and is primarily within the administrative boundaries of the Whitman Ranger District, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, and the North Fork John Day Ranger District, Umatilla National Forest, approximately 30 miles west of Baker City, Oregon, and 40 miles southeast of Ukiah, Oregon.

For more information, contact: Jeff Tomac Whitman District Ranger (541) 523-1301 or Ian Reid, North Fork John Day District Ranger (541) 427-5316. Full documents/maps can be found at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=2209>

Tollgate Vegetation and Fuels Management Update

The project identified fuels reduction and forest stand density projects within the Tollgate Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) area. Fuel reduction activities were placed strategically along the plateau rim to provide defensible space/fuel breaks for future fire suppression actions and public safety. The Record of Decision (ROD) for the project was signed in June 2014.

The first two timber sales were sold in 2014 and are currently being implemented. The third, a stewardship project, is expected to be sold in June of this year, and the fourth in 2016. The District expects to implement pre-commercial thinning this summer and offer a second stewardship project this fall. A public meeting on project implementation was held in Sept. 2014 and drew an audience of approximately 60 community members. The District intends to host additional public meetings periodically throughout implementation, with the next planned in the fall of 2015.

For more information, contact: Mike Rassbach, Walla Walla District Ranger, 509-522-6009.

Or visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=28356>

BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

Tiger-Webb Fuels Reduction Project:

This project area is adjacent to Mill Creek Watershed, the municipal watershed for the city of Walla Walla, WA. The project objective is to reduce fuels and firefighter risks to better protect the multiple values at risk. Scoping has been completed and next step is to develop alternatives based on comments. A Draft EIS is planned for release in the fall. We are working with the City and local fire departments. We conducted a field tour - local residences and city officials, rural fire departments, industry and the environmental community attended.

For more information, contact: Mike Rassbach, Walla Walla District Ranger, 509-522-6009.

Or visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=45376>

Blue Mountains Elk Initiative celebrates 25 years-

The BMEI is a cooperative effort between Federal, State, private landowners and industries, Tribal Nations, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, sportsman and conservation organizations, and many other dedicated partners with mutual goals of improving habitat for elk and other wildlife across the Blue Mountains of Oregon and Washington. Over the past 25 years, the BMEI has leveraged nearly \$10 million dollars and completed more than 300,000 acres of habitat improvement across the Blue Mountains. The celebration events will include a field tour of the Starkey Experimental Forest and Research Facility will occur on Tuesday, June 30 and a Tribal Welcome and Longhouse Dinner by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla will occur on Wednesday, July 1.

For more information, contact: Kevin Keown, Forest Wildlife Biologist, Deschutes National Forest, 541-416-6605

5th Annual Natural Resource Career Camp for Young Women –

Located on the Walla Walla Ranger District at the Buck Creek Organizational Camp, Natural Resources Career Camp for Young Women is an outdoor experience for young women focusing on science, technology, engineering, and math in the environment. The purpose of this camp is to orient these young women into careers that are statistically considered non-traditional in the natural resources sector. Representatives from various Federal, State, civic, tribal, and interest groups such as the Army Corps of Engineers, Umatilla National Forest, US Fish and Wildlife Service and Oregon State Parks attend and give presentations.

For more information, contact: Amber Mahoney, Forest Public Affairs Specialist and Conservation Education Coord., 541-278-3849

Miscellaneous:

Firewood Season, May 1-November 30: \$5 per cord, minimum \$20 permit, and maximum 12 cords per household per year. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/umatilla/passes-permits/?cid=stelprdb5417750>

Public Use Restrictions (PURs) go into effect: 1st up-Campfire Season! Beginning June 1 through October 31, when and where campfires are allowed, visitors are required to build their campfire in a fire pit surrounded by dirt, rock, or commercial rings, in areas cleared of all flammable material within a three-foot radius from the edge of the pit and free of overhanging material. A shovel and one gallon of water are required to be in your possession while building and tending campfires. These requirements also apply to the use of charcoal briquettes. Additional PUR restrictions are likely to be implemented as we move into the fire season.

Mottet Integrated Vegetation Project – This stand Density Moist-mixed conifer project is just in beginning stages. The Walla Walla RD is working with Paul Hessberg, PNW Research Station, to develop a landscape strategy for this project area. If the RAC interested in learning more we can provide a presentation at the next meeting.

BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

South George Vegetation and Fuels Management Project Update:

In February 2015, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals judges heard oral arguments to appeal a favorable District Court Opinion on the project; the panel affirmed the District Court Opinion in favor of the Forest Service. The Record of Decision (ROD) was signed in July of 2012, and the Forest Supervisor denied appeals in October, 2012. The American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) and Asotin County intervened on behalf of the Forest Service.

The objective for the South George is to improve forest health, vigor, and resilience to fire, insects and disease in upland forests that are outside their historical pre-fire suppression conditions for species composition, structural diversity, stocking densities, and fuel loadings. The first of several vegetation projects was advertised and sold in December, 2012 and the second in May of 2014. A stewardship package, including fuels reduction treatments in a riparian area, is scheduled for advertisement sometime in 2016. Another sale package is scheduled for advertisement in early 2017.

For more information, contact: Monte Fujishin, Pomeroy District Ranger, 509-843-1891.

Or visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=26469>

2005 Travel Management Rule -Sub-part A: Travel Analysis Report

The purpose of the analysis is to inform future road system decisions on a site-specific project basis and will require the appropriate level of NEPA and include a public involvement process. The analysis will identify a road system that addresses: impacts to fish, plants and wildlife, affordability, and opportunities to improve connectivity of open routes. This analysis and will not make any on-the ground decisions. No roads will close as a direct result of completing the analysis in 2015. The forest completed Subpart B of the Travel Analysis in 2009, which involved publishing the Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUMs) that identified and implemented an open road and trail system on the forest.

The forest is offering to meet individually with members of the public interested in discussing Forest routes important to them and will consider options to improve the existing designated system in the future. Maps and comment forms are available at the District and Supervisor's offices, as well as on the forest's website. The maps and any comments received will then go into the Subpart A analysis project record and be available for review when projects are proposed in a site/project specific area.

For more information, contact: Wynn Avocette, Operations Staff Officer, 541-278-3848

Recreation Program Faces Funding Challenges (Recreation, Wilderness and Trails)

The recreation program has seen a gradual decline in budget over the past decade with the largest cuts taking place over the past few years. The forest has managed to maintain a level of public services by becoming more efficient in our actions, utilizing recreation fee authorities and taking advantage of grants and partnerships, but increasing efficiencies and stretching dollars can only go so far. Though the interim FY2015 recreation program budget is similar to the 2014 budget, it remains only 2/3 of the minimal budget necessary to meet only fixed and critical costs. This budget won't cover the increasing fixed costs (permanent employees, vehicles, rent, etc.), let alone cover what is considered critical costs (funding for seasonal recreation and trail employees, campground hosts, materials/supplies, water testing, toilet pumping, and sign maintenance.) Forest managers will continue to take a hard look at what can and cannot be accomplished for the 2015 recreation season and beyond, based on projected funding. We will continue to employ additional cost cutting measures such as diverting recreation staff to other programs to round out salary or reducing services, such as shortening campground opening/closing seasons, closing facilities and reducing facility and trail maintenance.

For more information, contact: Larry Randall, Forest Recreation Staff, 509-522-6276

Overview

The Deschutes National Forest (DNF) is 1.6 million acres of highly-recreated and managed public land primarily within Deschutes County with smaller parcels in Klamath and Jefferson County. Key drivers for activities on the Deschutes are recreation (3.1 million visitors per year), fire management (fuels reduction and suppression), vegetation management (timber and restoration) and watershed restoration.

Project Highlights

New Crescent Ranger Station: The year the DNF built and will open its new Crescent Ranger Station in Crescent, OR in mid-June. The building will serve not only the employees and customers of the DNF, but will also provide a community gathering place.

New Cascade Lakes Welcome Station: The DNF will also open a new Welcome Station on the busy Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway for visitors to the area to get information about the DNF and recreation opportunities. It will provide a place for visitors directly connected to where many of the DNFs most actively used recreation areas. The Welcome Station will open in September of this year.

West Bend Vegetation Management Project and the Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project: The Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project (CFLR) is a community-led framework that allows stakeholders and partners to come together to build a common understanding and shared vision for a 250,000 acre landscape on the Deschutes National Forest. A current focal project within this landscape is West Bend - 26,000 acres of forest adjacent to the City of Bend. This year alone we will be implementing a 5,000 stewardship contract that will help to improve forest health, create a diversity of plant and wildlife habitat and to protect our communities and quality of life.

Ryan Ranch Restoration and Oregon Spotted Frogs: Three temporary culverts have been installed in a berm that obstructs water from the Deschutes River to enter a floodplain in the Ryan Ranch area. The project is a pilot project during spring and summer of 2015 to test the seepage and evaporation. If the project is successful, permanent connections between the river and floodplain and the restoration of the eroded river banks may be done and would provide habitat for the Oregon Spotted Frog.

Whychus Creek: For the many years the DNF has worked with partners, primarily the National Forest Foundation and the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, to restore water and fisheries to the designated Wild and Scenic River Whychus Creek. The project is reestablishing floodplain connectivity, improving riparian conditions and in-stream habitat for reintroduced runs of steelhead trout and Chinook salmon. Activities include removing historic levees and reconnecting 4 miles of side channels across the alluvial fan, thinning conifers in the riparian and planting native riparian hardwoods to improve condition on over 170 acres, as well as dam removal that will open up 13 miles of stream and instream habitat improvements using large woody debris on approximately 2 miles of stream. Approximately 3 miles of road have been decommissioned and new trail bridge was reconfigured to fit the stream channel and allow fish passage.

Program Highlights

Volunteers: The DNF completes approximately 80% of all trail maintenance through volunteers and partners. On average 700 volunteers contribute approximately \$1 million of labor annually to the trails program.

Youth Conservation Corps: For 8 weeks this summer 18 youth crews will be employed within Central Oregon between the Ochoco National Forest and the DNF. These crews are composed of youth from the communities of Madras, Redmond, Prineville, Sisters, Bend, La Pine and Crescent. The primary partner in this work is Heart of Oregon Corps (www.heartoforegon.org)

Newberry National Volcanic Monument 25th Anniversary Celebration: From June 2015 through June 2016 the DNF will be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the National Monument's Dedication. Celebration events will begin the weekend of June 19-21 with the Anniversary Weekend Kickoff.

Invasive Plant Treatments: In 2014 crews surveyed over 8,600 acres and completed 20 miles of weed surveys along roads on the DNF. Over 6,800 acres of invasive plants; including approximately 4,400 with herbicides and 2,400 manually were done on the Deschutes. In 2014, volunteers and partners contributed 1,374 hours of surveying and controlling infestations. The same level of treatment done during 2014 is anticipated during 2015.

Climate Change: This year, the DNF, along with the Ochoco and Fremont-Winema National Forests, is engaged in the South Central Oregon Adaptation Partnership, which is Forest Service science-management collaborative, to increase climate change awareness; assess the vulnerability of cultural and natural resources; and develop science-based adaptation strategies and incorporating them into management of federal lands in south central Oregon. The effort will synthesize the best available scientific information to assess climate change vulnerability and develop adaption options in south central Oregon in order to understand and mitigate potentially adverse effects of climate change on natural resources and ecosystem services.

Fire: The DNF, as a part of Central Oregon Fire Management Services (COFMS), is staff and prepared for the 2015 fire season. A more intense and busy fire season is anticipated in Central Oregon as well as across all of Oregon. Over 4,500 acres of prescribed burning has already been completed on the DNF in 2015.

Planning: The region is evaluating its strategy for revising forest plans across the region. Listening sessions were held across the region, including in Bend and Prineville. The feedback from those sessions, as well as the recently released 20 year reports for the Northwest Forest Plan, will be used to inform that strategy.

Human Ecology Mapping: The Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests are working with our regional office and Pacific Northwest Research Station on developing a public survey tool to collect information about how the public lives, works, and plays on our lands. This tool should help inform land managers and the community at large about how people value specific places on our Forests. It is anticipated that the survey tool will be used beginning in late August or early September of this year.

Key Partners

Children's Forest of Central Oregon (CFCO): The CFCO won the Forest Service's Chief's Award for serving students. CFCO is expected to serve over 15,000 students in Central Oregon over more than 25,000 student days. www.childrensforestco.org

Discover Your Forest (DYF): DYF is working as a significant partner for the Newberry National Monument, visitor services, volunteer management and conservation education. Recently, a new Executive Director, Rika Nelson, was hired with a focus on fundraising to contribute to the stewardship of the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests. www.discoveryourforest.org