

## **John Day – Snake RAC Meeting Summary**

November 13-14, 2014

**Facilitator:** Lisa Clark

Due to severe weather conditions, several members were unable to attend. The John Day-Snake Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was convened for its meeting at 12:49 P.M. on November 13, 2014, at the Kah-Nee-Tah Resort, Warm Springs, Oregon. In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public.

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

**Federal Managers present:** Carol Benkosky (Prineville District Manager); Don Gonzalez (Vale District Mgr.); Tom Montoya (Wallowa-Whitman Forest Sup); Jim Westbrook (for Malheur NF);

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.

**Note:** *RAC did not have a quorum; no decision-making occurred.*

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST**

Introduction of new members and federal managers present; Announcement that the 2015 call for nominations would be out in early 2015. New and reapplying members need to submit a letter of recommendation from someone who can attest to the applicant's proficiency in the area of interest (conservation, state resources, etc.). Review of RAC meeting processes, along with travel reimbursement procedures for new members.

**Approval of March 2014 minutes:** approved

**Blue Mountain Plan Update** (provided by Tom Montoya) – Tom provided an overview of the status of this project. Public comment was taken until August 2014, and public meetings were held throughout the state. The plan covers approx. 5 million acres of forest on the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman, Malheur and Ochoco National Forest. There were 6 alternatives ranging from No Action to Restoration. The preferred alternative in the Draft document was Alt E. This would look at restoration over a 20 year period, with considerations for recreation and wilderness.

They received about 1,000 comments, which are being analyzed with an estimated completion date of March 2015. The comments will be put into focus areas such as economics, social aspects, access, etc. The final document is not expected to be out



until 2016.

The next question is how can the Blue Mtn. Plan use this RAC for more public engagement? How do you reach people without relying on the Federal Register, which very few people actually read? When processes and decisions are announced in the Federal Register, people feel cheated because they don't know what's going on and it seems like decisions are made without public input.

- Would like the Blue Mountain sub-group to weigh in on methods to reach the public and to help get discussions started.

#### Blue Mountain presentation clarifying questions:

*What kinds of meetings were previously held? General overview or by themes?*

- General overview, primarily, with stations describing alternatives.

*Will travel management be consistent across forests?*

- No – will follow the same rules for designating routes, but implementation may be different.

*How do you address travel management in a master plan? It seems so varied by forest, that it doesn't seem to work? How do you deal with reaching more public while at the same time having meetings hijacked by smaller groups?*

- Generally, we have a lack of public trust. Need to remember the plans are guides, not decision documents. Travel management is just one area where the public is getting more engaged.

*Just a note, a lot of roads have already been closed, but because there's been so little public education, it seems like a lot of closures are happening at once. Need to tell the whole road story – from the cost of roads, what's already closed, and provide an opp to both give and get input.*

*The forests are dealing with 3 sides of travel management:*

Consistency is a problem and requires work within and between the forests, along with expanding education.

Fear of losing access – while this isn't true, it's the perception.

Enforcement – people don't read maps, make rules that are enforceable. Look at grants for signs, and plan for closing and signing roads.

**A lot to address – the committee will work with the designated forest contact to help identify some of the processes for going forward.**

#### Hells Canyon Recreation Area Presentation (Wallowa-Whitman, Jake Lubera and Dan Ermovick)

Presentation provided an overview of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area on the Snake River. The Wild and Scenic River has many Outstandingly Remarkable Values including: Scenery, Recreation, Geology, Wildlife, Fish, Botany, Ecology and Historic/Cultural. Infrastructure includes boat launch sites, historic sites, a visitor center, a designated campground and some concessions.

Recreation on the river is about boats – both motorized and non-motorized. They have 31 guides and outfitters, running about 31,000 commercial floating and fishing trips, along with another 3,000 private trips. The river requires a permit from Labor Day to Memorial Day (online; \$6 fee). Self-permits the rest of the year.



They have responsibilities for Education, Interpretation and assist with Emergency Rescues. The work is carried out by students, seniors, and veterans and a pilot Field Ranger Program that has made 35,000 public contacts. In addition, volunteers contribute about 687 volunteer days each year; however, with declining budgets, they've had to cut back on per diem reimbursements, which mean fewer volunteers. The Wallowa-Whitman is also looking for more partnership opps to help.

**The W-W would like the RAC to consider a fee of \$5.00 per user (anticipated \$650,000 income per year), or per boat (anticipated \$250,000 income per year) for both non-commercial and commercial trips.**

(Note: The John Day – Snake RAC can consider fees and fill the role of a REC-RAC. The group can choose which issues they'd like to take on, and how many).

The funds would be used for:

- Update and maintain facilities
- Public safety (presence and education)
- Interpretation and Education
- Cleanup and Waste Removal
- Habitat Restoration
- Weed Abatement
- Access maintenance
- Volunteer recruitment and development of “friends” groups.

The RAC provided the following input:

- Meet with user groups.
- Look for small fixes where possible
- Get informal support for a fee by outreaching affected groups
- Ask affected groups where they think the money should go
- Complete a business plan – use EOU students.
- Create a communication plan
- Make sure people know the money is coming back – that it can't go somewhere else.
- Get users to help give presentations and add interpretation to the presentations
- Make sure you let people know how the money is spent – use signs
- Look for “Adopt a site” options
- Clarification – why only 95% of fees back to river? – 5% goes to collection and Regional Office
- Consider sending some funds from fees to the county law enforcement offices
- Use groups like “HistoryCorps” to work on cultural/historic sites and to help with grants

**RAC decided it would consider this proposal.** Timeframe for RAC consideration?

Wallowa-Whitman will have to complete their business plan in early 2015; would come back to RAC in summer 2015 for more updates, etc.



## NEPA 2.0

Teal Purrington, Prineville BLM NEPA Planner, provided an overview of NEPA Planning 2.0. A planning strategy designed to improve the current resource management planning process. The goal is to create a more dynamic and efficient planning process, enhance opportunities for collaborative planning and plan at landscape levels. RAC members have been invited to comment on the process.

## RAC boundary

Reminder that the RAC boundary now covers all of the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests. With the next Charter update, name should change to Northeast Oregon RAC.

By adding the Deschutes, we may have a large pool of participants to draw on. The Deschutes Provincial Advisory Committee is no longer active, so some members may want to head this way.

**November 13, 2014 – meeting adjourned at 5:12 p.m.**

**November 14, 2015**

**Meeting re-convened at 8:15 a.m.**

## Committee Review

RAC members reviewed existing committees and identified new committees. Committee membership was also determined. The group also determined that each committee and/or topic needed to have an agency representative who could help organize the committees when needed. The RAC currently has the following committees:

- **Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision** – Jim Reiss, chair; Sabrina Stadler, agency rep.
- **OHV** – Art Waugh, chair
- **John Day Basin RMP** – Pat Dunham and Tim Unterwegner, chairs; Chip Faver, agency rep.
- **Invasive Species** – Berta Youtie, chair; Don Gonzalez and Carol Benkosky reps for BLM weed EA's
- **Energy** – Greg Jackle, chair
- **Forest Restoration** – Mike Hayward, chair
- **Hells Canyon Rec RAC** – chair TBD; Jake Lubera, agency rep.
- **Sage Grouse** – Berta Youtie, chair; Don Gonzalez, agency rep.
- **South Fork Fire Restoration (Wild Horse)** – Berta Youtie, Tim Unterwegner, chairs; Carol Benkosky, agency rep.
- **NEPA 2.0 BLM Planning** – Ben Gordon, chair; Teal Purrington, agency rep.
- **Deschutes River** – Jim Reiss and Tim Unterwegner, chairs; Carol Benkosky, agency rep.

## PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no in-person or call-in participants.



## FEDERAL OFFICIAL UPDATES

**Carol Benkosky, Prineville District Manager:** provided an update on several on-going or upcoming activities on the Prineville District. Topics included a review of the status of the Sutton Mountain Wilderness Proposal, which has local support from Wheeler County, the City of Mitchell and environmental groups. Next steps will be for Congress to address the proposal and look at access, land ownership/land exchanges, wilderness values, etc. Carol also provided an update on the Invasive Weed EA step-down process – which will add several options, including additional herbicides, for treating invasives. Lakeview District has completed its EA, and Prineville is in the process (see attached handout for additional information).

**Tom Montoya, Wallowa Whitman NF Supervisor:** provided information on the Lower Joseph EIS, which is going out for public comment November 2014. This project was brought forward by the Forest Collaborative as a way of accelerating restoration, and will look at options for decreasing large-scale wildfire, increasing forest health, and increasing economic opportunities on about 100,000 acres. Open houses will be held for this EIS. In addition, the WW, Ochoco, Umatilla and Malheur NF are working on dry pine site restoration EIS with strategic fuel breaks – this landscape level EIS will kick off in 2015. Travel management continues and the forest is looking for public input to see if the “existing condition” maps are accurate. Reviews and edits are accepted until March 2015. The Snow Basin Project to rework. At this time, the WW will not include travel management as part of this decision. Finally, the Cohesive Wildfire Project “East Face” with BLM, Oregon Dept. of Forestry and NRCS continues as part of the Chiefs Initiative. More than 100 landowners are part of this effort to reduce wildfire risk in the intermix of public and private land (see attached handout for additional information).

**Don Gonzalez, Vale District Manager:** announced new service at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center – where a new golf cart is available to shuttle visitors to view points. So far the demand is exceeding the carts capacity! Boardman to Hemmingway is still in the works with a public meeting to look at the draft in December 2014 (see attached handout for additional information).

**Jim Westbrook, Acting for Malheur Forest Supervisor:** provided an overview of Malheur NF projects including an update on the 10-year Stewardship Contract, which awarded its second task order in September 2014 for approx.. 27,000 acres of restoration. Work includes thinning, range improvement, riparian area improvement, and fish culvert installation. After the Blue Mtn Forest Plan revision is complete, the Malheur will re-start Subpart B of travel management. The forest is also starting the Murderer’s Creek Wild Horse Territory/Management Plan, and working through the MOU/horse mangemetn agreement with ODFW and BLM. Public scoping for the project should begin in 2015 (see attached handout for District specific activities).

## ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Art – reported that the Summit Prairie OHV (Ochoco NF) had the decision withdrawn to modify based on public input. Next looks will examine restoration, private landowner concerns for trespass, etc.



Berta - reported that the Native Seed Bank has seed for the Deschutes and John Day Basins, with John Day seed available (specifically Clarno and Murderers Creek). Also, the Society for Ecological Restoration Meeting in October 2014 had more than 300 attendees and was a great meeting.

Mike – Provided an update on the progress of the Moist Forest Type Collaborative. While the group is moving toward common ground, there is still a ways to go and a consensus group may need to be called in to help the collaborative progress. Mike also thanked the Vale District for helping get some paperwork done on a county road on BLM that washed out – the county did not have a Right-of-Way and now the EA is on track to be done in a few months.

Greg – ODFW is recruiting a new director, and the agency will be looking for a fee increase in the next legislative session. ODFW is looking at different ways to get money to support fishing and hunting programs. In the Blue Mountain Zone (Prineville and parts east) ODFW is looking at mule deer migration patterns on 500 collared mule deer.

Chris – Sutton Mountain Wilderness Proposal is continuing – with public meetings and working through some adjacent landowner issues. Looking at opportunities and potential for using land exchanges to square up boundaries. The land conveyance would help with the airport, and that in turn would help with travel, tourism and the economy of the county. For Wheeler County, getting into the legislative cycle and that will tie up his time working with Juvenile programs along with Children and Family programs.

Tim – will be working with a group to design a management plan for the 13,000 acres that was blocked up on the Malheur as part of resolving some of the checkboard ownership.

#### **NEXT MEETINGS:**

- **March 11 – 12, 2015 in John Day**
- **June 18-19, 2015, will include a field trip (jet boat ride) to look at Hells Canyon Recreation Area**
- **October 26-27, 2015. Prineville – joint meeting with Southeast RAC**

**Meeting Adjourned: 11:51 p.m.**



# Briefing Paper

## **Pacific Northwest Region – Wallowa-Whitman National Forest**

**Purpose:** For the purpose of establishing sustainable funding strategy to manage the Wild and Scenic Snake River

**Background:** The Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA) is located on the northeast boundary of Oregon and western boundary of Idaho, and is managed by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

- Established by Congress in 1975.
- The main attraction is Hells Canyon. Measuring 7,993 feet deep from mountain peaks to the river and, at places, 10 miles from rim to rim, it forms the deepest river canyon in North America. The HCNRA comprises an exceptional richness, diversity, and productivity of vegetation and geology that support a diversity of fish and wildlife.
- Running through Hells Canyon is the congressionally designated Wild and Scenic Snake River, recognized for having outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, wildlife, fisheries, vegetation/botanical, ecological and cultural values.
- The Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Comprehensive Management Plan (2003) guides the Forest Service to provide the best possible experience for visitors while protecting the uniquely rugged environment that makes the area cherished for generations.
- Boating is the primary recreation use of the Wild and Scenic Snake River; personal and commercial watercraft, both motorized and non-motorized. Boat use is managed through a no-cost permit system, which limits the number of boats during the popular primary summer season. A self-issue permit is still required during the remainder of the year, but use is not limited. There is a \$6.00 transaction fee per permit which goes directly back to the reservation contractor.
- Services and infrastructure along the Snake River that support boating include developed launch sites at Pittsburg and Cache Creek, The Hells Canyon Creek Visitor Center, dispersed and developed campsites, and several historic ranches with museums, visitor services and Interpretation.

**Providing the Snake River Experience:** The river is patrolled by USFS law enforcement and River Rangers acting in a river stewardship capacity to provide educational opportunities, employee/volunteer transport, facilities maintenance, regulation enforcement, and river rescue support when requested by lead agencies. Further support for these program areas are provided by seasonal staff known as Field Rangers. These staff consists of locals, students, recent graduates, and military veterans. A key component to our continued operations within the corridor is our established volunteer workforce. The volunteer workforce provides for facilities maintenance and interpretive/educational opportunities.

### **Challenges**

- **Maintenance:** Most of the existing infrastructure found within the Snake River corridor is maintained through appropriated funds. As appropriated funds have lessened, a backlog of maintenance projects has accumulated. Most modern infrastructure within the corridor is over 30 years old and need of replacement/repair. Partnership opportunities have helped address some of these shortfalls.



for the greatest good

## BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

- *River Ranger and Law Enforcement Patrolling:* River Rangers provide an important service protecting the outstanding resource values that helped establish the Wild and Scenic Snake River. River Rangers are often over tasked with delivery of supplies, volunteers, and conduction maintenance/debris disposal patrols. This limits their time available to educate and inform users of the river to the sensitive nature of the area.
- *Volunteer Program Support:* Traditional investment levels in the volunteer program have declined. This could potentially lead to a smaller qualified and enthusiastic volunteer pool to choose from as incentives are reduced. Reduced ability and resources to support the volunteer program results in a decrease in the benefits these dedicated groups and individuals provide in caring for facilities and serving river users.
- *Field Rangers/Seasonal Staff:* As reductions in allocated funds occur agency wide, it is expected that that funding source for staffing this regional pilot program will be affected. Reduced staffing and presence by uniformed employees is resulting in lower compliance with resource and public safety regulations, which affect the quality of the recreation experience and potentially increase natural and cultural resource impacts.

### Proposed Strategy

- Continue to build on existing volunteer program and local partnerships
- Continue to strengthen outside funding sources like Oregon Marine Board, Idaho Fish and Game, and Idaho Power Co.
- Pursue a Special Recreation Permit Fee of \$5.00 per user boater fee. Currently authorized by the Federal Recreation Enhancement Act Authorization (PL 108-447, SEC 803(h)) with 95% of the funds generated from this proposal would go back into the river corridor.

### Focused Application of Increased Partnerships and resources:

- *Facilities Maintenance:* Reconstruction of Hells Canyon Creek Boat Launch and other critical visitor facilities
- *Visitor Services:* Continued levels of visitor contacts and services with uniformed employees in the field
- *Volunteer Participation:* Increased investment in existing volunteer program to allow for deeper pool of interested candidates.
- *Safety and Security:* Increased Law Enforcement presence with Forest Service or cooperative agreements with state and other entities.
- *Historic Preservation:* Reduction of maintenance associated with historic structures and other developed facilities found within the corridor.



## Baker RAC Update: November 2014

(Please note: Updated information reflects changes from last briefing)

### Greater sage-grouse:

The Baker Field Office is waiting for the Greater Sage-grouse Final Environmental Impact Statement before completing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Baker Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision.

### Boardman to Hemmingway Transmission Line (B2H):

The BLM anticipates the release of the Draft EIS for the proposed B2H Project for public on December 19. The document will be available online. Hard copies will be viewable at local government offices and libraries. CDs will be available upon request.

### Mining:

The Baker Field Office received comments regarding the Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-OR-V050-2014-025-EA prepared to analyze the potential environmental effects associated with the proposed Paul Ada #2/Snappy Ben Plan of Operations located on Clark's Creek. The public comment period closed on October 30, 2014, and BFO will now work on addressing comments, revising the EA if necessary and preparing a Decision Record/Finding of No Significant Impact (DR/FONSI).

### 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 project requires consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe in which BFO is currently engaged.

A cadastral survey was completed in 2014 in the vicinity of the Devil's Canyon Ranch. The survey should help clarify boundaries between public and private land and help facilitate the Mormon Basin Fuels and Forest Health Project.

### Range Management:

An environmental assessment will soon be released regarding livestock grazing on the Powder River Canyon Geographic Unit (GU) and Salt Creek is the only allotment being analyzed since the riparian rangeland standard is not being met. The anticipated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Decision Record (DR) would allow the renewal of grazing permits associated with the GU.

The Vale District will soon begin work with an environmental contractor to complete an environmental assessment regarding the expanded use of herbicides for non-native species.

### Fisheries/Hydrology:





In cooperation with Wallowa County, the Baker Field Office completed an expedited environmental assessment and expedited consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service which permitted repairs and stabilization of the Wallupa-Wildcat Road. Wallupa-Wildcat Creeks are tributaries of the Grande Ronde River and provide critical anadromous fish habitat. High-water events in the spring of 2014 caused severe damage to the road that follows these stream courses. The road is important to Wallowa County and residents along the Grande Ronde and is one of the primary access routes for residents, emergency services and recreationists.

#### **Forestry and Fuels:**

The Dark Canyon Timber Sale was awarded to the highest bidder in October. This project will commercially thin approximately 60 acres of overstocked forest lands, thereby reducing the incidence of insect and disease infestation and making the stands more resilient to the effects of wildfire. Approximately 250 thousand board feet will be delivered to local saw and chip mills as a result of the project.

An environmental assessment for the Mormon Basin Fuels and Forest Health Project will soon be released for public comment. It proposes treatment of up to 15,000 acres of forest and rangelands in the Mormon Basin and Pedro Mountain areas. The 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 the availability of saw and chip logs as well as potential juniper wood.

#### **Recreation:**

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



## District Wide

### Greater Sage-grouse RMP amendment

In April 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) determined that the greater sage-grouse warrants the protection of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing the species was precluded by the need to address other, higher-priority species first. One reason for the FWS identification of the greater sage-grouse as a species to protect was an identified need for more adequate and consistent regulatory mechanisms to ensure species conservation.

In Oregon, BLM has the opportunity to fully consider long-term sage-grouse conservation and habitat restoration guidance contained in the Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon published by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. To date, an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) has been formed, a contractor hired and the Resource Management Plan (RMP) process has begun.

For the Prineville District, this RMP amendment will amend direction in the existing Brothers/La Pine and Upper Deschutes RMP(s) which govern activities on the Deschutes and Central Oregon Resource Area(s).

**Update:** The BLM is continuing to work through the planning process. We are engaged in a joint effort with other federal agencies and the western states to develop and implement a coordinated conservation plan for the greater sage-grouse. This effort aims to proactively protect key sage grouse habitat for more than 350 species of plants and animals that essential part of the west.

We have analyzed a range of alternatives and identified a preferred alternative in our draft plan (released to the general public on November 12, 2013). We are currently working on an Administrative Draft Proposed Plan, which lists what the BLM is currently considering to include as goals, objectives, and actions in the proposed plan. A preliminary FEIS is expected in early 2015.

### Multiple Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment

The Prineville District is currently working on two Multiple Grazing Permit Renewal EA's to evaluate the effects of renewing grazing permits or leases, installing range developments in some of these permit's or lease's allotments, and maintaining some existing range developments in some of the permit's or lease's allotments. One EA is expected to be released for public comment in the near future, while the second EA is still in the early scoping phase, with public comments accepted until October 1, 2014.

### Emergency Site Rehabilitation – 2011 Fire Rehabilitation Update

The BLM, Prineville District, signed the Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact on January 10, 2013 to apply the herbicide imazapic for the control of Medusahead rye, cheatgrass, and North Africa grass, on 32,714 acres of BLM land affected by the 2011 Brown Road, Razorback, and Hancock Complex Fires. The action is part of a comprehensive post-fire emergency stabilization and rehabilitation plan, inclusive of drill and aerial seeding, fence replacement,



application of herbicides currently approved for use under the Prineville Integrated Weed Management EA, and grazing rest and deferment.

Similar to action taken in 2013, invasive annual grasses on BLM land within the 2011 Brown Road, Razorback, and Hancock Complex fire perimeters will be treated with imazapic in fall 2014, on about 12,500 acres following a 30 day public comment period, which ended Oct. 22, 2014. Treatment would be implemented again using aircraft (helicopter) as well as some ground-based equipment. Monitoring after the first herbicide treatment in the fall of 2013 showed a decrease in abundance of these annual grasses, and objectives met for native bunchgrass regrowth in the majority of monitoring plots. Further monitoring in subsequent years will provide more information as to the overall abundance of native bunchgrasses and forbs in the weed-killed areas versus weed-infested areas.

## 2014 Wildfire Summary

2014 was a significant year for fires in Central Oregon. The ten year average for acres burned in Central Oregon is 34,77 and in 2014, almost 315,000 acres burned on COFMS (Prineville BLM, Deschutes, Ochoco, Crooked River National Grassland), Private, ODF, and Confederated tribes of Warm Springs land. At the same time, the ten year average for wildfires in Central Oregon (BLM, FS and ODF) is 363, while in 2014 we exceeded 500 fires. In addition, COFMS representatives signed almost 20 delegations of authority to manage large wildfires throughout the season – a significant increase over average years.

For the South Fork Complex, the Washington Office, BLM has partially approved an Emergency Stabilization plan; funding \$260,000 to replace culverts, implement livestock closures, and potentially remove up to 40 head of wild horses from treatment areas. The funding to spray for annual/invasive grasses on 14,000 acres is pending.

## Unprotected & Under-protected Lands

Unprotected lands are lands for which there is no jurisdictional agency or association that has fire protection responsibilities. Oregon Statute requires landowners to either pay for services or to provide their own fire protection. The BLM has historically responded to fires on unprotected lands **when** fire suppression resources are available. The rationale for such a response is that it helps with local landowner relationships (good neighbor policy) and it is known that fighting a fire when it is small is much more safe and cost effective than allowing the fire to grow (often threatening residences, livestock and property) and ultimately impacting BLM-administered lands. However, BLM is taking on the risk of being outside its jurisdictional responsibility, taking on additional liability and is responding to fires for which we are neither staffed nor funded to handle. In addition, we are creating an expectation that the BLM will respond at all times – or at least when the smallest parcel of BLM is considered "threatened."

If BLM does not engage in initial attack, these fires frequently reach a size or proximity that impacts significant values at risk (homes, structures, wild and scenic rivers, sage grouse habitat, etc.). Frequently the BLM has to engage at that time and assume control of the fire. These fires have much higher complexity, greater firefighter exposure and risk, and ultimately are much more costly.

As an example, several lightning caused fires that started on private merged and formed the Donnybrook fire this past summer, which was within the area protected by the Ash Butte RFP. The wildfire was almost immediately beyond the capacity of the RFP and they contacted Central Oregon Interagency Dispatch several times requesting assistance, but at the time all agency resources were committed to numerous other fires. After several days ODF took action on



the southern flank stopping the spread towards their protection boundary. The BLM took action by assigning the fire to the Pine Creek Complex when the fire threatened a larger portion of BLM land and more firefighting resources were available. In the end, the fire burned just over 3,000 BLM-administered acres, and almost 23,000 acres of private land protected by the RFPA.

Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs) have been formed to try and address the unprotected lands issue, particularly in Southeastern portion of the State. Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) has been tasked by the Oregon Board of Forestry to help with the formation of RFPAs and providing "technical" support such as facilitating the transfer of old federal and state engines to the RFPAs; providing excess firefighting equipment, clothing and radios; providing advice and training; and paying for liability insurance for the Association. ODF does not oversee the RFPAs in matters such as setting training standards, establishing safety rules or codes of conduct. They envision themselves as being on par, or as a "sister" agency to RFPAs under the Board of Forestry. ODF does not sign mutual aid agreements with the RFPAs such as the BLM does. ODF only responds to fires that threaten ODF protected lands.

Because RFPA members live close to the lands for which they protect, they excel in initial attack on small fires through quick response times. However, since most members are farmers and ranchers, they cannot afford to do extensive mop up or patrolling to ensure fires are out. They also do not possess the training, equipment or manpower to safely or effectively staff larger fires. Ultimately, when these fires are not caught in initial attack, the cost of large fire suppression becomes a federal cost. ODF does not pay for suppression costs on private land which they are not under contract to protect and the RFPAs do not have capacity to pay for any federal efforts. These lands are therefore significantly under protected. Many Rural Fire Departments (generally city or county sponsored) have similar capacity.

## Central Oregon Resource Area

### John Day Basin Proposed Resource Management Plan

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Prineville District, has prepared a Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS) for management of BLM-administered lands in the John Day Basin. The PRMP was prepared by the BLM in consultation with cooperating agencies and the public and will provide future direction for managing 456,000 acres of BLM-managed public lands located in parts of Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla, Grant, Wheeler, Jefferson and Wasco counties in the State of Oregon.

When finalized in a Record of Decision, this document will revise the Two Rivers RMP (1986); the John Day RMP (1985); and the Baker RMP (1989) and will provide objectives, land use allocations, and management direction to maintain, improve, or restore resource conditions over the long term. It will specify where and under what circumstances activities will be allowed on BLM-administered lands. The plan will also provide practices that ensure a healthy and productive landscape, and add to community stability through resource use and enjoyment.

#### Timeline

- The Notice of Availability for the John Day Basin Proposed Resource Management Plan was published in the Federal Register April 20, 2012; beginning the 30-day protest/comment period and the concurrent 60-day Governor's review.
- Protest resolution – will be released with Record of Decision (ROD).
- Record of Decision – Delayed – waiting final approval from Washington Office to go to print.



### **Current Status**

The OR/WA State Director signed the RMP/ROD this summer, and now we are waiting for BLM Director approval to print. Prineville District is waiting for a scheduled time for a BLM Director briefing. After Director approval, we anticipate a printing time of approximately three weeks before the document is mailed to the public. At this point our hope is that the document will be mailed by the end of the calendar year.

### **John Day River Fee**

After hearing from members of the public, guides and outfitters, and other groups, reviewing existing budgets and river needs, as well as gaining a unanimous approval from the John Day–Snake Resource Advisory Council, Prineville BLM added a new boater special recreation permit fee for the Wild and Scenic sections of the John Day River between Service Creek (River Mile 157) and Tumwater Falls (River Mile 10). Beginning in 2014, a non-refundable launch fee of \$20 per overnight trip per group or \$10 per day-use trip per group was charged for boating from May 20–July 10. An on-line permit is required for boating the Wild and Scenic sections of the river year round, but the fee is charged only for trips that will be on the water between these dates.

During the 2014 fee season, 871 launch permits were issued and \$15,350 in special recreation permit fees was collected. All fees collected will be used directly on the river to help keep launch sites and river campsites clean.

The launch permit and fee are not required when boating a distance of less than 100 yards upstream or downstream of the launch point, or to cross the river to the opposite bank. For short, day trips taking place completely within the Priest Hole Recreation Site (one mile between River mile 136.5 and 137.5), free, self-issue paper permits are unlimited and may be obtained at Priest Hole.

In 2015, the BLM plans to return to the launch limits prescribed by the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan for Segments 2, 3A and 3B (Service Creek to Cottonwood Bridge). Boaters will have a less crowded experience and an easier time obtaining a launch permit if they avoid launching on Memorial Day weekend or June 12-19, 2015. Permits and boating information are available at [www.blm.gov/or/permit](http://www.blm.gov/or/permit).

### **Murderers Creek Wild Horse Gather/Management Plan EA**

**Current Status:** The Gather Plan EA was placed on hold as the intent was to role it into the joint management plan to be developed jointly with the Malheur NF. Data collection for the management plan is currently underway and a new team lead on the Malheur NF is being recruited following the departure of the current team lead.

The contractual agreement between the FS and BLM for horse gathers was terminated by the FS at the WO level leaving gathers on the Murderer's Cr. HMA in question.

### **Murderers Creek Wild Horse Gather**

The BLM, Prineville District, released an Environmental Assessment (EA) to the public for a 30-day comment period September 2012. The EA analyzed the effects of capturing and removing wild horses in excess of Appropriate Management Levels (AML) and analyzed other management actions necessary to manage the wild horse herd within the Murderer's Creek Herd Management Area (HMA). The initial gather may look at removing up to 113 horses, with subsequent gathers bringing the herd below the AML of 140 horses. The HMA is located south of Dayville, OR and southwest of John Day, OR.



## **Murderer's Creek Wild Horse Management Plan**

The Prineville District BLM and the Malheur National Forest, who share management of the wild horse population, are jointly beginning an EA to analyze the impacts of various management actions for achieving the Appropriate Management Level (AML) of wild horses on the Murderer's Creek Herd Management Area (HMA). The purpose of the proposed action is to gather and remove wild horses in excess of AML on the Murderer's Creek WHT/HMA. This action is necessary to achieve and maintain a population size within the established AML, protect rangeland resources from further deterioration associated with the current overpopulation, and restore a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship on public lands in the area.

Through the interdisciplinary process, actions would be developed to implement the following management strategies: 1) address population control methods to achieve and maintain AML, 2) maintenance of genetic diversity and sustainability of healthy populations, and 3) ensure conformance with the Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines and other applicable laws and regulations. The timeline is contingent upon the ability of the Malheur National Forest to assimilate new staff and organizational structure for implementation. The Prineville BLM and MNF will continue to work jointly to reach the common goals of the plan.

## **Cottonwood Canyon**

Cottonwood Canyon State Park runs along 15 miles of the lower John Day Wild and Scenic River (WSR). The area encompasses a checkerboard of State (8,100 acres) and BLM (10,171 acres) land. Western Rivers purchased the private parcels collectively known as the Murtha Ranch in 2008 and sold 8,008 acres to OPRD for development of the state park. The BLM is preparing an Environmental Analysis of alternatives to provide the public with a seamless recreation experience and enhance resource values in and around the new Cottonwood Canyon State Park. Unless the BLM allows access through connecting trail segments on public land, the OPRD would forego constructing 20.1 miles of the State Park's trails system.

Draft proposed actions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Adopting a Travel Management Plan
  - BLM - 9.4 miles of existing routes
  - BLM - 20.8 miles of trail construction
  - OPRD - 16.2 miles of existing routes, of which, 10.8 depend on connection across BLM
  - OPRD - 14.8 miles of new trail construction, of which, 9.3 depend on connection across BLM
  - BLM - less than 1 mile of road re-route away from steelhead habitat in Hay Creek.
- Eliminating dispersed camping
- Managing one boat-in campsite through the OPRD reservation system
- Restoring weed infested areas to native vegetation.
- Examining boating use levels for Segment 1 of the John Day Wild and Scenic River.

The BLM is currently analyzing public comments from a two month scoping period with two public meetings. Concerns identified during scoping include, but are not limited to, the effect of increased public access on neighbors, local fire and emergency response capacity, wildlife, noxious weeds spread, fish, hunting opportunities, cultural resources, visual resources, and erosion and the effect of all the proposed actions on all the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the John Day River.



Over the past year, the Prineville District has been processing an Oregon State Parks and Recreation (OPRD) application to lease BLM-administered land within the Cottonwood Canyon State Park boundary under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP). In February 2014, after reviewing Chapter 1 of the required Environmental Assessment, the BLM Solicitor advised against issuing an R&PP lease for the 3,408 acres of BLM-administered land that fell within the WSR corridor. The Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) Act only allows leasing of acquired lands within WSR boundaries, and BLM did not acquire these lands as they are public domain lands. The solicitor advised the BLM could enter into a Cooperative Management Agreement (CMA) with OPRD for the WSR lands and use either a CMA or an R&PP lease for those lands outside of the WSR. The CMA is expected to accommodate the same actions requested under an R&PP lease.

**Update:** BLM is currently working with OPRD to map location of trails to ensure they meet national and Resource Management Plan direction for routes in travel planning. Based on the expected need of OPRD, BLM will only analyze trails likely to be built in the next 5 years (based on OPRD funding levels). The Environmental Assessment for the CMA is expected to be completed by next winter/spring, with trail construction potentially beginning next summer.

## **Gravel Quarries**

### Sutton Mountain Gravel Quarry

The Sutton Mountain WSA shares a border with the quarry and the quarry activity has begun to encroach into the WSA. BLM Prineville is currently reviewing documents (Gravel License and Access Easements) provided by Wheeler County that predate the existence of the WSA. BLM sees the responsibility to validate Wheeler County's right to own mineral rights and extract material from the pit. In so doing, BLM would pursue an effort to create a suitable (mutually beneficial) boundary adjustment and ensure that this use is considered prior to any legislative action to designate the area as Wilderness.

### Burnt Ranch Quarry

This quarry is adjacent to Burnt Ranch Road north of Mitchell, OR. BLM is in the NEPA process for designating a new quarry in this area. At this point, the EA will go out for public comment sometime this Fall/Winter.

## **Deschutes Resource Area**

### **Barnes Buttes Mercury Removal**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Prineville District Office is planning to 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 several areas of concern.

Mercury is found naturally in the environment and is found mainly in cinnabar ore. Mercury enters the environment as a result of normal breakdown of minerals in rocks and soil through exposure to wind and water. Higher concentrations in the Barnes Butte area are a direct result of the mining activity, which extracted mercury through a heat process and left concentrations of the metal in the mining "leftovers" called tailings.

The BLM has developed a Time-Critical Removal Action Memorandum that documents approval to conduct a time-critical removal action (TCRA) to mitigate threats to the environment or human health posed by soil and tailings containing mercury. The removal action consists of



excavating mercury contaminated soils and tailings with concentrations above 132 parts per million and storing the material in a temporary laydown area consisting of multiple layers of plastic and soil. The material will be loaded into specially-adapted trucks with sealed compartments and hauled out of Central Oregon for disposal at an appropriate hazardous waste disposal facility (Subtitle C). In addition, mercury contaminated tailings and soils with concentrations below 132 parts per million but located along a road used by recreationists will be moved upslope to a repository and covered with clean soil to prevent potential human contact. During the process, the Barnes Butte area will be closed to public access. The TCRA was available for a 30-day public comment period, ending on October 13, 2014.

## Lower Deschutes River – Overview

### **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.

The State of Oregon has recently identified a representative for the Governor, so it is now possible for the Managers Group to elevate this issue to the Executive Group. As the Inter-governmental Agreement does not specify a process, it is assumed that the Chair of the Managers Group would be responsible for initiating that contact and arranging a meeting. It is unclear if the issue at hand is a definition of "consensus" or the resolution of the issue for 2014. Due to technical difficulties in making changes to an antiquated permitting system, the BLM cannot completely assure that a change could be made in 2014 if the Executive Group did resolve the issue.

The Segment 3 Limited Entry Allocation Adjustment EA scoping letter will not specify a proposed action due to the controversy of the issue within the Managers Group. Since this NEPA document will not be completed until fall of 2014, potential changes in either numbers or boundaries will not occur until the 2015 season. Execs would consider keeping use at 2013 levels for 2014. The impact will likely be that the public will be limited in the number of passes they can obtain on weekends. Although the guides will not have a "pool" or special allocation, they are more knowledgeable of the need to purchase passes in advance.

BLM solicitors have advised that we 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. BLM is seeking to meet with ODFW and Tribal fisheries biologists to discuss the potential impacts to ESA listed fish, Mid-Columbia River Steelhead and Bull Trout.

**Update:** 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 met on three occasions and discussed the issues, have come up with alternatives and are drafting and 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. Without protest and appeals, the decision for the EA is on track to be issued in mid-April of 2014.



With the complications of the antiquated system, the results of the EA may not be able to be implemented for the 2015 boating season. During the latest Lower Deschutes Working Group meeting, the Tribes proposed returning the Limited Entry number to 250 on weekends until the results of the EA can be implemented in the new boater pass system. The Manager's Group will meet soon and discuss the proposal on how to handle the 2015 boating season in lieu of the new system being able to implement the alternative chosen.

### Macks Canyon Boat Ramp

The Prineville District is finalizing a new concrete boat ramp at Macks Canyon Recreation Site within the Lower Deschutes River Recreation Area. The new boat ramp is located approximately 300 feet downstream of the existing concrete boat ramp and provides access to the river for motorized boats. The proposed project designates the existing boat ramp for non-motorized use, closes and re-vegetates a small user-created launch area, redesigns the parking area, converts a group day-use site to additional parking and adds facilities to meet design standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Funding for the proposed project was secured through a State/Federal partnership to include \$108K in BLM deferred maintenance funds and \$108K in grant funds awarded through an Oregon State Marine Board Boating Facilities Grant. Sherman County agreed to serve as BLM's sponsor for the OSMB grant, which means that grant funds would be sent to the county for dispersal to the BLM.

*Update: Project work was completed in fall 2014!!*



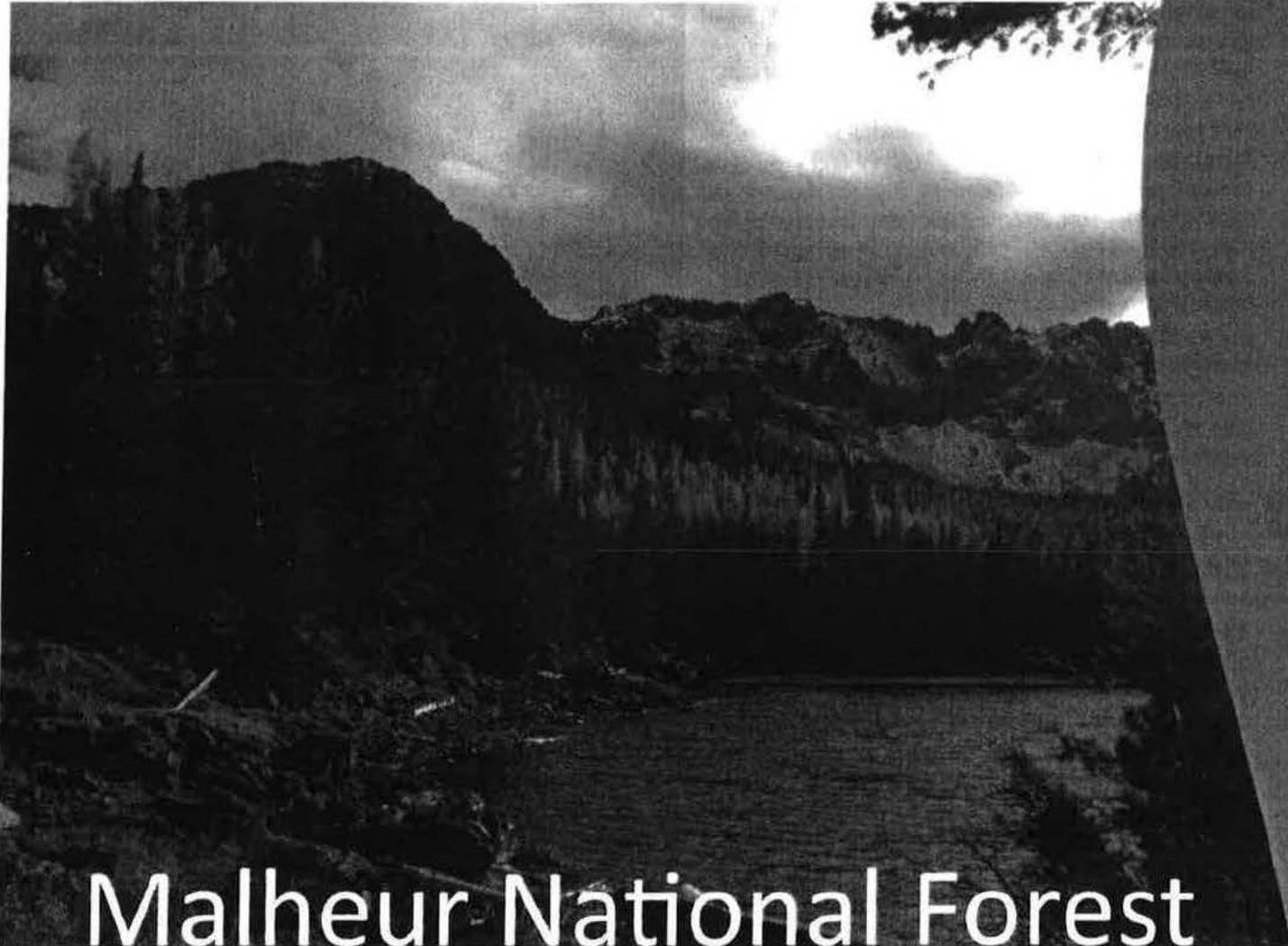
### South Junction

BLM continues to work with Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad to identify a solution for a railroad crossing at South Junction. The campground is on the east side of the railroad, and visitors must cross the tracks to reach the river. BNSF has informed BLM that no legal railroad crossing exists at this location. BLM has posted "no crossing" signs at the campground, and is working with BNSF to request a right-of-way and provide a safe method of crossing the railroad tracks. BLM has completed an on-site visit with BNSF and ODOT and is considering costs and design of an underpass type solution. BLM would not have access to deferred maintenance funding for a proposal, so acquiring funds for an undercrossing would require outside sources such as grants or private funding.





for the greatest good



# Malheur National Forest In Brief - November 2014

An Information Update of Malheur National Forest Projects

*Fall at Strawberry Lake, photo courtesy of Jessica Pfsiter.*

## 10-Year Stewardship Contract

- The first task order was awarded in September 2013 and the work is on-going.
- The Malheur National Forest awarded the second task order of the 10-year Stewardship Contract in September of 2014 containing approximately 27,000 acres of restoration activities.
- Service type restoration work activities were required as part of the initial advertisement for the project including aspen thinning/fencing, range improvement work, riparian area improvement through large woody debris input, road decommissioning and maintenance, and fish culvert installation. Service work activities are added to each task order based upon the estimated product value.
- Significant outcomes to date include: 12,000 acres treated using pre-commercial thinning, biomass removal and commercial harvest, restoring the forest to a fire resilient state, and Malheur Lumber Company (a partner of Iron Triangle) added a second shift of employees (first increase since 1998).
- The Forest has also stepped up hiring, adding to its diverse workforce to facilitate the contract's implementation.
- Most importantly, Oregon State Employment Department reported Grant County experienced an unemployment decline of 3.1 percent between September 2013 and March 2014. This was the sharpest unemployment drop of any county in the state.



*Strawberry Mountains, photo courtesy of Audra Clark*

*For more information, contact Steve Beverlin at 541-575-3073 or [sbeverlin@fs.fed.us](mailto:sbeverlin@fs.fed.us)*

## Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision

- The Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests (collectively referred to as the Blue Mountains National Forests) have combined efforts and established the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision team to revise their land and resource management plans (also referred to as forest plans or plans). The current plans are being revised to address substantial resource and social changes on the three national forests and to include new scientific information.
- All of the comment letters received during the public comment period for the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Draft EIS and Proposed Revised Land Management Plan (March 14, 2014 – August 15, 2014), totaling over 1,000 letters, are now posted in the following public reading room: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/ReadingRoom?project=31195>.
- A total of nearly 1,000 people attended our 15 public meetings to kick off the release of the Proposed Revised Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Approximately 30 people attended the webinar on June 25th to discuss access, wilderness, backcountry, and general forest management.
- The plan and additional information are available at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/wallowa-whitman/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5247447>.

*For more information, contact Sabrina Stadler at 541-523-1264 or [sdstadler@fs.fed.us](mailto:sdstadler@fs.fed.us)*

## Access Travel Management

- Once the Forest Plan Revision is completed the Forest will re-start Subpart B Motor Vehicle Use Map Environmental Assessment (MVUM EA).
- Sign Forest Plan Revision Record of Decision (ROD).
- Re-start environmental analysis of Subpart B MVUM. EA has already been started, but would need to be re-scoped which will require additional time.
- Sign Decision Notice for Subpart B MVUM.
- Publish MVUM.

*For more information, contact Mike Montgomery at 541-575-3166 or [mmontgomery02@fs.fed.us](mailto:mmontgomery02@fs.fed.us)*

## Murderer's Creek Territory/Wild Horse Management Plan

- We are in the initial planning stages, creating an Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) and reviewing a revised agreement/MOU with Forest Service Enterprise Team (TEAMS).
- TEAMS will provide various specialist and project lead services to the Forest. At this time, we are aligning the Forest with soon to come guidance from the WO/RO, due to the national significance of and changes within the Wild Horse and Burro Program.
- Due to the mixed land administration and ownership in the Murderer's Creek Wild Horse Territory (143,000 total acres), we will engage with the BLM, Prineville District, ODFW, and private land owners, as we advance with a Wild Horse Management Plan for the Murderer's Creek Territory.
- A broad and overarching MOU/horse management agreement with the Forest, ODFW, and BLM is awaiting final review and signature as well.
- Approximately 75% of the lands within the Territory are on the Malheur National Forest. Once our internal ID



Fields Peak Trail, USFS photo.

Team is developed and the TEAMS agreement revised and signed, we will further engage with our BLM and State partners.

- We have developed a draft internal Project Initiation Letter (PIL) and will advance with our partners by compiling existing data, drafting a Purpose and Need Statement, and identifying existing condition. Public scoping will begin soon after.
- The current Management of the Territory is directed by the Murderer's Creek Wild Horse Territory/Herd Management Area Management Plan signed in 2007. That plan directs an Appropriate Management Level (AML) of 50 to 140 horses.

For more information, contact **Gerald Dixon** at 541-575-3018 or [gerald Dixon@fs.fed.us](mailto:gerald Dixon@fs.fed.us)

## Fire and Fuels

### Fuels

41,554 acres of various fuels related activities were completed on the Forest. These activities included under burning, small diameter thinning, piling of slash, burning piles, and commercial thinning through a mix of service contracts, stewardship contracts and timber sales.

- It takes more than one fuels treatment to move the project to the final condition, so many of these activities occur on the same piece of ground to help move toward an end result of reducing future fire severity.
- 26,270 acres of those activities occurred in the Southern Blues Restoration Coalition Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program area.

For more information, contact **Roy Walker** at 541-575-3103 or [rlwalker@fs.fed.us](mailto:rlwalker@fs.fed.us)

### Fire

- 123 fires (to date, not all fire reports entered are final).
- Total acres of wildfire for 2014 on the Malheur is 25,400 acres; Bald Sisters was 2,846 acres of that, and the Malheur portion of the South Fork was 22,000 acres of the total. The other 122 fires totaled 554 acres.
- 112 of 123 are Lightning for about 3,390 acres burnt; 11 of 123 are human for about 10 acres burnt.
- Previous Years Comparisons: 2013 = 147 fires for 945 acres; 2012 = 81 fires for 6600 acres; 2011 = 92 fires for 923 acres; 2010 = 123 fires for 938 acres.



South Fork Complex, photo courtesy of Zach DeRosier.

For more information, contact **Teresa Youmans** at 541-575-3101 or [tyoumans@fs.fed.us](mailto:tyoumans@fs.fed.us)

## Blue Mountain Ranger District - Dave Halemeier, District Ranger

### Big Mosquito Project

The Big Mosquito project planning area encompasses approximately 36,000 acres within the Big Creek and Bear Creek-Middle Fork John Day sub-watersheds. The project was developed in cooperation with the Blue Mountain Forest Partners collaborative.

The project includes silviculture and fuels treatments, riparian restoration, range developments, interpretive site development, and associated road activities.

- Scoping completed April 2014.
- 30-day comment period on the Preliminary EA ended September 26, 2014.
- Final EA and draft Decision Notice expected to be released for 45-day objection in December 2014.

*For more information, contact Sasha Fertig at 541-575-3061 or [sashafertig@fs.fed.us](mailto:sashafertig@fs.fed.us)*

### Starr Aspen Project

The Starr Aspen project planning area encompasses approximately 17,500 acres in the Starr sub-watershed. The aspen and meadow restoration treatments being proposed under this analysis were originally a component of the Starr Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) Project completed in July 2012.

The project includes felling and girdling conifers that have encroached into aspen stands, fuels treatments, aspen stand fencing, aquatic restoration activities, and fish barrier improvements.

- Scoping completed April 2014.
- Preliminary EA expected to be released for 30-day comment period in January 2015.

*For more information, contact Sasha Fertig at 541-575-3061 or [sashafertig@fs.fed.us](mailto:sashafertig@fs.fed.us)*

### Camp Lick Project

The Camp Lick project planning area encompasses approximately 40,000 acres in the Lick Creek, Lower Camp Creek, and Upper Camp Creek sub-watersheds. The project is being developed in cooperation with the Blue Mountain Forest Partners collaborative.

The project will likely include silviculture and fuels treatments, juniper removal, spring and shrub enhancement for wildlife, riparian restoration, range developments, and associated road activities.

- Scoping expected Spring 2015.
- Comment period expected Summer 2015.
- Decision expected Fall 2015.

*For more information, contact Sasha Fertig at 541-575-3061 or [sashafertig@fs.fed.us](mailto:sashafertig@fs.fed.us)*

### Magone Project

The Magone project planning area encompasses approximately 27,000 acres in the East Fork Beech Creek and Grub Creek sub-watersheds.

The project is being developed in cooperation with the Blue Mountain Forest Partners collaborative.

The project will likely include silviculture and fuels treatments, juniper removal, riparian restoration, range developments, trails and other recreation improvements, and associated road activities.

- Scoping expected January 2015.
- Comment period expected Spring 2015.
- Decision expected Summer/Fall 2015.

*For more information, contact Sasha Fertig at 541-575-3061 or [sashafertig@fs.fed.us](mailto:sashafertig@fs.fed.us)*

*Magone Lake, USFS photo*



## Emigrant Creek Ranger District - Christy Cheyne, District Ranger

### Central Malheur Allotment Project

Reauthorization of livestock grazing on the Central Malheur Allotment to ensure the effectiveness in meeting or moving toward desired conditions outlined in the Forest Plan, and to be consistent with agency policy, and other applicable laws and regulations.

The Central Malheur project encompasses an area of approximately 11,200 acres in a portion of the Headwaters of the Malheur River watershed.

- Scoping completed February 21, 2014.
- Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) released for 30-day notice and comment period July 16 through August 15, 2014.
- Final EA and Draft Decision Notice released for 45-day objection period October 22, 2014.

*For more information, contact Lori Bailey at 541-573-4366 or [labailey@fs.fed.us](mailto:labailey@fs.fed.us)*

### Wolf Vegetation Management Project

The Wolf project encompasses an area of approximately 39,465 acres in a portion of the Wolf Creek watershed. The project is being developed in cooperation with the Harney County Restoration Collaborative.

The project includes timber and biomass removal, vegetation treatments, restoration treatments, landscape scale prescribed burning, road management, wildlife and fish restoration.

- Scoping completed July 25, 2014.
- Preliminary EA expected to be released for 30-day notice and comment period November 2014.
- Final EA and Draft Decision Notices expected to be released for 45-day objection period in January 2015.

*For more information, contact Lori Bailey at 541-573-4366 or [labailey@fs.fed.us](mailto:labailey@fs.fed.us)*

### Dove Vegetation Management Project

The Dove project encompasses an area of approximately 43,892 acres in a portion of the Upper South Fork John Day River watershed.

The project is being developed in cooperation with the Harney County Restoration Collaborative.

The project, in the early stages of planning, would include forest products, fuels management, road management, watershed management, vegetation management, wildlife and fish restoration.

- Scoping expected February 2015.
- 30-Day Legal Notice of Comment on EA is expected to occur in September 2015.
- Final EA and Draft Decision Notice expected to be released for 45-day Objection in January 2016.



*Tour of the Dove Project. Photo courtesy of Jack Southworth, Harney County Collaborative.*

*For more information, contact Lori Bailey at 541-573-4366 or [labailey@fs.fed.us](mailto:labailey@fs.fed.us)*

### Izee Allotment Project

Reauthorization of livestock grazing on the Izee Allotment to ensure the effectiveness in meeting or moving toward desired conditions outlined in the Forest Plan, and to be consistent with agency policy, and other applicable laws and regulations.

The Izee project encompasses an area of approximately 23,800 acres in the Headwaters of the South of the John Day River watershed.

- Scoping completed August 14, 2014.
- 30-Day Legal Notice of Comment on EA is expected to occur in January 2015.
- Final EA and Draft Decision Notice Expected to be released for 45-day Objection in April 2015.

*For more information, contact Renee Hollowell at 541-575-3345 or [rchollowell@fs.fed.us](mailto:rchollowell@fs.fed.us)*

### Elk 16 Landscape Restoration Project

Project objectives include restoration of ecological structure and function of forest ecosystems to improve the forest health and increase resilience to drought, fire, insects, diseases, and other disturbances in Crane Creek and Elk Creek-North Fork Malheur River sub-watersheds. Restoration of streams that lack hardwood vegetation and the ability to capture and store sediment, and adjustment of the road system to reduce impacts to specific watershed and riparian areas.

Collaboration with Blue Mountain Forest partners has been completed on the 43,000 acre project area located approximately 15 miles southeast of Prairie City. Several issues were discussed during collaboration:

- Thinning and fuel treatments to reduce the current insect epidemics and landscape fire risk.
- Roadless, and Potential Wilderness.
- Management in the North Fork Malheur Wild and Scenic River, Dugout Research Natural Area, Inventoried Roadless Area.
- Reducing fuel levels in the project area. Forest Roads 16 and 14 are identified in the Grant County Community Wildfire Protection Plan as safety corridors (evacuation routes).
- August 13, 2014: Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) was made available for 30 day public comment period. Alternatives proposed a variety of ecosystems, fuels, and watershed and aquatic restoration projects.
- May 2015: Decision Notice (DN) is expected to be signed.
- Summer 2015: Project implementation is expected to begin.



*Elk 16 project area, photo courtesy of Sarah Bush.*

**For more information, contact Sarah Bush at (541)820-3800 or [sbush01@fs.fed.us](mailto:sbush01@fs.fed.us)**

### Summit Landscape Restoration Project

Begin restoring the natural processes that will help maintain healthy, resistant and resilient landscapes, rich in biodiversity, with a greater capacity to adapt and thrive in the face of natural disturbances and large scale threats to sustainability within Summit Creek and Bosonberg Creek – Malheur River sub-watersheds.

*Summit Landscape Restoration project area, USFS photo.*



- Purpose and Need, and Proposed action are in the development stage as part of collaboration with Blue Mountain Forest Partners on the 38,005 acre project area located approximately 15 miles southeast of Prairie City.
- The project could include commercial/noncommercial thinning, underburning, road closures for stream channel improvement and wildlife security, aquatic habitat restoration, aspen thinning and protection, meadow restoration, sagebrush restoration, range enhancement, and ecological services that benefit the local community.
- Decision expected: Fall 2016.
- Early public involvement will included collaboration with the Blue Mountain Forest Partners and other interested individuals.

**For more information, contact Alissa Tanner at 541-820-3800 or [altanner@fs.fed.us](mailto:altanner@fs.fed.us)**

## Malheur National Forest Site-Specific Invasive Plants Treatment

The Malheur National Forest Site-Specific Invasive Plants Treatment Project EIS encompasses treatment of known and newly discovered invasive plants using herbicide, manual, mechanical, biological and/or cultural treatments. This also includes a non-significant forest plan amendment to allow use of aminopyralid (Milestone TM).

- Expected Final EIS Notice of Availability in Federal Register November 2014.
- Expected to publish the Record of Decision by April 2015 to provide a broader range of treatment options to reduce invasive plant infestations and prevent future introductions.

*For more information, contact Joe Rausch at 541-575-3141 or [jhrausch@fs.fed.us](mailto:jhrausch@fs.fed.us)*

*Malheur River, USFS photo.*

