

John Day – Snake RAC Meeting Summary

Facilitator: Lisa Clark

The John Day-Snake Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was convened for its meeting at 12:October 26, 2015 at the Prineville BLM – High Desert Conference Room; 3050 NE 3rd St., Prineville OR. Day One was a Joint learning session for the members of the John Day – Snake and Southeast Oregon RACs, with informational presentations. Day 2 the two RACs held separate business meetings. The minutes for the Southeast Oregon RAC on October 27 will be available on the Southeast Oregon RAC website.

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

Council members present: SEOR: Richard Watts (Dispersed Recreation), Jason Kesling (Tribal Rep.), Julie Weikel (Wild Horse and Burro), Don Hodge (Transportation), Duncan Mackenzie (Grazing Permits/Leases), Ralph Stout (Commercial Timber), Anne Hiller Clark (Archaeological and Cultural Resources), Jean Findley (Environmental Organization), Jim Bishop (Public-at-Large).

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

Federal Managers present: Carol Benkosky (Prineville District Manager); Don Gonzalez (Vale District Mgr.); Lori Wood (Vale BLM), Patrick Lair for Stacey Forson (Ochoco Forest Sup); Ryan Nehl/Joseph Rausch (for Malheur Forest Sup.), Shane Jeffries (Deschutes National Forest Deputy Sup), Bill Gamble (Umatilla National Forest), Chuck Oliver (Wallowa-Whitman NF), E. Lynn Burkett (Lakeview District Manager); Larisa Bogardus (Lakeview BLM, facilitator); Lisa Clark (Prineville BLM, facilitator).

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 a series of learning sessions on Wild Horse and Burro Management, an update on Greater Sage-grouse management, a review of how agencies identify Lands with Wilderness Character/Potential Wilderness, an overview of the 2015 Fire Season and a briefing on fire restoration.

Wild Horse and Burro briefing

Bob Hopper, Rangeland Management Specialist, BLM Oregon State Office, presented a PowerPoint outlining the WHB program, which covers 10 states (see attached).



Oregon represents about 10 percent of the WHB population, with 19 Herd Management Areas (17 on BLM lands and two on National Forests). The national WHB program budget is about \$75 million a year, with 65 percent allocated to housing animals and 5 percent on the adoption program. Only 10-15 percent of the horses gathered are adopted. Nationally there are 8 contraceptive sterilization programs, three of which are being conducted at the Burns, OR facility. The planned Beaty Butte gather on the Lakeview District is the first in a Sage Grouse Focal Area. Once complete, the agency hopes to shift to bait trapping and using PZP (equine birth control) to maintain the herd population, and develop a training facility at Adel to make the animals more adoptable. The agency is also looking at expanding adoption centers in the east to reach more people.

Julie Weikel, SEO RAC and National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board member, outlined her proposal advocating for development of a permanent sterilization program to better manage herd populations. Gathering and housing horses is not working. One facility in Oklahoma has 214 mares, costing about \$46,000 a year per animal to house.

The BLM is now opening the door to alternative solutions. Two years ago, the Southeast Oregon RAC endorsed vaginal ovary removal (colpotomy). This new proposal would be broader, allowing for all forms of sterilization. Ms. Weikel presented a draft letter to the National Wild Horse and Burro Program, advocating for a pilot program in Oregon, where herd populations are still small enough to stabilize, and asked if both RACs would support it. It was noted that horses would still have to be gathered and sterilized as new generations are born. Julie agreed, but said the sterilization program would create a window of opportunity to build other programs, like the training facility at Adel. The matter was referred to each RAC for action during their respective business meetings Tuesday, Oct. 27, 2015.

Sage Grouse update

Joan Suther, Greater Sage-grouse Project Manager and Mike Haske, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist, both of BLM Oregon/Washington, addressed the recent decision not to list Sage Grouse as an endangered species, and how the agency will proceed with its management.

Sage Grouse habitat covers 165 million acres in 11 states. In Oregon, 70 percent of the habitat is on federal lands, 3 percent is on state lands; and 27 percent is on private land. About 4.5 million acres in Oregon are primary habitat management areas, 7 percent of which are in Oregon; and another 1.9 million acres are in Sagebrush Focal Areas, of which 3 percent are in Oregon. Surface disturbances will be capped at 3 percent with buffers, exclusions and avoidance areas, with an emphasis on net conservation gain. A four mile radius will be evaluated for new projects, reflecting the ODFW modeling of leks and habitats.

About 1.9 million acres of BLM lands with locatable minerals in Sagebrush Focal Areas will be segregated from development for at least two years, while they are evaluated for permanent withdrawal. RACs are encouraged to participate in the reviews and proposal process.



Lands With Wilderness Characteristics/Potential Wilderness Areas and other land designations: How can RACs participate?

Jerry Magee, Wilderness & Nat'l Conservation Lands Program Lead, BLM Oregon State Office

Berry Phelps, BLM Rec Planner

Karen Brand, Des/Ochoco NFs - Rec Program Lead

Under the Utah Settlement Agreement of 2003, there are to be no new Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), but required periodic wilderness inventories, which are taking place now.

Three areas are being inventoried:

- Congressionally-designated Wilderness areas (of which there are 9 in Oregon and Washington);
- Congressionally-designated Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), as established under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), of which there are 88 in Oregon and Washington, representing 2.6 million acres); and
- Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC), meaning those areas that meet the criteria, but are not part of a Wilderness or WSA and have no federal protections.

Under the settlement agreement, LWCs are not allowed because they are not addressed in the Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Southeast Oregon RAC has supported a proposal that would allow ecologically-based stewardship to address the potential impact of management activities (such as juniper removal). Lakeview BLM is updating their inventories for an RMP amendment.

RACs can participate in the plan amendment process by endorsing one or more of the range of alternatives identified by the proposed amendment; or even proposing an alternative. There is precedent for citizen- or RAC-designed alternatives that fit the purpose and need. RACs have also impacted the process by submitting feedback on preferred alternatives or amending alternatives. For example, one RAC influenced a proposed alternative to restrict old growth juniper cutting.

Fire season update and restoration report

Rick Stratton, Fire Analyst USFS Pacific NW & Alaska Regions/BLM State Office, Fire, Fuels, and Aviation Management

Molly Galbraith, Rangeland Management Specialist, OR/WA ESR Coordinator

Early fires in Washington warned of a severe fire season, which moved into Oregon with the Buckskin Fire. The number of large fires in the last 15 years is a little terrifying.

Making RACs more visible to public

As it was getting late it was decided the RACs would have this conversation separately.

The joint meeting adjourned, followed by a social dinner at the Club Pioneer restaurant.



October 27, 2015 – John Day Snake RAC Separate John Day – Snake and Southeast RAC mtgs.

The John Day – Snake RAC meeting convened at 8:08 a.m. in the Prineville BLM High Desert Conference Room (3050 NE 3rd St., Prineville OR).

The minutes from June 2015 Meeting were approved with a few adjustments to the “members present” portion. The group also agreed to an agenda modification to address the Julie Weikel letter proposal from the previous day first.

Weikel Letter

*Julie Weikel, SEO RAC and National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board member, outlined her proposal advocating for development of a permanent sterilization program to better manage herd populations. She proposed a letter to be sent to Dean Bolstad, Acting Division Chief, Wild Horse and Burro Program, supporting that Oregon serve as a model for wild horse population management. JDS and SEOR RACs worked independently on edits and then combined responses into a single letter. The JDS members recognized the significance of the horse herds’ population growth, the need to look at newer and better science – while allowing opportunities for more options as they become available, the need for cost effective and humane options, and the damage that unmanaged herds cause to rangelands (and sage grouse habitat). The **JDS RAC approved the final draft unanimously and recommended that the letter also be sent to the Secretary of the Interior.***

Manager Updates

Bill Gamble (for Umatilla National Forest)

See Attached

Shane Jeffries (for Deschutes National Forest)

See Attached; also reminder that the JDS RAC will hear a cabin fee proposal from the Deschutes at the March 2016 meeting.

Ryan Nehl (for Malheur National Forest), provided information about the 2015 Canyon Creek Fire that burned 110,000 acres and 43 residences. The community remains very emotional and is now facing flooding concerns due to unstable soils, especially in Canyon Creek. The Forest is working on aerial mulching where a helicopter is dropping woody twisted fibers that lock and secure a slope, as well as log placement.

- The Canyon Meadows dam was condemned and has been removed (State owned dam on FS land). The Forest is also looking at roadside and area salvage.
- In addition, the Forest continues to work with their collaborative. This is a great group of people and they’re really getting some good discussions from the members.
- Hwy 395 culvert will also be replaced to mitigate flood risk.

- In addition, the Malheur is working on scoping for the Summit Creek project, as well as continuing work on the Dove Project and the Moon Lake Recreation Project. The Malheur is beginning work on the Murderers Creek Wild Horse Plan/EIS.



- The Blue Mountain Resiliency Team is conducting large scale studies on the west of the Blue Mountains to identify landscape level treatments to reduce wildfire risk.
- The Forest is also looking at salvage options from the Canyon Creek fire. The area will likely be a subset of what burned. The Malheur Collaborative is involved. Ultimately we think the salvage area won't be as large as originally thought.
- The Malheur is also working with a new branch of the Central Oregon Trail Alliance to evaluate the existing trail/road system to see what opportunities for mountain biking exist. New projects like Magoon may also include trail options. Comment from member: Travel Oregon is also looking at the "transcontinental bike route" so we're thinking of future development in the John Day area.
- Regarding Emergency Stabilization and Rehab funding, is any of this shared with the county? How will you address areas where wilderness abuts private and there is no buffer? How can we improve protections? Answer: Counties don't get the ES money, but they can get FEMA funding. They have a plan to be eligible and will be working on reseeded and reducing erosion. We also coordinate with NRCS (who can work on private) and try to coordinate our efforts.
- Reminder from member that salvage has a limited time frame – we need to move fast, get the deck sales going and try to find options like salvaging through stewardship.

Patrick Lair (for Stacey Forson, Ochoco National Forest), see attached.

The Forest Service (Washington Office) is discussing options for Wild Horse sale authority. While not immediately needed, the Ochoco would like to have options to address herd populations.

Currently dealing with two overlapping proposals on the Ochoco. One is for the Summit OHV trail and the other is a proposal from Oregon Wild for a National Recreation Area that would restrict motorized use. Still trying to understand what the NRA would mean, with respect to wilderness expansion, inclusion of the BLM North Fork Crooked River area, and use limitations. There is a lot of misinformation out there, and hoping that Oregon Wild works to clarify the concept. Currently, there appears to be little support for the NRA at the local level. Comment: Art would like to complement the Ochoco on how they've worked through objections etc. on the OHV proposal. He participated in the field tours, discussed solutions, and talked about crossing options. He appreciated the communication with the team and their willingness to listen.

December 2 – the Ochoco will host an open house/meet and greet at the Prineville Bowman Museum.

Lisa Clark (for Carol Benkosky)

See attached.

Chuck Oliver (for Tom Montoya, Wallowa Whitman National Forest), see attached.

Like everyone, they're dealing with the aftermath of a summer with fire. The emergency stabilization and rehab funding is scarce so limited help. There was not a lot of FS land burned in some of the fires that had a lot of private/mixed ownership. They will be looking at some roadside salvage, and some small blocks (less than 250 acres) of salvage.



The Blue Mountain resiliency group includes 4 forests (Wallowa, Malheur, Ochoco and Umatilla), and is a new group. The member include a cadre of scientists and will use analysis to look at resiliency (and define it) in the forest, and will tie in the collaboratives. Still figuring out this group's ultimate role.

Snake River Fee Proposal:

Still developing the public information like a brochure, webpage and comment card. Hope to have the Federal Register Notice out by early December and work on the public participation process through May. They will complete the business plan and have the RAC review it before the March meeting.

11:00 Public Comment Period

The RAC had three public commenters:

One commenter realized she meant to be in the Southeast Oregon RAC meeting and left to comment at their meeting.

Marika Ruppe (Equine Welfare Consulting Services) spoke on behalf of the American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign. The group presented their position opposing the Beaty's Butte Wild Horse gather scheduled for later in 2015 on the Lakeview BLM district. The group urged the BLM to keep the horses on the range to avoid long term holding costs, and to minimize impacts and stress to the herd. They urged the BLM to implement more humane solutions, such as the PZP birth control vaccine, and stressed that sterilization is not in the best interest of the herd. They would also ask that BLM look for ways to compensate ranches for relinquishing grazing when it opens up range for horses.

For PZP, the BLM should use much smaller, short-term roundups using hay as bait. Administer PZP and immediately return horses.

The AWHP supports moves to increase adoptions as well.

The AWHP submitted an official comment letter, along with thousands of signatures.

Gayle Hunt of the Central Oregon Wild Horse Coalition also spoke out against large scale gathers as well, and spoke to changing peoples' views of wild horses' role here in North America. Ms. Hunt presented the view that horses did not disappear from North America during the last ice age, and that horses today are native descendants of original horses. There is evidence of their presence that can be seen, even if not by fossil, but by examining DNA in the soil. As such, we need to be looking at them differently – they can be used to restore the range, rather than treated like medusahead or another invasive species.

Her hope is that BLM and FS craft out “out of the box” solutions. She would recommend:

- Selective gathering – get the tough old bachelors, etc.
- Conduct some fertility – but remember that horses have complex relationships much like people
- Let the horses fill their niche and self-regulate. When in balance, for example, 1 year old horses won't breed.



- We need to look at all controls – strategic captures, increased training, adoptions, etc.
- Do not do permanent sterilization.

End of public comment period

Don Gonzalez (Vale BLM District Manager)

See Attached

Sub-committee Reports – NO REPORTS

Blue Mountain Plan Revision (Reiss), OHV (Vaugh), 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), Lower Deschutes River Fee Proposal (Reiss)

Member Round Robin

Art Vaugh – for the **March meeting agenda**, can we look at the following issue?

“The John Day/Snake RAC is aware of a growing invasive plant/ noxious weed issue across all landbase ownerships. It is apparent that the greatest infestations are occurring alongside roadways and areas of motorized access. Other efforts, such as weed free feed for stock are in place, and this RAC believes the time for the following recommendation is here now. The agencies have fewer resources to apply to the issue every year and all efforts should be made to abate further areas being infested.

The John Day/Snake RAC endorses placing a recommendation for vehicle undercarriage washdown prior to use on USFS and BLM administrated lands. This recommendation, along with a short explanation for it, should be printed on all USFS and BLM maps as they are due for revision and or reprinting. The John Day/Snake RAC would also recommend that mandatory vehicle undercarriage washdowns be required on all group activities requiring a permit as is done in other areas.

While this RAC can only make recommendations for our area, we would like to see this recommendation be applied nationwide in all Federal land management jurisdictions. The John Day/Snake RAC believes this recommendation and voluntary compliance when the public and users understand the reason will be a start on reducing this vector for the spread of invasive plants/noxious weeds along with other vehicle borne organisms.”

Berta Youtie – Questioned whether there would be a RAC comment on the Invasive Weed EA’s? At this time, timing isn’t right. Also mentioned that the High Desert Museum has a new sage grouse presentation.

Randy Jones – pass

Erica Maltz – The Burns Paiute Tribe has acquired 2400 acres near John Day in Grant County. They’ll work toward a variety of economic development, winter grazing, leasing, and fish and wildlife habitat enhancement.

Mike Hayward – pass



Steve Lent – Checking in on resource damage at Canyon Creek (and other fires). Answer: Resource advisors were out during suppression so minimal impacts from suppression activities. Same oversight during rehabilitation. Also the Chinese Mining Fort (?) is having a tour to gain increased information about history.

Jim Reiss – congratulated Steve Lent on his latest book! Also offered congratulations to Terry, Mike and Berta for their 20 years of service to the RAC.

Tim Unterwegner – Steelhead recovery on John Day. In 2004 about 12,000 outmigrants (juveniles moving out). There have been many improvements to riparian since then and in 2008 there were 20,000 outmigrants, and in 2015, about 60,000! Great success!

Harry Dalgaard – in 2014, Oregon Tourism increased in visitors and revenue went up \$10 billion. In 2015, we're thinking an addition increase of 10%. Communities like Gateway near Madras actually have international visitors! We're seeing tourists now from China, when before the market was led by Japan/UK. China tourists also have the highest spending power. We're starting to see this market expand to central/eastern Oregon.

- Destination Development – Rural Tourism in “Gorge Tourism Studio.” Looking at impacts of tourism on resources, congestions, etc. Both sides of the Columbia River – the tourism vision is expansion with sustainability.
- The Bike Tourism Studio in NE Oregon – starting to see some products out of this.
- The Guide and Outfitter training (Bend) – is an opportunity to interface with new entrepreneurs, and to make sure information is shared about regulations, Leave No Trace, etc.
- In 2015, the summer campaign of “7 Bikes” was a huge success. We'll be getting data out on the industry.traveloregon.com website.

Terry Drever-Gee – Baker County is seeing a shift in ideology – more coordination and ultimately more collaboration, with the BLM, FS – more sitting down together over different issues. Also – would like to see this RAC continue to work with Wild Horse groups, to make sure we find solutions

- 12:00 Set meeting dates for 2016
- March 17-18, 2016: John Day
 - June 23-24, 2016: Maupin
 - October 6-7, 2016: Pendleton

Learning topics, meeting locations, etc. - TBD

Chair/Vice-chair appointments – set at March 2016 meeting

Priority work for 2016 – Snake River Fee, Lower Deschutes Fee, Deschutes Cabin Fee

Adjourn 12:23 p.m.



Attachments:

1. Weikel Letter, final.
2. American Wild Horse Preservation Organization submission of 19,408 signatures and statement
3. Article Submission by Gayle Hunt, Central Oregon Wild Horse Coalition; The Survival of Horses in Pre-Columbian America.
4. Article Submission by Gayle Hunt, Central Oregon Wild Horse Coalition; Wild Horses and Native North American Wildlife
5. Deschutes National Forest update
6. Vale BLM Update
7. Umatilla National Forest Update
8. Ochoco National Forest Update, including "Why Manage Motorized Travel" brochure
9. Prineville BLM Update
10. Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Update

Received

DEC 21 2015

Priority BLM

John Day-Snake River
and
Southeast Oregon
Resource Advisory Councils

To: Dean Bolstad
Acting Division Chief, Wild Horse and Burro Program
20 M Street South East
Washington D.C. 20003-3503

RE: Support for a proactive approach to managing wild horse and burro populations in Oregon

Division Chief Bolstad:

All Herd Management Areas (HMAs) in Oregon are represented by either the John Day-Snake River RAC or Southeast Oregon RAC. The District Manager for Pokegama HMA has asked to be included in this representation.

Upon a thoughtful review of the data available on the numbers of wild horses and burros on our drought-stricken western ranges, the John Day-Snake River and Southeast Oregon RACs request that you give serious consideration to an appropriate and thorough review of the numbers of horses and burros in Oregon, while the numbers are within manageable ranges.

The numbers of wild horses and burros throughout the West are clearly very problematic and reflect growth rates of approximately 20% a year.

We believe that Oregon could serve as a model for management if committed and careful management of our numbers could be implemented immediately. Oregon is uniquely positioned in that we still have manageable numbers as well as a working facility central to the affected HMAs.

Specifically, Oregon had 4,067 head of adult wild horses in the March 2015 population surveys. This represents a 12% increase over February 2014 and does not take into account the 2015 foal crop. Approximately 110 head were removed in the September 2015 Kiger/Riddle gather, and 1200 are scheduled for removal in November 2015 from the Beaty Butte HMA. This will make the number of excess horses in Oregon's HMAs a very manageable population of approximately 1200 animals above low Appropriate Management Level (AML).

We are requesting:

1. BLM gather all Oregon HMAs to lower range of AML, and

2. Accompany those gathers with an ongoing commitment to use permanent sterilization for animals returned to the range to maintain reproductive rates necessary to keep herds within AML.

We suggest that such permanent sterilization techniques might include:

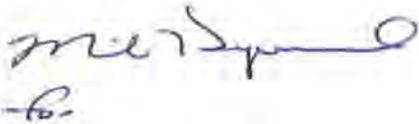
- Spaying mares
- Vasectomizing stallions
- Gelding stallions
- Other techniques that emerge from ongoing research.

Genetic diversity must be maintained in selecting which animals would be returned to the range to reproduce.

We believe that by implementing this proposal BLM could provide a model demonstrating how we can maintain our obligation to the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971, forestall continued and excessive gathers in the future, limit the need for additional long term holding facilities, and reinforce the commitment to greater sage-grouse conservation by providing relief for our drought-damaged ranges. Additionally, our proposal could serve to further research the behaviors and longevity of wild horses returned to the range under modified reproductive status.

The Southeast Oregon RAC and the John-Day Snake River RAC respectfully request that BLM seriously consider our proposal.

Sincerely,



Berta Youtie, chair
John Day-Snake River RAC



Chad Boyd, chair
Southeast Oregon RAC

cc:

Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell
Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack
BLM Director Neil Kornze
Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell
BLM Oregon State Director Jerry Perez
Regional Forester Jim Peña



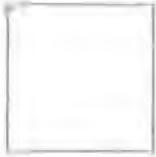
We, the undersigned 19,408 citizens and taxpayers, oppose the massive roundup of 1,500 wild horses from the Beatys Butte Herd Management Area (HMA) in southeastern Oregon, which is scheduled to begin at the end of this month (October, 2015). Further, we endorse the comments of the American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign calling on the BLM to:

1. Cancel the Beatys Butte roundup in favor of a common sense, fiscally-responsible and humane, long-term management plan for these federally-protected mustangs.
2. Implement a humane fertility control program within the Beatys Butte HMA and other HMAs in Oregon as an alternative to inhumane roundups and removals. The proven PZP vaccine can be utilized to suppress population growth, where necessary, while maintaining wild horse behaviors and well-being, in line with the National Academy of Sciences' recommendations for the BLM's Wild Horse & Burro Program.
3. Develop a mechanism to allow for private compensation of ranchers for the voluntary relinquishment of their grazing permits in wild horse and burro HMAs or Herd Areas (HAs).

Wild horses and burros are present on less than one fifth (just 19%!) of the BLM land in Oregon that is grazed by livestock. Therefore, conflicts between private livestock grazing and wild horses and burros foraging on public lands in Oregon can and should be resolved in a way that does not decimate our remaining wild horse and burro herds.

The BLM must STOP acting primarily in the interest of a small group of ranchers and START acting in the public's best interest by implementing cost-effective and humane management policies for America's cherished wild horses and burros.

Thank you for your consideration.



The Survival of Horses in Pre-Columbian America

Many people believe that the horse completely disappeared from North America, where it evolved, prior to the arrival of Europeans. But what if it did not?

By Terry McNamee © 2013

The idea that horses could have survived into more recent times in areas south of Alaska and the Yukon was suggested 40 years ago by archaeologist Paul S. Martin. He said that there was no reason why horses could not have survived in isolated areas of North America as late as 2000 B.C. (Paul S. Martin, "The Discovery of America," *Science* 179, 1973). But more recent discoveries are revealing that horses may have been present in North America much longer, even right up to the time when Europeans "reintroduced" horses to the Americas.

Map showing the Beringia land bridge (outline) compared to today.



Beringia

<http://www.nps.gov/bela/historyculture/images/BeringiaMap1.jpg>

The History of the Horse

The first true horse (*Equus*) appeared in North America between four and five million years ago. Two million years ago, during the glacial periods of the Pleistocene, low ocean levels created the Bering land bridge linking America and northern Asia. Today, this land bridge is completely covered by ocean water. But when ocean levels were low, that section of dry land, called Beringia, was sometimes as big as the state of Texas, enabling the free movement of animals back and forth between what are now Alaska and Siberia.

Horses crossed the bridge and gradually spread all the way into southern Asia, Europe and Africa. Those that reached Africa evolved into modern zebras, while the ones in the middle east evolved into onagers and asses. Those in Europe and Asia became true horses called *Equus caballus*, while in the Americas, the same species was given a different name, *Equus lambei*. In fact, there were two types, or breeds, of horses in North America: the larger northern Yukon Horse (*Equus lambei*), which is supposed to have disappeared first, and the American Periglacial Horse or Mexican Horse (*E. caballus mexicanus*). According to the [Cloud Foundation](#), genetic analysis of the DNA of the Yukon horse from the permafrost showed the variation was within that of modern horses — in other words, both of the Ice

Age horses of the Americas were the same species as the modern horse of the Spanish brought to the American in the 1500s.

By one million years ago, both North and South America had huge herds of horses. Initially, scientists believed that all of these horses became extinct in the Americas about 500 years before the first people arrived in the Americas between 15,000 and 17,000 years ago. In 2006, [statistical analysis](#) published by Andrew Solow of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, showed that horses co-existed with humans in the Americas for several thousand years, until 11,700 years ago.

Since it is now known that horses survived the last ice age, why would scientists assume horses would then disappear after the climate and vegetation improved? The answer to that is, they were wrong. Even disease is unlikely to have wiped out all the horses, just as the bubonic plague epidemics of the Middle Ages failed to annihilated the entire human population of Europe.

Ute Petroglyph in Arches National Park, Utah, carved between A.D. 1650 and 1850



[Petroglyph of Wolf Ranch in Arches National Park, Utah](#)

Poster

Discoveries Reveal That Horses Survived in America

As time passed, new scientific discoveries kept pushing the supposed date of extinction of America's horses closer to the present day. Now it seems clear that there probably was no such extinction at all.

Recent DNA analysis of a frozen Yukon Horse carcass found in the Alaskan permafrost in 2009 showed that horses were still living in North America as recently as 7,600 years ago (5600 BC), according to researcher Ross MacPhee, the American Museum of Natural History's Curator of Mammology.

Other discoveries have been cited by Dr. Steven E. Jones, a retired professor from Brigham Young University. In an [article](#) in *Ancient American*, Dr. Jones said that horse bones recovered from Pratt Cave near El Paso, Texas, by Professor Ernest Lundelius of Texas A&M University were dated to 6020-5890 BC. A horse skeleton from Wolf Spider Cave, Colorado, dated to AD 1260-1400. Another discovery in Wyoming put the date at AD 1426-1481. And there are more discoveries that show there already were horses in North America when the Spanish arrived.

How could enough of the the presumably small number of escaped or stolen domestic Spanish horses, unused to living in the wild, survive predation from wolves, grizzly bears and cougars, attacks by alligators, bites from poisonous snakes, severe winters and summer droughts and avoid breaking legs in

gopher holes, and other hazards to life and limb to reproduce in such abundance?

The logical answer is, they didn't. There had to be another source of horses in order for these herds to grow so large in as little as 150 years. It seem that, instead of Spanish horses repopulating the Americas, they simply added new blood to what was already here. The Spanish horses were the finest animals that could be procured for expeditions to the New World. Joining up with small groups of indigenous horses would have improved the survival of these quality Spanish horses, and the offspring of these two types would have had increased hybrid vigour, increasing their survival rates and therefore resulting in more animals reproducing each year.

While the genetic allele for Spanish blood is actually quite rare except in relatively closed populations such as the Spanish Mustangs of the Pryor Mountain range in Montana and Wyoming, equine geneticist Dr. E. Gus Cothran noted that it only takes one individual horse to introduce the Spanish gene into a population.

Equine Bones Discovered in Canada

According to Canadian Geographic, in western Canada (from Manitoba westward), “there is clear evidence of horses until 12,000 years ago, with isolated finds indicating there may have been horses closer to 3000-1000 years ago.” That means there could have been horses in western Canada as late as AD 1000, about 500 years before the arrival of Europeans and well after the presumed extinction. And those horses numbered in the millions.

“The complete extirpation of ancestral horse stock in Canada has yet to be completely confirmed, and a bone found near Sutherland, Saskatchewan, at the Riddell archaeological site suggests some horses might have survived much later,” stated Robert M. Alison of Orillia, Ontario, in 2000 in a research paper called Canada's Last Wild Horses. “The bone (Canadian Museum of Nature I-8581), has been tentatively dated at about 2900 years ago. Another *Equus sp.* Bone, found at Hemlock Park Farm, Frontenac County, Ontario, dates to about 900 years ago. Exhaustive confirmation of both bones has yet to be completed, but if they prove to be authentic, they comprise evidence that horses survived in Canada into comparatively modern times.”

There are many precedents in which large species remained either unknown to science or found still in existence long after they were believed to be extinct. Among them are Burchell's zebra (believed extinct, rediscovered in 2004), the koupray (a very large wild grey ox, found in 1937) and the giant muntjac (1994). So why not the horse?

Indian on horseback. Watercolor by Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied, painted during his travels in America, 1833 or 1834.



Indian on horseback. Watercolor by Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied 1833 or 1834.

Wikimedia Commons

Pre-Colonial Aboriginal Horses: Distinct and Separate Breeds

In 1991, Claire Henderson, a member of the History Department at Laval University in Quebec City, wrote a paper entitled *The Aboriginal North American Horse* supporting the beliefs of the North American Native people that horses were present long before the arrival of Europeans and did not go extinct.

“Dakota/Lakota Elders as well as many other Indian nations ... contend that according to their oral history, the North American horse survived the Ice Age, and that they had developed a horse culture long before the arrival of Europeans, and, furthermore, that these same distinct ponies continued to thrive on the prairies until the latter part of the 19th century, when the U.S. government ordered them rounded up and destroyed to prevent Indians from leaving the newly-created reservations,” Henderson stated. “Some biologists have pointed out that Elders could indeed be correct, for while the mammoth and other Pleistocene mammals died out during the last Ice Age in both continents, if the horse survived in Eurasia, there is no reason for it to have become extinct in North America, especially given similar environment and climate on the steppes and prairies.”

Henderson conducted her own investigation, following information left by the French explorer LaVerendrye, who in 1642 went on a quest to find the People of the Horse, whom he hoped would take him to the Western (China) Sea. LaVerendrye's trail led to Wyoming, where Henderson interviewed Lakota tribal elders, and uncovered some interesting information.

“According to Elders, the aboriginal pony had the following characteristics: it was small, about 13 hands, it had a 'strait' back necessitating a different saddle from that used on European horses, wider nostrils, larger lungs so that its endurance was proverbial,” said Henderson. “One breed had a long mane, and shaggy (curly) hair, while another had a 'singed mane'.”

Henderson did further research and discovered other French accounts of Lakota people being skilled horsemen in the mid-1600s and using horses to hunt buffalo.

“Several years prior to 1657, these Prairie Indians were already expert horsemen, having developed remarkable riding and hunting skills,” said Henderson. “That such expertise was developed by 1650 is remarkable in many ways. It implies that the original (Spanish horses) had so multiplied that within a few short years after the horses appeared, these Prairies Dakotas had devised methods for catching them, had learned to tame them, had become expert riders, had devised the most efficient buffalo hunting techniques on horseback, and had also devised techniques for training their horses in these skills. These accomplishments, in so short a time, seem all the more extraordinary when examining the development of similar skills in other areas of the world.”

In fact, she said, just seeing the Spanish riding horses would not have been enough for

any of the Native cultures to become so proficient with horses so quickly. She said that in the Middle East, where a similar situation occurred with the Scythians bringing horses to the Assyrians (who had no prior experience with horses), it took about a century from the arrival of this new animal until its people rode awkwardly, and that it took several generations for them to become horsemen, even when experts were there to teach them.

“These examples from other cultures make it difficult to believe that the aboriginal horse had indeed disappeared during the last Ice Age,” Henderson concluded.

Modern Curly Horse "NE Prime Time Regal" owned by Lindsay Braman



NE Prime Time Regal

Photo by Lindsay Braman (Wikimedia Commons)

Mustangs and Curly Horses Share Characteristics With Primitive Equines

The Pryor Mountain horses are believed to have been here since at least the late 1600s, and most of the animals have only five lumbar vertebrae (common in primitive horses)—although some have a fifth and sixth vertebrae which are fused. Many often have a curly winter coat (Fran Lynghaug, *The Official Horse Breeds Standards Guide*).

The presence of only five lumbar vertebrae is also found in the American Curly Horse. Curly Horses were well known to the Lakota and other tribes at least as early as 1800. Curlies were made famous by the Damele family in Nevada, who first saw Curlies running with wild mustangs in Nevada around 1900. When they discovered that the Curlies were especially well adapted to surviving very cold winters that killed other horses, the family started raising the Curlies as ranch horses, and still breed them today.

According to Dale Wooley, author of *The Dameles and the American Curly Horse*, “When the Dameles first began catching Curly horses out of the Mustang herds, they were big, coarse-looking horses with non-refined heads, bodies, and legs.”

Curly Horses were seen running wild in southern Alberta as recently as 50 years ago, and can still be seen in wild herds of the American west. Wildlife photographer Barbara Wheeler has photographed many Curly Horses in the wild in Nevada and Wyoming.

Perhaps the Curlies are living proof that the genes of the ancient North American horses still exist in modern horse populations. However, Curlies in captivity have been crossbred so much with other breeds of horses that the only distinctive genetic marker that separates them from other horses today is the gene for the curly coat.

The singed mane referred to by Henderson has also been mentioned elsewhere. On the [Bad Warrior Curly Horse](#) web page about the Curly Horses bred by a Sioux man named

Eli Bad Warrior (born 1882) in South Dakota, there is a quote from a man named Young Eagle. "These horses (Curlies) were raised by the Indians as far back as anyone can remember," said Young Eagle. "Most of them were dark in color with hair 'singed.' Hence their name, which is *Sung-gu-gu-la*, literally translating to 'horses with burnt hair.' "

Bad Warrior obtained his Curly Horses from his father, and the Sioux apparently got them from the Crow around 1800.

There is more evidence of early Curly Horses. Author Felix Azara wrote in his *Natural History of Quadrupeds in Paraguay* (1802), "I have seen many curly-haired horses, ones which are call "Pichai" in Paraguay. Their hair is kinky." Another primitive horse breed called the Lokai lives in Russia, and some specimens have curly coats, yet there is no evidence that Russians (or the Spaniards, for that matter) ever brought curly-coated horses to the Americas.

Perhaps the curly hair of the Russian Lokai and other steppe horses and the curly hair of North American and Paraguayan horses both show a link to the original *Equus* of North America — a species that never went extinct after all.

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[Wild Horses as a Returned Native Species \(/education/wild-horses-as-a-retur..-species\)](/education/wild-horses-as-a-retur..)

[Wild Horses as Native North American Wildlife](#)

WILD HORSES AS NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE

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Statement for the 109th Congress (1st Session) in support of H.R. 297

A Bill in the House of Representatives

Committee on Resources

Introduced January 25, 2005

To restore the prohibition on the commercial sale and slaughter of wild free-roaming horses and burros.

By Jay F. Kirkpatrick, Ph.D. and Patricia M. Fazio, Ph.D.

Are wild horses truly "wild," as an indigenous species in North America, or are they "feral" weeds - barnyard escapees, far removed genetically from their prehistoric ancestors? The question at hand is, therefore, whether or not modern horses, *Equus caballus*, should be considered native wildlife.

The genus *Equus*, which includes modern horses, zebras, and asses, is the only surviving genus in a once diverse family of horses that included 27 genera. The precise date of origin for the genus *Equus* is unknown, but evidence documents the dispersal of *Equus* from North America to Eurasia approximately 2-3 million years ago and a possible origin at about 3.4-3.9 million years ago. Following this original emigration, several extinctions occurred in North America, with additional migrations to Asia (presumably across the Bering Land Bridge), and return migrations back to North America, over time. The last North American extinction occurred between 13,000 and 11,000 years ago.¹ Had it not been for previous westward migration, over the land bridge, into northwestern Russia (Siberia) and Asia, the horse would have faced complete extinction. However, *Equus* survived and spread to all continents of the globe, except Australia and Antarctica.

In 1493, on Columbus' second voyage to the Americas, Spanish horses, representing *E. caballus*, were brought back to North America, first in the Virgin Islands, and, in 1519, they were reintroduced on the continent, in modern-day Mexico, from where they radiated throughout the American Great Plains, after escape from their owners.²

Critics of the idea that the North American wild horse is a native animal, using only paleontological data, assert that the species, *E. caballus* (or the caballoid horse), which was introduced in 1519, was a different species from that which disappeared 13,000 to 11,000 years before. Herein lies the crux of the debate.



were released a few years back and now repopulate their native range in Mongolia. Are they a reintroduced native species or not? And what is the difference between them and *E. caballus* in North America, except for the time frame and degree of captivity?

The key element in describing an animal as a native species is (1) where it originated; and (2) whether or not it co-evolved with its habitat. Clearly, *E. caballus* did both, here in North America. There might be arguments about "breeds," but there are no scientific grounds for arguments about "species." The non-native, feral, and exotic designations given by agencies are not merely reflections of their failure to understand modern science, but also a reflection of their desire to preserve old ways of thinking to keep alive the conflict between a species (wild horses) with no economic value anymore (by law) and the economic value of commercial livestock. Native status for wild horses would place these animals, under law, within a new category for management considerations. As a form of wildlife, embedded with wildness, ancient behavioral patterns, and the morphology and biology of a sensitive prey species, they may finally be released from the "livestock-gone-loose" appellation.

Jay F. Kirkpatrick, Director, The Science and Conservation Center, Billings, Montana, holds a Ph.D. in reproductive physiology from the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University. Patricia M. Fazio is currently a freelance environmental writer and editor residing in Cody, Wyoming and holds a B.S. in animal husbandry/biology from Cornell University, and M.S. in environmental history from the University of Wyoming, and a Ph.D. in environmental history from Texas A&M University, College Station.

1 "Horse Evolution" by Kathleen Hunt from www.onthenet.com.au/~stear/horse_evolution.htm; Bruce J. MacFadden, *Fossil Horses: Systematics, Paleobiology, and Evolution of the Family Equidae* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 205.

2 Patricia Mabee Fazio, "The Fight to Save a Memory: Creation of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (1968) and Evolving Federal Wild Horse Protection through 1971," doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University, College Station, 1995, p. 21.

3 Ann Forstén, 1992. Mitochondrial-DNA timetable and the evolution of *Equus*: Comparison of molecular and paleontological evidence. *Ann. Zool. Fennici* 28: 301-309.

4 Carles Vilà, Jennifer A. Leonard, Anders Götherström, Stefan Marklund, Kaj Sandberg, Kerstin Lidén, Robert K. Wayne, Hans Ellegren. 2001. Widespread origins of domestic horse lineages. *Science* 291: 474- 477.

5 Hofreiter, Michael; Serre, David; Poinar, Hendrik N.; Kuch, Melanie; Pääbo, Svante. 2001. Ancient DNA. *Nature Reviews Genetics*. 2(5), 353-359.

6 James Dean Feist and Dale R. McCullough. 1976. Behavior patterns and communication in feral horses. *Z. Tierpsychol.* 41: 367.

Overview

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

Summer/Fall Highlights

Fire Season: Though, the DNF experienced the yearly average of number of fires during the 2015 fire season, all fires were contained before they became large incidents.

Deschutes Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC): This summer the Deschutes Provincial Advisory Committee, established as a part of the Northwest Forest Plan implementation, was reauthorized. The PAC provides direction to the Forest Service and the BLM for developing an ecosystem management approach that is consistent with statutory authority for land use planning, such as the Forest Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act, the National Forest Management Act, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The PAC held its first meeting in early October to meet new members and begin discussion of priority issues for the PAC to work on during the next year.

Catch and Release Trail Project: In late September over 280 employees of REI along with Central Oregon Trail Alliance (COTA) volunteers and Deschutes National Forest employees built a new 4.5 mile mountain biking/hiking trail called "Catch and Release." The trail project required significant effort by both COTA volunteers and Deschutes National Forest employees. The project was done in conjunction with REI's National Leadership Conference. After a hard afternoon of work, most of the trail was completed. The trail will provide connections from the popular Phil's Trailhead biking area, the City of Bend, the new Cascade Lakes Welcome Station, and trails along the Deschutes River.

Oregon Forest Resources Institute Tour: At the beginning of October the Deschutes National Forest hosted a tour for the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) Board and other local leaders to discuss collaborative forest management in the 26,000 West Bend Project Area, adjacent to the City of Bend. The tour included approximately 50 people and Regional Forester, Jim Pena, was a featured speaker on the tour as well as the OFRI Board dinner the previous evening.

Project Highlights

Update New Cascade Lakes Welcome Station: The DNF will open a new Welcome Station on Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway for visitors to get information about the DNF in April, 2016. It will provide a location in the forest where visitors to many of the DNFs most popular recreation areas.

Update West Bend Vegetation Management Project and the Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project: The Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project (DCFP) is a community-led collaborative that allows diverse members of Deschutes County 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. Two smaller project areas,



Ruble and Yen, within the larger West Bend Project are actively having restoration activities, including commercial timber harvest, being done.

Update 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. This past summer a new overlook for visitors was completed. In addition, the final phase of the restoration effort was completed. The final phase filled old ditches with gravel and added whole trees to the stream for fish habitat. Along with the stream work, the Forest Service replaced a trail bridge over Whychus Creek with a wider spanning bridge to better pass large floods.

BMW Project: The DNF's Bend-Ft. Rock Ranger District is implementing a project to create a strategic fuel break for the City of Bend's municipal watershed. The project area is located about 12 miles west of Bend between the Three Sisters Wilderness boundary and the Bear Wallows Inventoried Roadless Area. The project will create a 50-200 foot wide fuel break to provide safe entry into and exit from the area for the public and fire crews during a wildfire. It also will provide a safe location for fire crews to defend the area if a wildfire advances towards the Bend Municipal Watershed. The project will be ongoing until 2018 and involve intermittent trail closures.

Ringo Butte Project: The DNF's Crescent Ranger District is beginning the analysis of the 30,000 acre Ringo Project area. The project area is centered on Ringo Butte, extending close to Wickiup Reservoir to the north and Highway 58 to the south and is located in both Deschutes and Klamath counties. It is home to a variety of wildlife and plant species including habitat for bald eagles, northern spotted owls, Oregon spotted frogs and big game. It borders private forest land on the east and encompasses the community of Wickiup Acres. The goals of the project are to protect or enhance quality habitat for key wildlife species including the northern spotted owl, white-headed woodpecker and big game; allow for safe and effective wildfire response; maintain developed and dispersed recreation opportunities; and contribute to local and regional economies by providing time, firewood and other forest products. The Crescent Ranger District hosted a public values mapping workshop and public field trip for the project this past summer and fall.

Melvin Butte Vegetation Management Project: The DNF's Sisters Ranger District is proposing a vegetation management project adjacent to the Pole Creek Fire area. The Melvin Butte Project area was originally a part of the Popper Project that was analyzed in an EIS just prior to the 2012 Pole Creek Fire. Within the project area dense forest conditions, large scale wildfires, and insects and disease threaten large old trees and their habitats, including fire maintained ponderosa pine forests in the project area. Approximately 80% of large trees in the area have been lost. The remaining large trees are stressed by dense stand conditions and the in-growth of tree species that have created ladder fuels, which help wildfire reach into the crowns of old trees. The Sisters Ranger District is proposing that thinning small trees from below and preparing the stands for prescribed fire to protect and maintain large old trees and their habitats and help restore fire's natural role in the ecosystem.

Human Ecology Mapping: The Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and Crooked River National Grassland are working with the Forest Service's 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. The project will focus resources on methods to reach under-represented communities (Latino, Native American, African-American, Asian-American, disabled, veterans and low income) in the pilot project. In addition, on-line survey tools and some small workshops will reach the general public, partners and stakeholders.



Baker Resource Area

Greater sage-grouse:

The final statewide Greater Sage-grouse Resource Management Plan Amendment (GSG-RMPA) decision was signed in September. The Baker Field Office is beginning to look at the amendment to determine changes to the draft and what that will mean for the development of a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to become part of the DEIS prepared for the Baker Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision released in November 2011. It is anticipated that the SEIS will analyze the changes to the no action alternative in the DEIS, as the new baseline for sage grouse habitat will be based on the state wide amendment.

Boardman to Hemmingway Transmission Line (B2H):

BLM conducted an ID Team and Cooperating Agency workshop on August 27th, to review resource methodology, impact assessment criteria, data gaps, and review any route segment/variations requested from DEIS comments to be brought forward for analysis in the FEIS. Managers/Solicitor were briefed on September 17, 2015, and preliminary direction to proceed with the FEIS was received. The schedule is currently being revised and will be available soon. The PNWRIT meeting was held on October 9, 2015, in Olympia, WA, and focused on cultural and tribal protocols/issues for projects. BLM will be meeting with the Shoshone- Paiute of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation on Oct. 21, 2015, and with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation on November 19, 2015, in Pendleton, OR.

Mining:

The Baker Field Office signed the ROD and FONSI for 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; operations are in progress.

Currently we are working on a draft environmental assessment for the Don J Plan of Operations.

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

On October 19, 2015, Sarah Doyle joined our office as a Geologist to fill a vacancy that was left when an employee returned to graduate school. Sarah comes to us from the National Parks Service in Page, Arizona.





John Day/Snake River Resource Advisory Committee

INFORMATION UPDATE

New Information Only

Lands and Realty:

Baker Field Office approved an upgrade of the "216 Line" which would provide a more consistent, reliable supply of electricity to the Halfway area. Consultation was completed with SHPO and Nez Perce Tribe.

The Baker FO is working with Pacific Corporation on the potential issuance of a ROW for the construction of a new power line in the Wallua McNary corridor.

We have been working to complete an EA on a 6 acre "orphan" parcel of land that we were congressionally obligated to transfer ownership to the State of Oregon. The Draft EA should be available for public comment in late November.

We are currently advertising to fill a vacant Realty Specialist position; we are hoping to have a new person in place by the first of the year.

Range Management:

The public comment period for the Powder River Canyon Geographic Unit (GU) environmental assessment regarding the effects of livestock grazing has ended. Currently the BFO is addressing the comments that were received. Salt Creek is the only allotment being analyzed in the Powder River Canyon GU permit renewal EA because the riparian rangeland standard is not being met. While reviewing the public comments, it was determined that another alternative brought forward by the permittee needed to be analyzed. That analysis has been completed and an additional comment period will be opening. The anticipated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Decision Record (DR) would allow the renewal of grazing permits associated with the GU. The response to comments is complete, and the Final EA and Decision should be out in November.

The Vale District anticipates releasing a draft environmental assessment this winter regarding the expanded use of herbicides in the ongoing battle against noxious weeds.

November 2, 2015, a new Rangeland Management Specialist will arrive to fill behind a vacancy that occurred with a retirement. Amanda Smith is coming to us from the Winnemucca Field Office of the BLM in Nevada.

Forestry and Fuels:

The Dark Canyon Timber Sale was awarded to the highest bidder in October of 2014. This project would have resulted in the commercial thinning of approximately 60 acres of overstocked forest lands, effectively reducing the incidence of insect and disease infestation, and making these stands more resilient to the effects of potential future wildfire. Approximately 250 thousand board feet would have been delivered to local saw and chip mills as a result of the project. The purchaser was scheduled to begin later this year.





John Day/Snake River Resource Advisory Committee

INFORMATION UPDATE

New Information Only

This summer the Baker Resource area was impacted with several large wildfires. As a result of the Windy Ridge Fire the Dark Canyon Timber sale which had previously been awarded, but work had not yet begun suffered high burn severity. As a result of the change of condition, this sale was remanded and Categorical Exclusion for Salvage was completed on 245 acres in that area. The salvage sale will be auctioned at the end of the month.

A Categorical Exclusion on approximately 160 acres of salvage for the Grizzly Fire is being completed. The associated salvage should be advertised for purchase in early November.

The Baker Field Office is beginning to prepare an EA to cover the changed condition and potential salvage of about 3000 acres of timber impacted by the Windy Ridge and Cornet fires. It is anticipated that salvage may occur on up to 1500 acres.

The Office is currently working on NEPA associated with ESR projects for the Lime Hill, Windy Ridge, Cornet, Grizzly and Dry Gulch fires.

The decision and FONSI for the environmental assessment of the Mormon Basin Fuels and Forest Health Project is completed. The EA received no appeals for 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 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 continues to enhance the field office's ability to disseminate information regarding OHV safety, as well as information regarding the respectful use of these vehicles on public lands, and provide visitor services, and enforcement of OHV rules.

We are currently working through many Special Recreation Permit renewals for seasonal outfitter and guide operations.

The Baker Field Office will be advertising to fill an Outdoor Recreation Planner in the next few months.



Briefing Paper



Pacific Northwest Region – Umatilla National Forest

Umatilla National Forest

Forest Supervisor: Kevin Martin

John Day Snake RAC – October 26-27, 2015



New Forest Supervisor Named for the Umatilla National Forest

Regional Forester, Jim Peña, announced the selection of Genevieve Masters as the new Forest Supervisor on the Umatilla National Forest.

"I am happy to announce Genevieve Masters as the new Forest Supervisor on the Umatilla National Forest," said Peña. "Genevieve brings a rich background in collaboration and leading teams, and managing a team that developed the Cohesive Strategy approach with the State of Nevada. She will be a tremendous asset to the Umatilla National Forest and the Regional Leadership Team."

Genevieve is currently the Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in Nevada. She has held several leadership positions within the Forest Service including District Ranger on the Carson National Forest, the Fremont-Winema National Forest, the Prescott National Forest, and Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Pike and San Isabel National Forest, Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands.

Genevieve graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in Wildlife Conservation Biology, and began her career on the Tonto National Forest as a volunteer. Prior to leading the Umatilla National Forest, Genevieve was a wildlife biologist and district range, wildlife and watershed staff officer on the Tonto National Forest on a variety of districts, and then moved into a leadership position as a District Ranger in Oregon and New Mexico. As the Ecosystem Staff Officer in Arizona, Masters managed forest-wide range, wildlife, watershed, air and National Environmental Policy Act programs. "I am looking forward to building strong working relationships with the employees, partners and stakeholders of the Umatilla National Forest," said Masters. Masters reports for duty November 2, 2015.

Fire Season 2015

Grizzly Bear Complex: The Grizzly Bear Complex was originally comprised of 17 lightning fires, ignited on August 13, in the steep and rugged Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. The wilderness area is somewhat unique in its inverted nature, with steep gorges and canyons positioned below general forest, major roads, developed recreation sites and other values at risk.

The Complex burned 80,000+ acres on two districts (Pomeroy and Walla Walla) of the Umatilla National Forest and private lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry and Washington Department of Natural Resources. The majority of acres burned occurred within the Wilderness. The fire burned in four counties: Columbia, Garfield and Asotin Counties in Washington and Wallowa County in Oregon. 33 structures burned including 5 primary residences. The fire is still considered 44% contained (the fire's perimeter within the Wilderness does not have a containment line.) Road closures remain in place.

We're currently requesting public comment on proposed roadside danger tree removal and considering our options for post-fire salvage.

Phillips Creek: The Phillips Creek fire burned 2,600 acres seven miles northwest of Elgin, Oregon on both ODF protected private lands and Umatilla National Forest lands. The fire started August 1st and was determined to be human caused. The fire is 100% contained and all closures have been lifted. We're currently considering our options for post-fire salvage using Categorical Exclusion (CE) authorities.



for the greatest good

BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

2015 Umatilla NF Wildfire Statistics to Date*						
District	Lightning Fires	L. Acres	Human Caused	HC Acres	Total Fires	Total Acres
Heppner RD	11	206.00	1	.25	12	206.25
North Fork John Day RD	19	21.50	10	176.60	29	198.10
Pomeroy RD	38	70,712.70	1	.10	39	70,713.80
Walla Walla RD	15	5.00	1	2,039.20	16	2,044.20
Totals	83	70,945.20	13	2,216.15	96	73,162.35

*These acreages do not include private/State protected lands

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 serves as the host organization.

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 share the Final EIS and Draft Record of Decision with the collaborative at this month's meeting.
- **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. The Draft EA was released for public comment in August, with a Final EA and decision in FY2016. We are currently assessing the impacts and need for adjustments due to the Phillips Creek Fire that burned into the project area.

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

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

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. Plans are to sign a decision in 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>

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 winter, 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.

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>

BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

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 was sold this summer, and the fourth is scheduled 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 last month and drew an audience of approximately 55 community members. The District intends to host additional public meetings periodically throughout implementation, with the next planned in the fall of 2016.

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

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

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

The Umatilla National Forest has completed the travel analysis report. Travel analysis reports for all of the forests in Region 6 will be released at the regionally level later this fall. 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 will not make any on-the-ground decisions. No roads will close as a direct result of the analysis.

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.

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

Miscellaneous:

- **Firewood Season ends 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>
- **Christmas Tree Permits go on Sale in Late November:** \$5 per tree, one per household. http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/umatilla/passes-permits/forestproducts/?cid=fsbdev7_016114
- **2016 Temporary Hiring: Region 6** – The Pacific Northwest summer job hiring process begins November 30th. Stay tuned! Position descriptions for temporary hiring will be posted soon. Info at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r6/jobs>



Temporary Hiring
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Briefing Paper

Pacific Northwest Region – Ochoco National Forest

Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River National Grassland - Updates

John Day – Snake RAC, October 26-27, 2015

2015 Fire season in review: Central Oregon Fire Management Service had **327** wildland fires that burned a total of **47,614 acres**. Of those, 134 fires were lightning-caused and 193 were human-caused. These stats do not include prescribed fire, only wildfire. If you compare these stats with the COFMS 10-year averages, you'll see that 2015 was actually above the 10-year average for number of acres burned (35,817), but below the 10-year average for total number of fires (365).

The largest incident was the Corner Creek Fire, which started by lightning on June 29 about 11 miles south of Dayville, Ore. and grew to nearly 30,000 acres before it was successfully contained. That fire was mostly on the Ochoco NF, just south of Black Canyon Wilderness, but it also burned partly onto Prineville BLM in the Murderer's Creek area. One structure was lost, but it was not a residence. A strong pulse of moisture across that fire in early July gave firefighters the opportunity to secure containment lines around most of the fire.

Overall, Central Oregon was very dry and there was very high potential for large fires throughout much of the summer. Oregon SNOTEL data shows that year-to-date precipitation for the Upper Deschutes and Crooked River Basin is about 14 percent of average. Central Oregon didn't experience the lightning activity that it experienced last year and firefighters were able to keep most fires small during initial attack and avoid large incidents through most of the year. Otherwise, COFMS sent a lot of firefighters to support the firefighting efforts going on throughout the rest of the country.

Gap Fuels and Vegetation Management Project: The Ochoco National Forest is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) to analyze the effects of managing fuels and vegetation within the 38,145-acre Gap project area, which is 25 miles east of Prineville, Oregon and southwest of Big Summit Prairie. The project area includes National Forest System lands in the Upper North Fork Crooked River and Horse Heaven Creek-Crooked River Watersheds.

Walton Lake Restoration Project: The Forest is moving forward with a proposal to selectively thin around 200 acres surrounding Walton Lake. The project calls for thinning Douglas and grand fir trees infected with laminated root rot disease on about one-quarter of the project area. Infected trees rot at the base internally and can fall without warning, which creates a safety hazard around the Forest's most heavily used recreation site. The project calls for thinning around legacy Ponderosa pine trees on the rest of the project area in order to reduce fir encroachment and preserve the large, attractive trees within the recreation site. Work will take place this fall following issue of a Decision Memo.

Ochoco Summit OHV Trail Project: The Forest expects to release a Draft Supplemental EIS for this project in November. A Final EIS and draft ROD were withdrawn last year following the Bailey Butte fire. The Draft Supplemental EIS builds on a previous proposal to construct a 130-mile OHV trail system across the Ochocos with a 4-month season of use. The OHV trail system is proposed in order to provide OHVs a suitable riding experience that will reduce the instances of resource damage and illegal use occurring elsewhere. The trail proposal is part of a broader strategy to manage motorized access across the Forest and Grassland.



for the greatest good

Managing Motorized Access: The Forest has recently begun meeting with numerous organized recreation groups and homeowners to discuss a broader strategy around managing motorized access. In addition to the OHV trail

BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

system proposal, the Forest is emphasizing information and education as a means to manage motorized access. This approach includes a “Stay on Designated Routes” awareness campaign, improved information and signage, and piloting a field ranger program. The overall objective is helping local communities to develop an ethic around responsible driving by illustrating the valuable public resources that motorized access systems are in place to protect.

Big Summit Wild Horse Herd Management: The Forest has begun gathering data this year in order to update its herd management plan. The Forest is also recruiting a collaborative group in partnership with Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) to assist with plan development over the next 3 to 4 years. Current (outdated) plan calls for management of herd size at 60 head. The 2014 wild horse inventory found about 120 horses within the designated 27,300-acre herd management area. The Forest has a positive working relationship with Central Oregon Wild Horse Coalition and will partner with them on this effort.

Stream Restoration Projects: The Forest completed large stream restoration projects this year on Deep Creek and Trout Creek. Next year, the Forest will undertake similar restoration work on McKay Creek. The work involves moving in big equipment and widening the channels, reconnecting them to their historic floodplains, creating shallow pools instead of narrow incisions, and covering them with woody material to make shade, cool the water, and provide better fish habitat. We then replant the banks with riparian vegetation, including more than 30 species of hardwoods that existed here historically. What you will see in a few years is moister, riparian habitat return to these streams, with more water storage and more water flowing downstream throughout year, instead of just the early spring.

Invasive Weeds: The Forest continues its efforts to control the spread of invasive weeds, especially on the Grassland. The combined Deschutes-Ochoco invasive weeds program treated 4,800 acres of infestations this year between both forests, but the Grassland continues to present challenges. Medusahead rye has spread across the Grassland to such an extent that employees have undertaken an effort to map those areas not yet affected in order to better protect the remaining weed-free areas. The Forest has partnered with Gray Butte Grazing Association on some experiments that combine targeted grazing with prescribed fire in an effort to reduce Medusahead viability.

Oregon Wild NRA Proposal: Oregon Wild has proposed a 312,000-acre National Recreation Area designation for a large swath of Ochoco National Forest and portions of adjoining Prineville BLM land. The proposal includes 26,000 acres of new wilderness around Lookout Mountain. The Forest has provided some baseline data to elected officials about current management guidelines but has not taken a position on the proposal. At this point, there are not many specifics about proposed management directives under such a designation so the Forest Service doesn't have a more detailed report.

Prineville Open House: The Forest and Grassland, along with representatives from the Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative, will host an open house from 6 pm to 8 pm on Wednesday, December 2nd at the Bowman Museum Annex in Prineville. The intent of the open house is to provide members of the community a chance to meet with Forest Service employees and Collaborative group members in an informal setting to ask questions and explore issues of their own interest, rather than as part of a specific project or decision.

Human Ecology Mapping: The Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests are developing a general public survey in partnership with the PNW Research Station and Portland State University to better understand people's values around National Forest System lands in Central Oregon. Once finished, the 10-minute survey will be advertised and distributed online to as wide an audience as possible throughout the 2016 calendar year. A special effort will be made to outreach the survey to “underrepresented” groups, such as youth, veterans, Native Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, physically and mentally handicapped, and low income citizens.

— PLEASE —

Stay On Designated Routes!

Driving on designated routes helps us to protect those things we all enjoy about our public lands - wildlife, solitude, natural beauty, and a healthy ecosystem.

Grab a map before heading out into the woods. Know the rules and know the routes so you can have the best experience possible.

Or download a map onto your smartphone so you know exactly where you are at all times. They work even when your phone is not connected to the internet!

#KnowBeforeYouGo



Visit Avenza to download all of our Motor Vehicle Use Maps (1-4) and the Ochoco Firewood map for FREE. These maps are GeoPDFs, so they track your location even when you do not have cell service.



www.OregonHuntingMap.com carries the "Green Dot" maps that denote travel restrictions for wildlife habitat. They are also GeoPDFs. "South Boundary" and "Rager" maps are within the Ochocos and "Metolius" is within the Crooked River National Grassland.



You can visit our website for more information or call or stop by the Supervisor's Office in Prineville to get a FREE paper map and the answers to your questions:

Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River National Grassland

3160 NE Third Street
Prineville, Oregon 97754
(541) 416-6500
www.fs.usda.gov/ochoco



for the
GREATEST GOOD

Why Manage Motorized Travel?

Why Should I Stay On Designated Routes?

To protect our drinking water, wetlands, and meadows



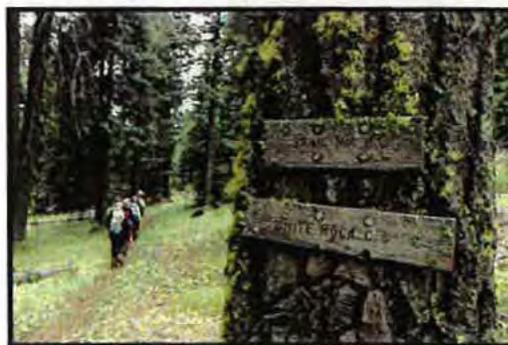
To prevent wildfires



To protect our wildlife and their habitat



To show respect to all recreationists



To help stop invasive weed spread



nature
MATTERS

District Wide

Prineville Invasive Plant Environmental Assessment

In October 2010, the Oregon/Washington Bureau of Land Management (BLM) State Director signed the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on "Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon." Each ORIWA District will "step down" the statewide EIS in site-specific analyses particular to each District. These EAs will provide best management practices for treating weeds including prevention, mechanical, chemical, and biological treatments. They allow for use of 14 herbicides, expanding the current range of options for chemical control, consistent with national and state direction for use of herbicides on BLM managed lands. The EAs will facilitate more effective treatments tailored for more effective control of noxious weed and other non-native invasive plants while reducing risks to applicators, the public and tribes, and surrounding natural resources.

Currently, Prineville District is making progress on its EA, and will issue a draft document for public comment this fall. At this time, we expect to have a signed Record of Decision in early 2016.

2015 Wildfire Summary

2015 was both an above and below average fire season for the Prineville District, the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and the Oregon Department of Forestry, collectively managed as Central Oregon Fire Management Service (COFMS). The ten year average, (2005-2014) for acres burned across COFMS is 39,752 ac. In 2015 as of 09/29, 47,616 acres have burned. The largest single fire that occurred is the Corner Creek Fire south of Dayville at 25,659 ac. The ten year average for wildfires across COFMS is 416, although in 2015 we experienced less than that with 312 staffed wildfires. In addition, COFMS representatives signed 5 delegations of authority to manage large incidents, which is above average, although less than 2014, when we signed almost 20.

Emergency Site Rehabilitation- Post Fire Update

The South Fork Fire Complex of 2014 burned over 66,000 acres south of Dayville, Oregon. The fire affected Federal, state, and private lands, including the Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area (administered by Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife). This refuge provides winter range for mule deer populations and year-round habitat for a variety of wildlife including mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Within the BLM administered lands affected by the fire-including those adjacent to the wildlife area-were populations of the noxious weeds. In March 2015, Emergency Stabilization (ES) funding was used to apply the herbicide imazapic via helicopter to over 13,000 acres of BLM land in an effort to limit growth and spread of these invasive species between agency lands. Monitoring will occur over the next 3-5 years to assess treatment effects on both native and nonnative species. BLM is also funded to do a second round of spraying in 2016.

In addition, BLM is completing planning to reconstruct or repair about 34 miles of fence that burned in the South Fork Fire. We are also in the early stages of identifying up to 50 acres of burned timber that may be available for salvage in the Canyon Creek Fire area.



Central Oregon Resource Area

John Day River Fee

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) in 2014. During the 2014 fee season, 871 launch permits were issued and \$15,350 in special recreation permit fees was collected. During the 2015 fee season, 610 launch permits were issued and \$10,950 in special recreation permit fees was collected, which represents a 30% reduction in use (attributed to low flows in 2015).

John Day River Fee - Permit System Update

The John Day River Permit System was operated without launch limits again in 2015 due to problems with load capacity on the BLM server. Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department has agreed to host the server and a transition plan is in the works, which will allow a return to launch limits as prescribed by the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. An on-line launch permit is still required, and fees remain in place.

With no limits in place in 2015, launch targets were exceeded on one day (Saturday, May 23rd), by a total of 11 launches. The permit website allows the public to view the number of launch permits already issued in real-time, and as a result, they are scheduling their trips on less crowded dates, and spreading the use out over the season on their own.

Murderers Creek Wild Horse Gather/Management Plan EA

The Malheur National Forest and Prineville BLM district have initiated the joint Wild Horse Territory/Herd Management Area (Joint Management Area-JMA) Plan. Through the NEPA process, actions would be developed to implement the following management strategies:

- Analyze and evaluate all affected resources in order to validate or adjust the upper and lower Appropriate Management Levels (AML) of wild horses (not including foals of the year) to be maintained within the designated JMA Area boundary.
- Evaluate the effects of wild horse management actions including removal and disposition of excess animals and catch-treat-release gathers (i.e. bait trapping and helicopter gather) to implement population growth suppression (PGS) actions to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and a genetically viable wild horse population in harmony with the USFS and BLM multiple-use mandates.
- Develop processes to manage wild horses within the originally designated boundaries and to eliminate or minimize wild horse occupancy on private lands within the boundary and use outside of these designated boundaries.

The document is in the earliest stages, with an initial scoping period expected this fall. The final document is not expected to be completed until October 2017. The Malheur National Forest will have the lead for the development of the EIS; with BLM specialists providing input.

Teaters Road

The Prineville District was notified this past spring that Teaters Road would be closed to public access. Teaters Road extends several miles through private land, and the landowners (Waibel Ranches, LLC) installed gates on the road to prevent access by the general public. Waibels have said the closure is due to years of trespassing, illegal hunting on private land, off-road vehicle damage, illegal antler hunting and littering. Teaters allows through travel from the highway north through the Ochoco National Forest, and offers one of two points of entry to the BLM-administered North Fork Crooked Wild and Scenic River area.



BLM has an access easement on Teaters Road; however, the landowners assert that the access easement that was granted to the BLM in 1964 was incomplete, falling short by about 350 feet. BLM requested a Land Description Review (LOR) by the BLM's Oregon State Office Branch Chief of Cadastral Survey to review and validate the August 31, 1964 Access Road Easement.

As a result of the Land Description Review, BLM feels the agency has a complete right-of-way across Teaters Road and requested that the landowners open the gates in time for fall deer hunting season; however, the landowners maintain the easement is not complete, and have filed a lawsuit against the BLM.

Deschutes Resource Area

Cline Buttes

BLM continues to build trails and trailheads in cooperation with public and community groups for pedestrian, OHV, horse and bike trails in the Cline Buttes Recreation Area. This fall we will be finishing up trails for horses and hikers in the rest of the Tumalo Canal Historic Area. In 2016, we will be adding a new OHV trailhead north of Highway 26 on Buckhorn Road. We will also be adding a new non-motorized trailhead off Eagle Road on the Buttes. Both of these trailheads will include trails as well.

Hollywood Road Acquisition

Prineville BLM has been submitting applications for Land & Water Conservation Funds since 2011 to purchase 101 acres adjacent to Crooked River Ranch Resort to improve public access to the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River. The parcel was purchased from a private landowner by the Trust for Public Lands several years ago. The parcel was appraised but the land values were lower than the original purchase price therefore, TPL was no longer a willing seller at the appraised fair market value in 2015. TPL is looking to have the parcel reappraised in 2016 to see if there would be a difference in land values.

Wickiup Junction and Hwy 97 ODOT Bypass project:

The Oregon Department of Transportation is realigning US 97 at Wickiup Junction near La Pine to fix a dangerous RR crossing, and 52 acres BLM administered acres have been appropriated for Federal/State Highway purposes. We have removed timber from this parcel to facilitate the project, and part of the Rosland OHV play area will be closed during the construction.

Barnes Buttes Mercury Removal

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Prineville District Office removed 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. The cleanup work was completed last June, and most of the mercury contaminated soil was hauled to an appropriate hazardous material disposal site; BLM will be reseeding the reclaimed sites this fall.

Lower Deschutes All User Access Fee being considered

In order to have a more fair and equitable way to charge all users of the Lower Deschutes River corridor, an "all user pass" is being considered by the Lower Deschutes Managers Group. The John Day/Snake River Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) is tasked with coming up with a proposal and a subcommittee has been assigned the task of making a recommendation. Meanwhile a traffic counter has been installed at Macks Canyon access and Deschutes State Park access for baseline studies.



Boater Pass System Upgrade

The on-line Lower Deschutes Boater Pass system is currently operating on old hardware and programming, and is in need of an upgrade. The BLM is working with government contractor Active Network to negotiate a transition of the Lower Deschutes Boater Pass system to a new system to be operated by Rec.gov. The new system will include several improvements requested by boaters, including the ability to purchase all boater passes necessary for a multi-day trip in one sitting, and blocks of passes released at 7 AM instead of midnight. Getting a boater pass with Active Network will be similar to making a campground reservation for an Oregon State Park or USFS campground. Active Network plans to charge a processing fee of \$6 per transaction.

Special Recreation Permit- IBLA Decision

Kevin Dieker, doing business as Rivers In Oregon Rafting, applied for a commercial special recreation permit to run guided boat trips on the Lower Deschutes River in 2013. Prineville initially denied his permit application, and in June IBLA set aside a Decision by the Prineville District to deny Kevin Dieker's application to run guided boat trips on the Lower Deschutes River.

IBLA determined that the Prineville District's interpretation of the LDRMP was inconsistent with the LDRMP. In addition, the issuance of permits to purchasers of businesses already holding an SRP constituted a transfer, not a new permit, in express prohibition of the LDRMP.

Although BLM did not intend to associate a value with the permits, the availability of "new" permits only through the sale of a business currently holding a permit, has in fact, added a value to the permits. This process has been in place since 2008, and many current business owners purchased a business with a belief that when sold, a new buyer would be able to get a permit. Under the IBLA decision, current business owners will now be only able to sell businesses based on the value of the vehicles/boats/equipment and client list, etc., without guarantee that a new owner will get a permit.

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 managing agencies formed an inter-disciplinary technical team to assist with writing and reviewing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider how changing boating use levels in Segment 3 and/or adjusting segment boundaries would affect the outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) identified in the Plan. The Draft EA will be reviewed once more by the technical team before being released for a 30-day public comment period, which is anticipated to occur this fall. Any changes made in the EA Decision would be implemented for the 2016 season.

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 BNSF has informed BLM that no legal railroad crossing exists at this location. BLM 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 a range of options from an at-grade crossing to 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.



Briefing Paper

Pacific Northwest Region – Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
Deputy Forest Supervisor: Chuck Oliver
John Day Snake RAC – October 2015

Forest Plan Revision Update

The Forest Service has scheduled new public meetings to discuss the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision. Please see the current schedule below:

MEETING DATE and TIME	MEETING TOPIC and HOST	MEETING LOCATION
Monday, Nov. 2, 2015 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. (doors open at 5:30)	Access and Wilderness Wallowa-Whitman National Forest	La Grande, OR Armory, 404 12th St, La Grande, OR 97850
Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2015 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. (doors open at 5:30)	Livestock Grazing Umatilla National Forest	Heppner, OR City Hall, 111 N Main St, Heppner, OR 97836
Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2015 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. (doors open at 5:30)	Livestock Grazing Umatilla National Forest and Malheur National Forest	Ukiah, OR N. Fork John Day Ranger District, 401 West Main St, Ukiah, OR 97880
Thursday, Nov. 12, 2015 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. (doors open at 5:30)	Pace and Scale of Restoration Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla National Forests	La Grande, OR Armory, 404 12th St, La Grande, OR 97850

A facilitator will ensure that everyone in attendance has time to speak, listen to others, and propose solutions.

In 2014, the Forest Service released a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) related to the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision and received over a thousand comment letters. Based in part on that feedback, the three Blue Mountains National Forests have worked with stakeholders to identify topics for further discussion – including the Pace and Scale of Restoration, Livestock Grazing, Access, and Wilderness.

A Forest Plan describes the social, economic, and ecological goals of a National Forest and provides a framework for future management decisions. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires each National Forest to prepare a Forest Plan and revise it every 15 years to address changing needs and conditions. The current Forest Plans for the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla, and Malheur National Forests are from 1990, and the Blue Mountains region has changed significantly since 1990.

Meeting summaries from previous Forest Plan Revision meetings are available at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/BlueMountainsPlanRevision>, and the notes from new meetings will be posted there as well.



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For more information, please contact Peter Fargo, Public Affairs Officer for the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision, at 541-523-1231.

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BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

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. More information available at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/bluemountainsforestresiliency

The Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy team is currently conducting an all lands broad scale assessment of forest conditions and management opportunities across the Blue Mountains ecoregion. This analysis will use scientific data to show priority areas for restoration treatments, which can then be incorporated into treatment designs across the Blue Mountains. By identifying restoration needs at the landscape level, the team can design ecologically appropriate treatments, which will then be used to develop the proposed action for the forest resiliency project.

This approach is designed to provide a cohesive story across the Blue Mountains of the magnitude of restoration needs on all lands. Additionally, the broadscale assessment will provide a framework for the Forests to determine where potential priorities exist. This framework can then be used for multi-partner planning, implementation, and funding of landscape scale restoration.

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

Invasive Plants Treatment Project – Supplemental EIS

The forest is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to address inadequacies identified by the U.S. District of Oregon in *League of Wilderness Defenders/Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project v. Connaughton*, Case 3:10-CV-01397-SI (Amended Opinion and Order issued by Judge Simon, August 10, 2012). A notice of intent to prepare a supplemental EIS published in the Federal Register in January 2013. A decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, found additional inadequacy related to NEPA (Unpublished Memorandum issued by the 9th Circuit, October 30, 2014). 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.

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 Official). A draft SEIS was released last spring (or March 2015), and the Final SEIS and Draft ROD will be released this fall.

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

East Face Update

A range of five alternatives was developed last winter to meet the purpose and need of this project and respond to the key issues raised during scoping. Alternatives range from no action to the creation of an extensive network of strategic fuel reduction areas focusing on key ridges, road systems, private land boundaries, wildland urban interface areas, and developed recreation areas. Analysis of the effects of implementing each of these alternatives has been completed and documented in the East Face Vegetation Management Project EA which is now available for a 30-day public comment period ending 11/6/2015.

The East Face of the Elkhorn Mountains Project is a forest restoration project located in eastern Oregon's Grande Ronde and Powder River watersheds. The primary purpose of the project is to reduce the risk of loss to catastrophic wildfire throughout 141,000 + acres of public and private lands in an area historically prone to large wildfire. Other benefits/objectives include:

- Improve forest resiliency to insect and disease
- Enhance diversity and quality of wildlife and wildlife habitat
- Improve forest stands for healthier trees and soils (forest health)
- Protect threatened and endangered species habitat
- Support local communities and economies through recreational opportunities, resource management activities, and commodities

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

More information is available at the East Face of the Elkhorn Mountains project website:

www.fs.usda.gov/goto/EastFace and the East Face Vegetation Management Project Environmental Analysis website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=41765>

Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Power line

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.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently concluded the Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) public comment period. The comment period, which was open December 19, 2014 to March 19, 2015, provided an opportunity for the public to comment on aspects of the DEIS, including routing, environmental resources, and the project's purpose and need. The BLM is now analyzing comments and determining steps forward for the Final EIS.

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

<http://boardmantohemingway.com/>

Lower Imnaha Range Analysis Update

The Forest Service has signed the Record of Decision for the Lower Imnaha Rangeland Analysis. This finalizes a six-year process that assessed five alternatives for authorized grazing within four allotments in the Lower Imnaha project area.

The signed Record of Decision gives a summary of the current conditions (within the project area), summaries of all alternatives evaluated, description of the public involvement process, and the chosen management strategy.

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

POST Fire Update

Loss of vegetation due to fire exposes soil to erosion; runoff may increase and cause flooding, sediments may move downstream and damage houses or fill reservoirs, and put animals and community water supplies at risk. The Forest Service Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) program addresses these situations with the goal of protecting life, property, water quality, and deteriorated ecosystems from further damage after the fire is out.

Projects in the Cornet / Windy Ridge fire area include: Danger Tree Removal, seeding and mulching of exposed hillsides, invasive weeds treatments, road repairs, cleaning out culverts and replacing culverts when necessary. The work will occur throughout the burned area with an initial emphasis on Forest Service Road (FSR) 1130 and Stices Gulch to provide for the safety of the residents. Travelers can expect delays of up to one hour when visiting Stices Gulch during the last week of October and the first week of November.

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

Travel Management Rule, Subpart A Update

The road system identified under the Subpart A analysis would: 1) be a baseline system for Forest Service administration and management of natural resources across the forest; 2) consider long-term funding expectations; 3) describe potential options for roads not identified as necessary for future resource management needs; and 4) provide recommendations for roads where resource concerns have been identified as well as looking at those roads where we do not have concerns. Based on the analysis roads could be considered for a status change (opened, closed, decommissioned or converted to a motorized trail). These are only recommendations which would be considered as part of future project level decision making.

The release of Subpart A for National Forests in Region 6 (Oregon and Washington) is scheduled for this Fall.

For more information contact: Katy Gray, Public Affairs Officer, 541-523-1246