

Briefing Paper

Pacific Northwest Region – Umatilla National Forest

UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST

Forest Supervisor: Kevin Martin

John Day Snake RAC – January 9, 2012



Federal Judge upholds South George Vegetation and Fuels Project

A federal judge recently upheld the U.S. Forest Service's decision to implement the South George Vegetation and Fuels Management Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The 21,000 acre vegetation and fuels management project is located on the Pomeroy Ranger District, primarily in Asotin County with a small portion located in Garfield County. Purpose and need for action is to improve forest health, vigor, and resilience to fire, insects and disease in upland forests that are outside their historical pre-fire suppression conditions for species composition, structural diversity, stocking densities, and fuel loadings.

Highlights:

- ROD was signed July, 2012, and the Forest Supervisor denied appeals in October, 2012. One appeal with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Service was negotiated and withdrawn.
- The first of three vegetation projects (South Park) was advertised and sold in December, 2012. The successful bidder was Bennett Lumber Company from Clarkston, Washington with a subsequent awarding of the timber sale contract.
- Date of Service for a Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief (NFMA/APA and NEPA/APA) was filed in United States District Court for the Eastern District of Washington by The Lands Council; Hells Canyon Preservation Council; and League of Wilderness Defenders – Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project.
- The American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) and Asotin County intervened on behalf of the Forest Service.
- A District Court hearing was held in Spokane, WA on December 18, 2013. January 6, 2014, the forest received a favorable opinion. Plaintiffs have 60 days to file a notice of appeal.

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

Or visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/umatilla/landmanagement/projects>

Tollgate Vegetation and Fuels Management FEIS

In 2005, Umatilla County's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) identified the Upper 204/Tollgate Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) area as a priority for fuels reduction projects to lessen the impact of wildfire on lives, property, and the landscape. The Walla Walla Ranger District began an assessment process to identify fuels reduction and forest stand density projects in the Tollgate area. Fuel reduction activities are placed strategically along the plateau rim to provide defensible space/fuel breaks for future fire suppression actions and public safety.



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BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

Highlights:

- Fuel reduction activities are placed strategically along the plateau rim to provide defensible space/fuel breaks for future fire suppression actions and public safety.
- Approximately 4,400 acres of the total 46,464 acres project planning area is proposed for treatment through a variety of activities such as commercial harvest and noncommercial thinning.
- The project is authorized under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) to streamline the NEPA process, allowing public land managers to more quickly address fuel loading issues that occur within WUI areas.
- The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was released in December 2012 for public comment. Eighteen individuals or organizations provided public comment on the DEIS.
- The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was published in December 13, 2013 with a 30-day objection period. Only those individuals or organizations who provided comment may object.

Contact Information: Kimpton Cooper, Walla Walla District Ranger, 509-522-6009.

Or visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/umatilla/landmanagement/projects>

Youth & Community Engagement

The Umatilla National Forest has received funding for a fifth year from the regional office to support Youth and Community Engagement through our Conservation Education Program. The program works to engage both urban and rural youth, with an increased focus on the Tri-Cities, WA region. Along with the funding for the Regional Office, we have built a Service First network that also has a focused mission in the Tri-Cities region. Our partnerships and relationships with the local community continue to grow.



Young Women's Career Camp hike

Highlights:

- The March, 2014 we'll host the 7th Annual Fire & Fuels Career Camp – 20 High School Seniors from Umatilla & Morrow County School District attend a 3-day, 2-night camp. Students participate in hands-on interactive activities and spend time learning how to apply to Seasonal and Pathways positions.
- In June 2014, we hold the 5th Annual Natural Resource Career Camp for Young Women. This camp, integrates a 14-day summer school program with a 3-night campout experience co-hosted by Tri-Tech Skills Center of Kennewick, WA. Students ranged in age from 15-18 years of age and came from all four major school districts in the area. Local partners from 10 different state, federal and non-profit organizations come together to present interactive hands-on learning experiences, introducing young women to the variety of careers in natural resources.
- In FY12 our Conservation Education Program hosted and/or assisted with 115 events, reached over 15,000 members of our communities of which 57% were considered underrepresented or underserved. Events included a 5-day Watershed Field Day exercise, Career Fairs, Outdoor Schools, Fire Prevention Education, Job Shadows, Career Camps and other community volunteer activities.
- In FY13 we will be continue to work to formalize our partnership with the Hanford Reach Interpretive Center. The Reach has broken ground on a new interpretive facility and the Umatilla NF will play a role in hosting and developing Conservation Education programming for the center.

For more information contact: Katy Gray, Environmental Education Assistant, 541-278-3849

Umatilla Forest Collaborative Group

Background: The Umatilla Forest Collaborative formed in late 2011 to provide a platform for individuals and organizations to unite diverse interests toward common-goal, pragmatic proposals for the Umatilla National Forest. The diverse group, with over 30 dedicated participants, meets monthly.



Highlights:

- 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; a vegetation management project in dry forest (Kahler-Heppner District), and a young stand development project in cool/moist forest (Thomas Creek – Walla Walla District.)
- The North Fork John Day Watershed Council was selected as their “umbrella”/host organization and Oregon Solutions provides neutral facilitation, as well as logistical and administrative support.
- **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.

For more information contact: Elaine Eisenbraun, North Fork John Day Watershed Council (541) 421-3018
Or visit: <http://umatillacollaborative.org/>

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision

The Blue Mountains National Forests planning area covers three national forests: Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman, and a portion of the Ochoco, administered by the Malheur. A separate Record of Decision and Revised Forest Plan will be prepared for each Forest; however, the analysis of effects will be together in one environmental impact statement (EIS).



Highlights:

- The Draft EIS and Plan are scheduled for public release in March and April 2014.
- Meetings are occurring with congressional staffers, county commissioners, Tribes, Co-conveners, RACs, and other agencies in January and February.
- A series of 12 public meetings/open houses will take place in March and April.
- A Newsletter will be distributed to the mailing list in January/February.
- Everyone will have an opportunity to provide comments during the 90-day comment period, which is anticipated to begin in March.

The Forests are committed to continuing to work with all of these groups and the public, as everyone reviews the DEIS and submits comments during the 90-day comment period, and in development of the FEIS and Final Forest Plans. **For more information contact:** Sabrina Stadler, Team Lead, 541-523-1264.

Or visit: www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/blue_mtn_planrevision/.