

Notes

Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council Meeting

June 11 and 12, 2024

Tuesday, June 11, meeting:

Ethics training: Tim Davis, Ken Poole, Brett Seward, Alison Cole, Mark Salvo, Tom Batty, and Stan Sheperdson participated in a virtual ethics training conducted by Joseph Kaczmarek from the DOI Ethics Office.

Regular Meeting:

RAC members Tim Davis, Ken Poole, Brett Seward, Alison Cole, Tom Batty, Stan Sheperdson, Michael O'Casey (virtual), Mary Jo Hedrick, Joe Tague, Mark Salvo, and Don Hodge

Agency representatives: Designated Federal Official/Burns District Manager Jeff Rose; Vale District Manager Shane DeForest; Lakeview District Manager Todd Forbes; and Lisa McNee, Lakeview PAO/RAC coordinator.

Public: Sam Dudley, Field Representative Congressman Bentz (1-3 p.m.)

Minutes: Notes from the October 2023 meeting were approved with edits from Mary Jo Hedrick.

District Updates:

Lakeview –

- Key RNA Grazing Closure EA – This EA is being drafted to modify livestock grazing practices in three allotments containing key Research Natural Areas. The EA analyses alternatives to remove grazing from all or portions of the key RNAs. These analyses are necessary to address the site-specific resource issues and potential on-the-ground effects of closure alternatives prior to issuing any required site-specific grazing decisions.
- Habitat Restoration and Fuels Management EA – An environmental assessment has been drafted to analyze proposed future vegetation management activities to restore natural vegetation habitats and control the amount of excess fuel to reduce the risk of wildfires across the field office area. BLM has received public comments on the draft and are currently working through addressing those comments.
- Ongoing Sage-Steppe Habitat Restoration – A portion of Picture Rock Sage Grouse and mule deer habitat restoration juniper treatments have been completed. This project covers treatments of post-settlement trees with light to moderate density over approximately 10,000 acres. Burning of piles is planned for this Fall. Juniper cutting/piling treatments in the 10,000-acre North Warner Project area are complete with pile burning planned for this fall. Within the smaller Loveless Creek project area, juniper piles and pile burning are complete. Additional contracted juniper treatments are being planned for the Monument Rock project areas.

- ESR projects – In 2021 the Cougar Peak Fire burned at low and moderate fire severities on approximately 5,770 acres of BLM administered lands. Throughout 2022 and 2023 the entire burned area was treated with herbicide to reduce annual grasses and reseeded using either drill or aerial application methods. Approximately 8 miles of fence burned in the fire and was reconstructed in 2023. There are no treatments planned for 2024 but if medusahead becomes a problem we may apply more herbicide in the fall. We have monitored the fire each year and have plans to use AIM and local employees to continue to monitor the area.
- Solar Projects – The Lakeview Field office currently has 2 solar project proposals. The Lava Solar Project is a proposed 5000-acre project located near Cougar Mountain in Fort Rock. The application for this project has been approved however there are still multiple steps including NEPA that need to occur prior to issuance of a ROW grant. We recently received a new application for a 12,000-ac solar project and are still working through the application approval process with the proponent.

Vale –

- National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center – NHOTIC reopened on May 24, 2024. The energy retrofit project concluded back in October and staff have been quietly working away to prepare the facility for reopening. Vale BLM is partnering with museum specialist staff from the National Park Service and Department of the Interior offices to put exhibits back together. This partnership highlights our interagency efforts, and we are very fortunate and appreciative of their service! Huge kudos to our curator, Bobby Reis.
- South Fork Walla Walla (SFWW) Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Management Plan Revision EA – The Baker Field Office is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to update the 1992 Management Plan for the SFWW ACEC. Changes in uses and environmental conditions of the ACEC managed under the 1992 SFWW plan warrant analyzing these changes which could lead to updating and clarifying future management of this important and treasured area. Specifically, a catastrophic flood in February 2020 severely damaged the road accessing the SFWW trailhead, the trailhead, and trail, including complete washouts of the trailhead access road where the trail transitions from BLM-administered land to the USFS Umatilla National Forest. Currently the interdisciplinary team (IDT) is in the critical stage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process of identifying issues that may need to be analyzed and developing alternatives.
- LIT Virtue Flat Weed Wash Station EA – The Baker Field Office and Baker Local Implementation Team (LIT) are preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to develop a weed wash station near the Virtue Flat Off-Road Vehicle Recreation Area. The intent of this project is to reduce the spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants seeds with the Baker Sage-grouse Priority Area of Conservation (PAC). The IDT has completed its review of the draft EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI). These documents are posted to e-planning for a 15-day public comment period ending April 19.

- Weed assistance agreements – In January, the Baker Field Office staff represented the BLM at the Unity Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) annual meeting. BLM staff, Baker County Weed Manager and Tri-County CWMA talked with local ranchers and property owners to develop a landscape scale weed treatment project that would treat both private and public lands. In February, BFO staff met with the Baker County Weed Board to discuss treatments of BLM rights-of-way in 2024 and potentially expanding the scope of treatments for 2025.
- Recreation – In February, BLM Law Enforcement and Vale District staff worked closely with Umatilla County officials to clean up an extended stay camp at the corner of Bensel and Lind roads in Hermiston, Ore. Multiple RVs and vehicles were removed from the area, and corrections work crew assisted with picking up trash and debris. BLM staff will continue to work with local officials and community groups to deter future occupancy of this site.
- Kast Auburn Plans and Occupancy (Sundog & Hidden Nugget) – The Baker Field Office is reviewing a new plan of operations for placer mining on approximately 55 acres of BLM-administered lands in the Auburn area, Baker County, Ore. Mining operations have been conducted on the site since at least the 1860s, initially associated with the development of the town of Auburn. Mining activity appears to have occurred intermittently on the site until at least the 1960s, when a large reservoir and dredging occurred within the French Gulch drainage. Notice-level exploration by the proponent has been conducted on the site since 2017 under mining notices 69884 (Sundog) and OR68984 (Hidden Nugget). A 30-day public scoping period ended in March.
- Denton Gold Danser Plan and Occupancy – The Baker Field Office received supplemental information to the Denton Gold Danser Plan of Operations (Plan) in February and determined completeness of the Plan in March. The proposed action is for placer mining operations on BLM managed lands in the Burnt River historic gold-placer district, Baker County, Oregon. The operator, Rick Denton, currently operates under a Notice Level of Operations (Notice) and has submitted the Plan for exploration beyond the five acre and 1,000-ton Notice limits and initiate mining level activities. A 30-day scoping period was completed in March 2023, and all comments were reviewed and will be considered in the Environmental Assessment analysis. The goal is to complete the analysis and public comment period this summer and publish the EA, Decision Record (DR) and FONSI later this year.
- Louse Canyon Geographic Management Area (GMA) Rangeland Health Management Actions EIS – The LCGMA encompasses five grazing allotments (536,434 acres) in southeast Malheur County, Oregon, and two grazing allotments (11,262 acres) in Humboldt County, Nevada. The EIS analyzes alternative livestock management and restoration actions that would promote the landscape health of the LCGMA while providing continued opportunities for public land grazing. Interdisciplinary teams are refining analysis for the alternatives, with an anticipated

release of the Draft EIS to the interested public, grazing permittees, Tribal governments, and state/local and other federal agencies by the end of September.

- **SpraKil SK-26 Sterilant Application Environmental Assessment (EA)** – This project was initiated by Idaho Power and proposes to apply SpraKil SK-26 Granular (SK-26) herbicide/sterilant around the base of transmission line structures to prevent all vegetation growth as an additional tool to reduce the risk of wildfire related to transmission lines.

Idaho Power is seeking the least intrusive, cost-effective method for preventing and suppressing fire around structures reducing potential adverse effects to adjacent natural and cultural resources, and alleviating risks associated with customer power outages due to structure loss. The project would prioritize structures most likely to be impacted by wildfire or located in high-risk wildfire prone areas with a goal of eventually treating all structures not excluded for environmental or safety reasons.

Up to 2,458 structures may need SK-26 treatments. Applications will be conducted in phases. Idaho Power is currently drafting Chapter 3 of the Environmental Assessment, Affected Environment with input and review by the BLM. It is anticipated the Project will be implementable by the fall of 2024.

- **Tri-State Fuels Break Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision** – In April 2020, Boise and Vale District Offices completed the Tri-State Fuel Breaks Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Boise District followed with a Record of Decision (ROD) to implement the EIS. The Vale District delayed completing a ROD until issuance of the Southeastern Oregon RMP Amendment (SEORMPA) Record of Decision.

The Vale District is now preparing the ROD for the Tri-State Fuel Breaks Project to implement Alternative 5. This alternative would result in up to 41,558 acres of roadside mowing and/or seeding treatments and a total fuel break network of 47,213 acres along 987 miles of established roads: 26,583 acres along 552 miles in Oregon and 20,630 acres along 435 miles in Idaho. Roadbed vegetation removal using blading, herbicide, or manual methods, would occur on up to 596 acres along 165 miles of roads in Idaho and up to 332 miles of roads in Oregon, for a total of up to 497 miles.

The Project addresses the departmental priorities of conservation stewardship and being a good neighbor. It is strategically designed to protect sagebrush landscapes from catastrophic wildfire by providing a network of safe areas and opportunities for wildland firefighters. The Tri-State Fuel Breaks project would be available for use not only by BLM firefighters, but also by Rangeland Fire Protection Associations and local fire departments, supporting the departmental commitment to be a good neighbor.

- **Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) Transmission Line Project** – The Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (B2H) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared in response to an Application for Transportation and Utility Systems and Facilities on Federal Lands (Standard Form 299) submitted by Idaho Power

Company (IPC) to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and United States Forest Service (USFS), Department of the Navy (Navy), and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation).

The Applicant proposes to construct, operate, and maintain the B2H Project, which is an approximately 300-mile-long (depending on the route selected), single-circuit, 500-kilovolt (kV), alternating-current, overhead electric transmission line and ancillary facilities. The transmission line will connect the Longhorn Substation, a substation planned by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) approximately 4 miles east of the city of Boardman in Morrow County, Oregon, to the existing Hemingway Substation near the city of Melba in Owyhee County, Idaho. The goal of this project is to provide additional electrical load capacity between the Pacific Northwest region and the Intermountain region of southwestern Idaho. It would alleviate existing transmission constraints and ensure sufficient electrical capacity to meet present and forecasted customer needs.

The proposed B2H Project would cross federal, state, and private lands in five counties in Oregon and one county in Idaho. The proposed transmission line will cross federal lands administered by multiple federal agencies, including the BLM and the USFS. The B2H Project would potentially affect lands and assets administered by the Bureau of Reclamation and may affect lands of the Naval Weapons System Training Facility (NWSTF) Boardman and associated military Special Use Airspace administered by the U.S. Department of the Navy (Navy).

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) were signed in November 2017. As expected, litigation occurred, and the project was put on hold for the federal process during this time. With the litigation completed, work began again in 2021 to meet the terms and conditions of the right-of-way grant and ROD.

Status – At this time, there are multiple outstanding issues driving the determination of a construction start date for the B2H Project, including cultural resource surveying and reporting, outstanding state and federal permits and reclamation bonding. The BLM and IPC meet weekly to discuss schedule and outstanding requirements.

- Burns Junction Fire Crew Quarters Replacement – This is a GAOA-funded project valued at approximately \$2.5 million and involves replacing an existing crew quarters facility, originally constructed in the 1980s, with an updated facility aligned with the National Fire Program prototypical layout. This replacement facility will provide improved thermal and energy efficiencies and ensure greater fire crew work-life separation through improvements to floor plan and living quarters. Project is currently at substantial completion (99 percent) and will be operational well ahead of fire season.
- Baker City Fire Crew Quarters Replacement – This is a Fire Facilities Deferred Maintenance-funded project valued at approximately \$2 million and involves replacing an existing crew quarters facility with an updated facility aligned with the National Fire Program prototypical layout. The replacement facility will provide improved thermal and energy efficiencies and ensure greater fire crew work-life

separation through improvements to floor plan and living quarters. The project is currently being prepared for solicitation.

- Burns Junction Fire Engine Storage Building Replacement – This is a Deferred Maintenance project valued at approximately \$650,000 and involves replacing an existing engine fire storage building, originally constructed in the 1980s. Work includes removing and salvaging the existing storage building and replacing it with a facility capable of housing new engines. Project is currently at substantial completion (99 percent) and will be operational well ahead of fire season.
- Malheur Radio Communication Site Repairs – This is a Deferred Maintenance project valued at approximately \$450,000 involves installing improved radio equipment grounding materials to eliminate safety concerns identified by the Radio Infrastructure CASHE program. Work involves grounding improvements at two fire stations and three mountain-top communication sites. The project has been awarded and completion is anticipated in early FY25.
- Juntura Potable Water System Repairs – This is a Deferred Maintenance project valued at approximately \$350,000 and involves replacing the well pump, improving the electrical system components to the potable water system, and installing a water filtration system at the Juntura Fire Station to provide improved water quality and flow rates so that fire crews can utilize quarter's facility water and fill fire engine tankers simultaneously. Project is currently with the Procurement Division and being prepared for solicitation.
- Ontario Air Base – This is a combination Deferred Maintenance and Fire Facilities project, valued at approximately \$7 million and involves construction of a Fire Aviation control center for fixed and rotary wing aircraft and a strategically located air base at the City of Ontario Municipal Airport. Project involves a City of Ontario land lease and construction of a 7,700 square feet operations building, fixed wing aircraft ramp, helicopter landing pads, and fire-retardant mixing and disposal systems. The project is currently under design with an estimated construction completion date of third quarter CY26.

Burns –

- KIGER, RIDDLE AND SOUTH STEENS WH&B GATHER – The Burns District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) conducted three helicopter gathers in August and September 2024. South Steens, Kiger and Riddle Mountain.

Kiger and Riddle HMA Gather – The Kiger and Riddle Mountain HMAs are in Harney County, Oregon, about 2 and 12 miles east of Diamond, Oregon. These HMAs are separated by approximately five miles yet the horses residing in both are known as Kiger Mustangs and managed for the same characteristics. The Kiger HMA is comprised of approximately 26,873 acres and the Riddle Mountain HMA is comprised of 28,346. The AML for wild horses within the Kiger HMA is 51-82 wild horses and for Riddle Mountain

HMA 33-56 wild horses. The AML was established in the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (Andrews/Steens RMP/ROD 2005). The Riddle Mountain and Kiger Wild Horse Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP) incorporated population and habitat objectives from the Three Rivers RMP (1992). Over the past decade, periodic drought and excessive horse populations have resulted in negative impacts to wild horse health and habitat conditions within the HMAs. Recent census of both HMAs indicate that there are 419 horses in the Kiger HMA and 283 horses in the Riddle Mountain HMA. The BLM is proposing to gather and remove 213 horses from the Kiger HMA and gather and remove 213 horses from the Riddle HMA.

South Steens HMA is in Harney County, Oregon approximately 75 miles south of Burns, Oregon (Appendix A - Vicinity Map). The HMA contains 126,732 acres of BLM-managed land and is bordered by Catlow Valley to the west and the top of Steens Mountain to the east. Topography varies from slightly rolling hills to steep, mountainous country. Currently the AML is 159 to 304 established by the 2005 RMP/RODs for the Andrews Management Unit and the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area. A Censuses in May of 2024 indicated that there are approximately 889 horses on the HMA. The BLM is planning to gather 600 horses from the South Steens HMA and remove 562 horses. Mares returned to the HMA will be treated with chemical birth control before being returned to the HMA.

- **CHERRY SPRINGS AREA** – As proposed in January 2024, the Cherry Springs area, approximately 5 miles northwest of Hines, is now closed to motorized access until further notice. Over the past few years, abandoned unauthorized camps, broken down vehicles, drug paraphernalia, household garbage, yard debris, human waste, dilapidated RVs, and soil and vegetation damage are just a few of the things the agency has had to deal with. The closure serves as the backbone for increased public safety and reduced resource damage in the area. The BLM is proposing to remove debris and establish a hiking/walking trail in the area. Proximity to the communities of Burns and Hines makes the area easily accessible. Many people can be seen walking on the Hines Logging Road and a trail, or trail system will provide additional opportunities off the main road to recreate. Cherry Springs remains open for non-motorized access, adjacent landowners, and other legal uses.
- **SKULL CREEK ROAD PROJECT** – The Skull Creek and Horton Mill Road(s) Project is concluding this year. The road maintenance project graded, added gravel, and improved culverts on Skull Creek and Horton Mill roads north of Burns and Hines. These roads are important access points to approximately 500,000 acres of BLM and Forest Service lands. Prior to this project, these roads can be impassible during most of the fall, winter, and early spring and those attempting BLM closes access to the road during this time for public safety and to protect the road surface. The maintenance project will not make the road a 4-season road but will help the BLM increase the amount of time the road will remain open during the year.

- **STEENS MOUNTAIN LOOP ROAD SLIDE** – A rockslide occurred during the spring of 2023 following an exceptionally high snowpack year on the Steens. Burns District Operations staff discovered the rockslide during the annual maintenance work prior to opening the road for the summer season in July. The slide is one mile above the Big Indian Gate on the southern side of the Loop Road. Operations crew found large boulders on and upslope from the road. The boulders apparently were dislodged during the spring thaw and runoff event. Steens Mountain recorded 300% annual snowpack in the winter of 2022-2023. Initial evaluation by geologists and engineers indicated that the boulders were not stable and could dislodge and continue down slope to the road. The Loop Road was partially opened for 2023 and the slide area will remain closed until the boulders can be either stabilized or removed. The slide is in a section of the Loop Road that travels through the Steens Mountain Wilderness Area. The BLM has a contract out for bid to stabilize the slope. Loose rocks will be removed or mechanically fixed to the mountain. Debris will be removed, and the South Loop Road could be opened later this summer.
- **PAGE SPRING WEIR REMOVAL** – The Page Springs Weir is a concrete structure in the Donner und Blitzen River within the Steens Mountain Wilderness Area near Frenchglen, approximately one mile upstream from the Page Springs Recreation Site. The weir was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corp in 1937 for the purpose of measuring water flow. US Geological Survey still uses the structure as a stream gauging station. The structure is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Steens Cooperative Management and Protection Act of 2000 stated, “The Secretary shall remove the dam (weir) located below the mouth of Fish Creek and above Page Springs if removal of the dam is scientifically justified and funds are available for such purpose.” The BLM, in coordination with ODFW, OSU and USFWS have concluded that the weir is a partial passage barrier to native migratory redband trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and a full barrier to other aquatic organisms. The weir also modifies the natural river processes and geomorphology. Funds have been made available through the Inflation Reduction Act (2022) for the removal of the weir. The BLM will need to address several key issues involving Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, aquatic species, and historic properties in the project. NEPA planning will begin in late 2024 or 2025.

- **DM HIRING** – Jeff Rose is retiring June 30, 2024. The OR/WA BLM is recruiting and will hire a permanent DM in the next 4-6 months. In the interim period Tom Beaucage has agreed to do a 120-day temporary promotion into the DM position. Tom is currently the Field Manager for the Border Field Office of the Spokane District in Washington. He tentatively reports to the district on June 17.

Dark Sky Presentation: Bob Hackett, Executive Director Travel Southern Oregon, and Dawn Nilson, FIBONACCI ENTERPRISES – [OOIDSS Presentation.pdf](#)

Fire Season Outlook: John Saltenberger, Fire Weather Program Manager Northwest – [Climate and Significant Fire Potential Outlook](#)

Public comment: A member of the public submitted two comments in writing. The comments were provided to the RAC members.

Lakeview RMPA Update: Todd Forber, BLM Lakeview District Manager –
[Draft Lakeview RMPA Release.pptx](#)

- The Lakeview Field Office is in south central Oregon. There are 3.2 million acres of public land located in the planning area. The area is characterized by a basin and range topography with remote canyons as well as high desert and mountain systems.
- The RMP Amendment has a Narrow scope to comply with the 2010 Settlement Agreement by:
 1. Determining how Lands with Wilderness Characteristics units will be managed;
 2. Addressing a full range of alternatives with respect to OHV use; and,
 3. Considering the reduction of grazing when:
 - A grazing permit is voluntary relinquished.
 - Standards for Rangeland Health are not achieved due to current livestock grazing.
- What Happens Next?
 1. 90 Day Public Comment Period (June 7 – Sept.5)
 2. Public Meetings (Late June – Early July)
 3. Proposed RMP / Final EIS
 4. Governor's Review Period / Protest Period
 5. Record of Decision

Wild Horse and Burro Update: Emily Lent, BLM OR Rangeland Management Specialist –
[Overview of the WH&B program and 2024 gather schedule.](#)

Round Table:

- Topic Ideas: Technology for monitoring lands, cattle, gasses; Flash fire suppression grazing (Targeted grazing); Climate changes affects on public lands; Public Lands Rule; BLM blueprint for recreation; Population growth and impacts to public lands; Formal rockhounding regulations, including petrified wood; and Managing healthy sagebrush steeps.
- Next meetings:
 1. August 12, Lakeview RMPA RAC comments, virtually.
 2. September 24 and 25 RAC meeting in Burns.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Wednesday, June 12, Tour of the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center:

RAC members Tim Davis, Ken Poole, Brett Seward, Alison Cole, Tom Batty, Stan Sheperdson, Mary Jo Hedrick, Joe Tague, Mark Salvo, and Don Hodge

Agency representatives: Lisa McNee, Lakeview PAO/RAC coordinator.

Tour ended at noon.



Wild Horse & Burro Program

**SOUTHEAST OREGON RAC
MEETING**

June 11, 2024

**Presented by Emily Lent
BLM OR/WA Range and WHB
Program Lead**



Wild Horse and Burro Act

- BLM manages and protects wild horses and burros under the authority of the **Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971**.
 - *Goal:* to preserve and protect wild horses and burros as integral parts of a thriving ecological system in balance with other public resource values. These include wildlife, livestock grazing, mineral and energy resource development and recreational access.



National WHB Overview

- Nationally, the BLM manages wild horses and burros on 177 herd management areas comprising 26.9 million acres of public land in 10 Western states.
 - The BLM estimates there were approximately 73,520 federally protected wild horses and burros on BLM-managed public lands as of March 1, 2024 – 9,363 fewer animals than what was estimated in 2023.
- Though this was the largest one-year reduction in overpopulation since 1985, the estimated population remains nearly three times appropriate levels.



WILD HORSE AND BURRO PROGRAM

Highlights from Fiscal Year 2023

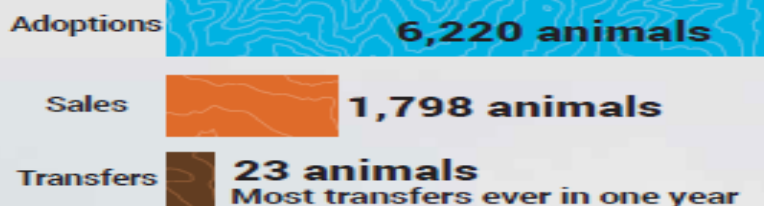
The Bureau of Land Management is tasked with the management and protection of wild horses and burros on public lands managed by the agency. In Fiscal Year 2023, the BLM continued to focus on efforts to slow population growth and reduce overpopulation on public lands to protect animal and land health. The agency also took steps to reduce costs to taxpayers, including rehoming more than 8,000 wild horses and burros from BLM facilities. To support this important work, the BLM continues to partner with public and private organizations that share the agency's goal of managing and protecting healthy wild horses and burros on healthy public lands.

ADOPTIONS, SALES AND TRANSFERS powered taxpayer savings

Adoptions, sales and transfers of wild horses and burros into new homes increased in Fiscal Year 2023, resulting in the second-highest placement rate in more than 20 years. Each animal placed into private care saves taxpayers approximately \$22,500 in what would otherwise be spent to provide lifetime care for the animal.

8,000+ animals = **\$181 million**
placed into new homes est. taxpayer savings

Hosted **83 public events** and offered **over 8,000 animals**



Adoption Incentive Program continues to drive adoptions



Wild horses and burros adopted through the BLM's Adoption Incentive Program accounted for approx. one of every three animals placed into new homes in Fiscal Year 2023 (2,908 animals).

WELCOMED new partners

The BLM continued to recruit and fund public-private partnerships and inter-agency agreements to support its mission.

10 organizations were awarded funded agreements

- American Wild Horse Campaign
- Colorado State University
- Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine
- Wild Horses of America Foundation
- High Desert Strategies
- Mustang Champions
- Northwest Wildlife Conservation Research

A picture of a group of wild horses grazing on the range, with a sunset over mountains in the background.

Animal and Plant Health Wildlife Research Center

- Utah State University Cooperative Extension



MANAGED wild populations

28

The BLM conducted 28 gather operations across the West focused on applying fertility control and reducing overpopulation

<0.35%

Safety during gathers remained a top priority. Reflecting the BLM's commitment to animal welfare, the loss rate during gathers was less than 0.35% of the animals gathered, which is well below the general threshold of 2% suggested for wildlife studies (Scasta, 2019)

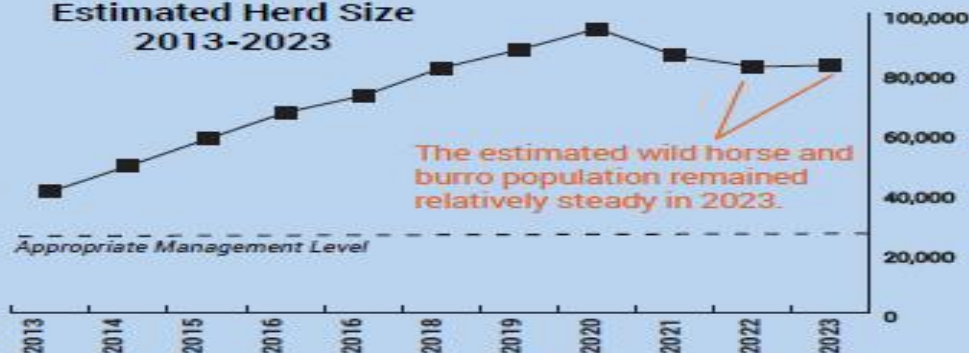
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About a quarter of all fertility control treatments were conducted via gather. Half of all fertility control treatments in Fiscal Year 2023 used GonaCon-Equine, compared to about a third of treatments in Fiscal Year 2022.



REDUCED herd growth

Estimated Herd Size
2013-2023

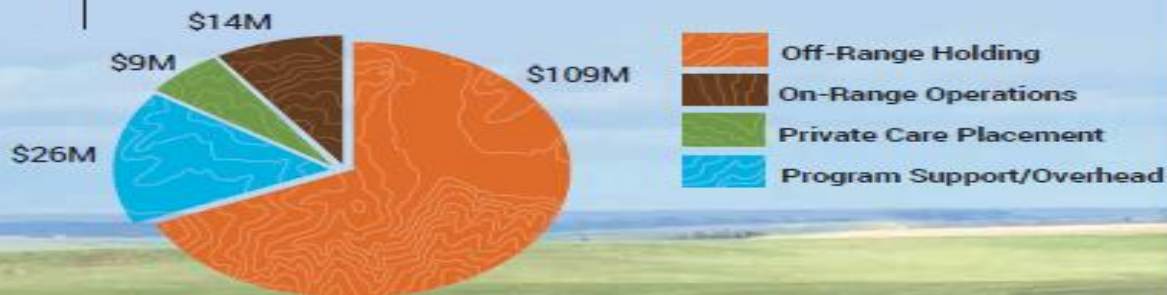


Despite recent success at reducing overpopulation and stabilizing herd growth, the estimated wild horse and burro population (82,883 animals as of March 2023) remains three times appropriate management level - the size at which the wild horse and burro population is in balance with rangeland resources and uses.

CARED for unadopted animals

The majority of expenditures continue to go towards caring for unadopted and unsold animals in off-range facilities. As herds reach appropriate management level, holding costs are projected to decrease.

Total expenditures: **\$158 million**



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

For more information, visit [BLM.gov/WHB](https://www.blm.gov/WHB)

Gathers and Removals

- Gathering and removing excess animals for private care and maintenance remains the best, most humane way to effectively reduce overpopulation in wild horse and burro herds. Some wild horses can be remotely darted with fertility control vaccines. The BLM often works with volunteers and partners to identify, track and dart wild horses to help control growth in some smaller herds.
- The BLM uses a combination of bait-trap and helicopter-assisted gather techniques to safely remove animals and reduce overpopulation. For herds that are close to a sustainable size, the BLM is prioritizing fertility control treatments to slow future growth and reduce the need for removals.
- BLM and contract staff adhere to a Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program during all gathers. The Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program outlines required best practices and humane handling standards that prioritize the health and well-being of the wild animals. For example, the standards do not allow contact with helicopters, traveling excessive distances and/or gathering in extreme temperatures.

Gathers and Removals

- Gathers are also an important tool for applying fertility control vaccines to captured animals. Most herds are not conducive to ground-darting operations because it is difficult or impossible to locate, track and approach animals across thousands of acres of rugged terrain.
- During emergency situations (such as drought-caused starvation or thirst), a gather is the best way for the BLM to remove imperiled animals.
- Removed animals are checked by BLM staff and a veterinarian and either prepared for private adoption/sale, transported to long-term care on a pasture, or treated with fertility control and released back to the range.
- The BLM recognizes that gathers and removals alone will not enable the agency to help herds reach and stay at the appropriate management level. Other strategic approaches – in particular, expanded use of humane fertility control and more successful adoptions and sales – are critical to meeting the long-term challenges facing the BLM.

Fertility Control

- Where it is effective to do so, the BLM is committed to implementing safe, humane fertility control measures to limit herd growth and reduce the need for future removals of excess animals. Every BLM management action for wild horses and burros on public lands must consider the use of fertility control in the range of alternatives
- Some wild horses can be remotely darted with fertility control vaccines. The BLM often works with volunteers and partners to identify, track and dart wild horses to help control growth in some smaller herds.
- Most wild horses in larger, more remote herds are not approachable enough to be darted and would need to be gathered for treatment. For those herds, the BLM must capture, treat, and release the animals back to public lands.
- For herds that are close to a sustainable size, the BLM is prioritizing fertility control treatments to slow future growth and reduce the need for removals.
- The BLM primarily uses *Porcine Zona Pellucida*, or PZP, for fertility control but is increasing its use of the *GonaCon-Equine* vaccine, which has the potential to last more than twice as long as PZP if followed up with boosters.

Private Placement

- The BLM's goal is to place animals removed from overpopulated herds into good, private homes. Thanks to the help of its partners and innovative tools like the Adoption Incentive Program and the Online Corral, the BLM has doubled the rate of private care placement over the last five years compared to the previous five years.
- Since 1971, BLM has placed a total of nearly 300,000 wild horses and burros into private care.
- Adoptions, sales and transfers of wild horses and burros into new homes increased in Fiscal Year 2023, resulting in the second-highest placement rate in more than 20 years (8,045 animals).

Private Placement

- In January 2022 the BLM implemented several improvements to the Adoption Incentive Program designed to enhance protections for animals adopted under the program. These changes include:
 - Requiring mandatory compliance inspections of animals within six months of adoption rather than the first year.
 - Title applications must be signed by a veterinarian or BLM authorized officer for the adopter to receive the incentive.
 - The incentive will now be made within 60 days after title date, rather than \$500 at time of adoption and \$500 at time of title.
 - The minimum adoption fee for AIP animals was increased from \$25 to \$125.
 - The protections for animals adopted through the Adoption Incentive Program are layered upon existing protections which require adopters to certify under penalty of prosecution, that they will not knowingly sell or transfer the animal for slaughter or processing into commercial products. There is also a required 12-month waiting period before titling of adopted animals.

Off-Range Holding

- Historically, adoption demand has not been sufficient to place all excess wild horses and burros into private care through adoptions, sales, and transfers and therefore, private pasture and corral contracts have been acquired to care for the unadopted wild horses and burros.
 - The BLM has 38 off-range pasture contracts that range in size from 450 acres up to 46,000 acres; the average size is 20,000 acres. The pastures are currently located in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah and Washington.
- The BLM anticipates releasing solicitations in Fiscal Year 2024 to acquire additional corral and pasture capacity to support efforts to reduce overpopulation on public lands.

Oregon Herd Management Areas (HMA)

- 17 HMAs managed by BLM (~2.7 million acres BLM)
- 1 Wild Horse Territory co-managed by BLM (32%) & USFS (68%)- Murderers Creek
- 1 Wild Horse Territory managed solely by USFS-Big Summit
- 19 Wild Herds total



OREGON

CALIFORNIA NEVADA

Oregon Wild Horse Herd Management Areas

— Oregon Highways — Not All Roads Are Shown — County Boundaries

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
Bozeman, Oregon

This is a map of the Oregon Wild Horse Herd Management Areas. The map shows the distribution of wild horse herds across the state, with different colors representing different herds. The map includes an inset showing the location of Oregon within the Pacific Northwest. A legend at the bottom identifies Oregon Highways, County Boundaries, and the Bureau of Land Management logo. A disclaimer states that the map is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a warranty of accuracy.

Oregon's Horses

- Oregon set and reached AML in the 1980's
- This allowed us to select the best horses to be turned back on the range to produce the next generation of horses for our adopters.
- We select for – Temperament, Size, Color & Conformation
- Highly desired by adopters
- Great public support!



Adoption Program

- Average 300-400 animals/year
- Successful Partnerships with Teens & Oregon Mustangs and Mustang Yearlings & Washington Youth
- Gentled Horse Events/Internet Adoptions via Online Corral



Oregon's Wild Horse Corral Facility

- Located in Hines, Oregon
- Off-Range Corral
- Care for ~700 animals per year



Oregon Gathers 2023 & 2024

- Palomino Buttes (Burns District): **192**
- Stinkingwater (Burns District): **63**
- Hog Creek (Vale District): **38**
- South Steens (Burns District): **Planned August 2024**

Opportunities

- Improved Fertility Control
- Partnerships
 - High Desert Strategies
 - Beaty's Butte Training Facility



Challenges

- Drought
- Maintaining AML/achieving objectives
- Reproduction
- Public perception/litigation/activism
- Reduced budgets





Questions?

Program Resources

The Program maintains a vibrant website and social media presence, as well as a fulltime Wild Horse and Burro National Information Center (866-468-7826; wildhorse@blm.gov).

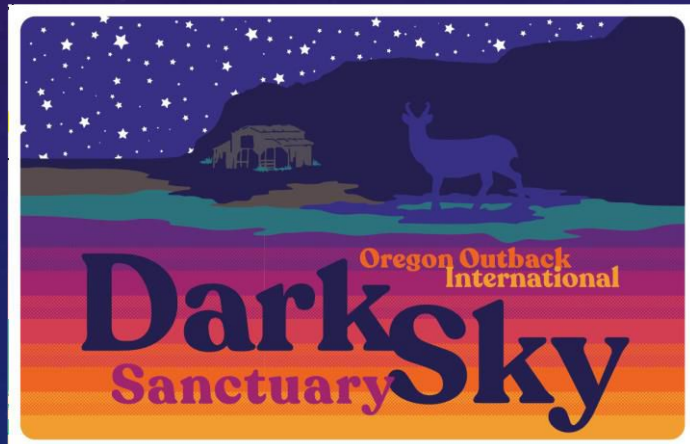
<https://www.blm.gov/whb>



OREGON OUTBACK INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY SANCTUARY: A CASE STUDY OF LANDSCAPE-LEVEL COLLABORATION, PROTECTION, AND TOURISM

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

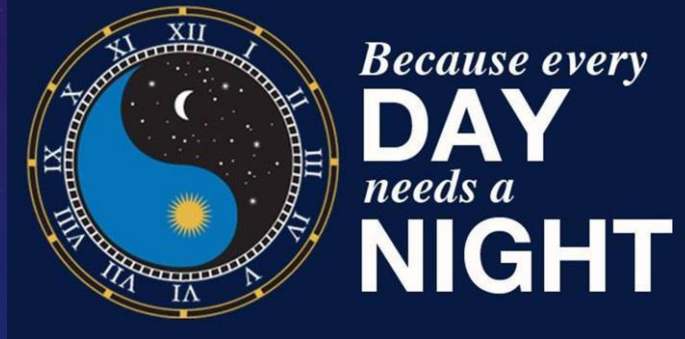
JUNE 11, 2024



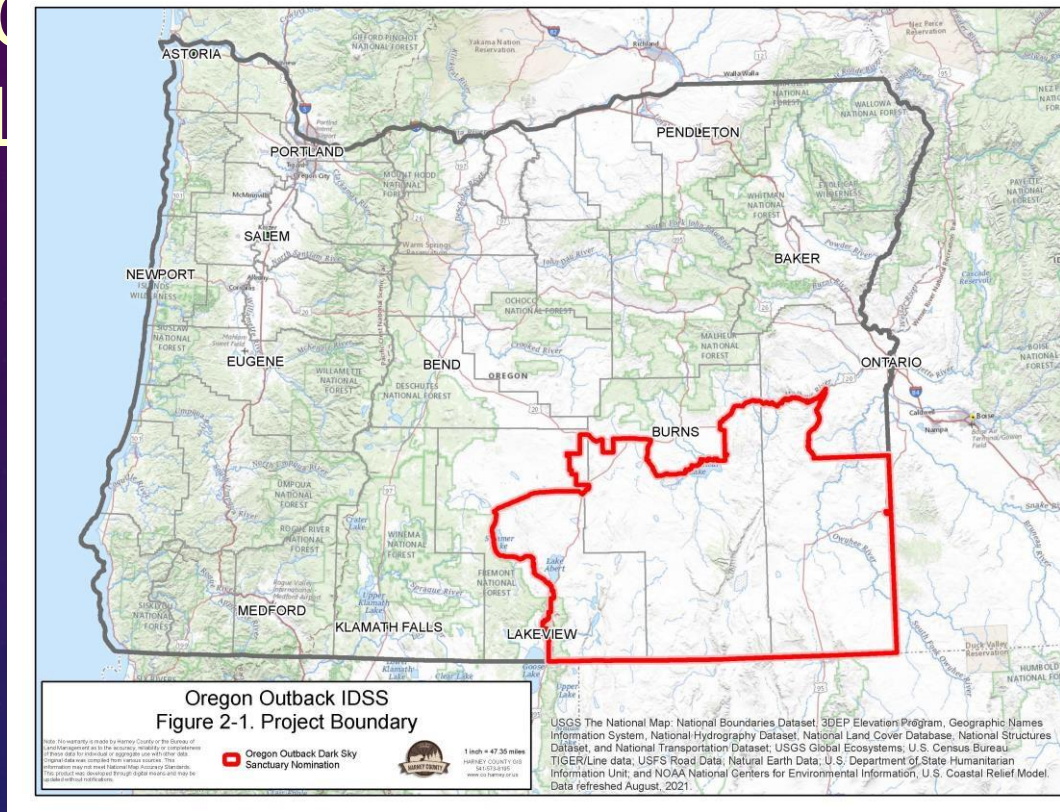
DAWN J. NILSON, FIBONACCI
ENTERPRISES BOB HACKETT,
TRAVEL SOUTHERN OREGON

DARK SKY PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

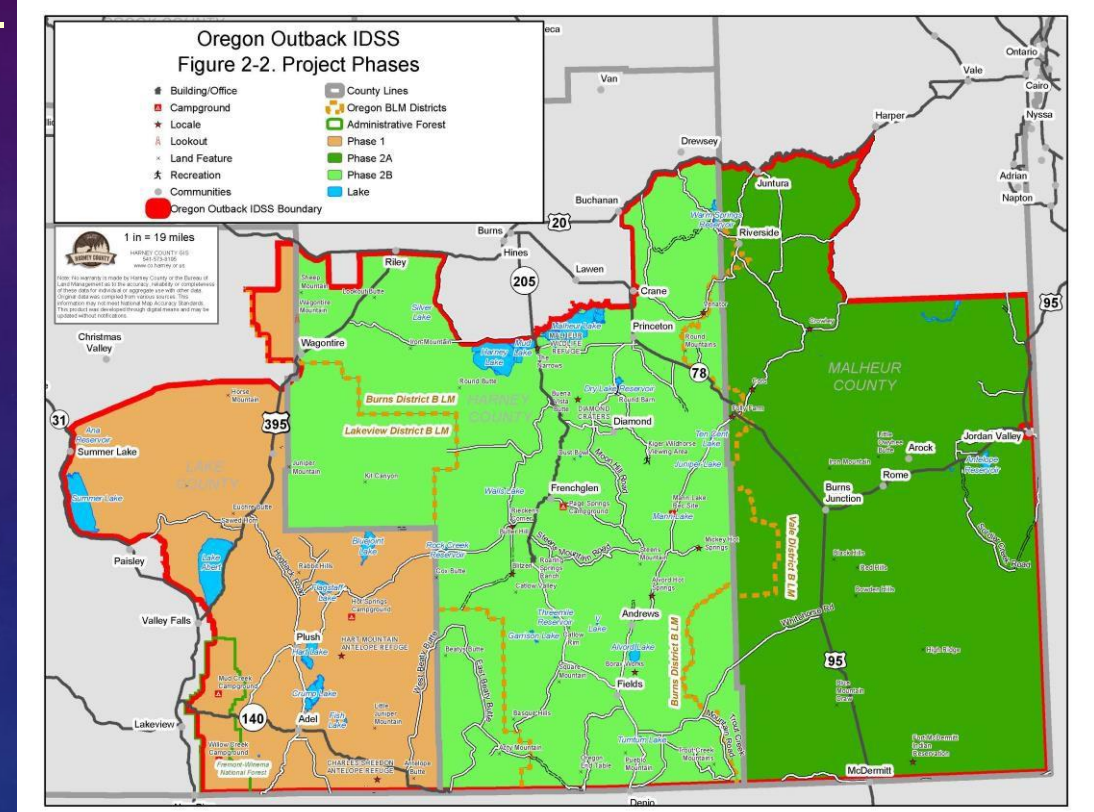
- Oregon Outback Dark Sky Sanctuary Certification (Outback setting/boundaries)
- Planning Process
- Project Benefits
- Project Challenges (Past and Ongoing)
- Next Steps in Expansion
- Fostering Ecotourism Opportunities



OREGON OUTBACK INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY SANCTUARY –



- Lake County (Phase 1) is 2.5 million acres
- Phase 1: 113 lights on public land; 120 private lights
- 4 BLM sites with 8 lights total; 3 need retrofits

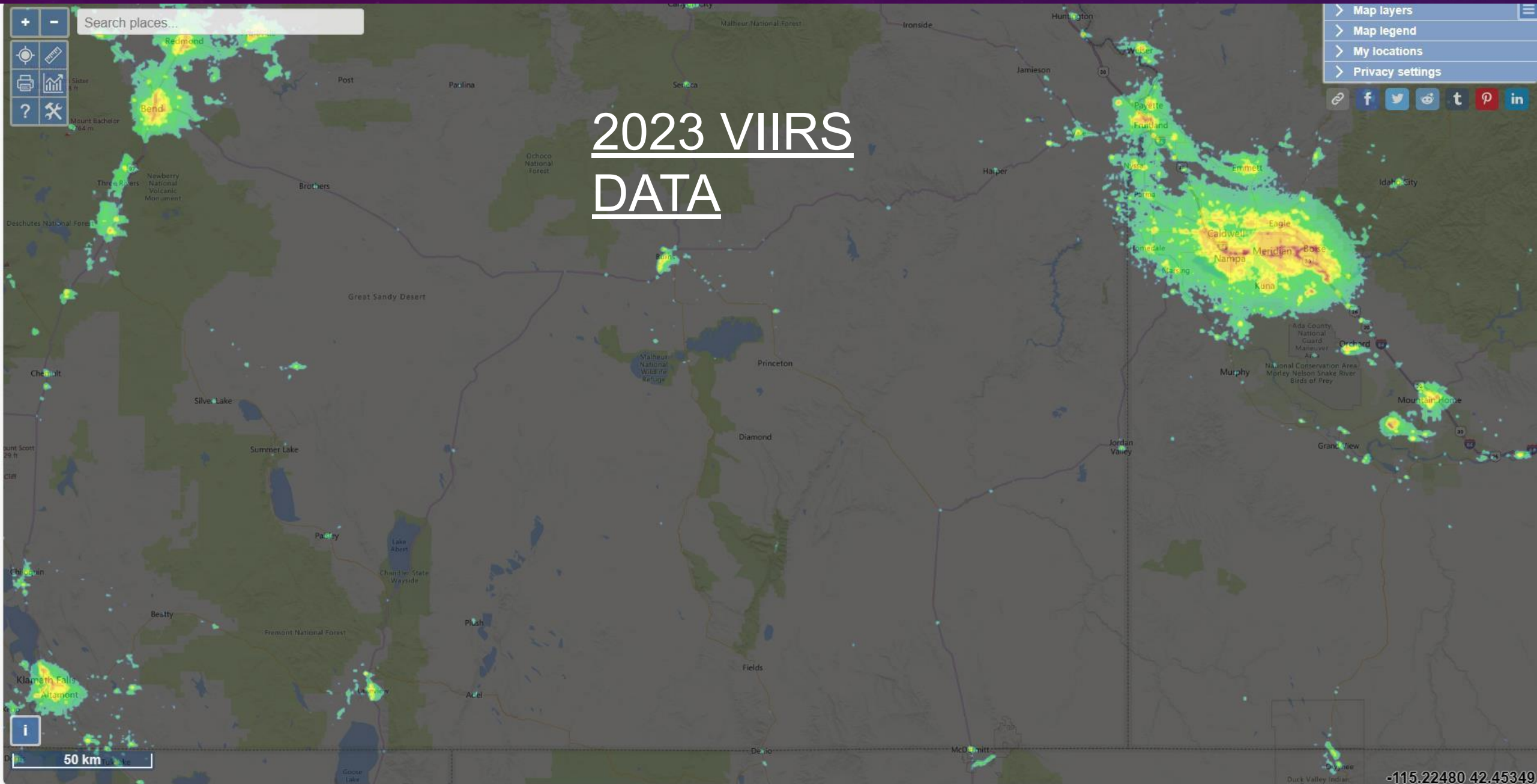


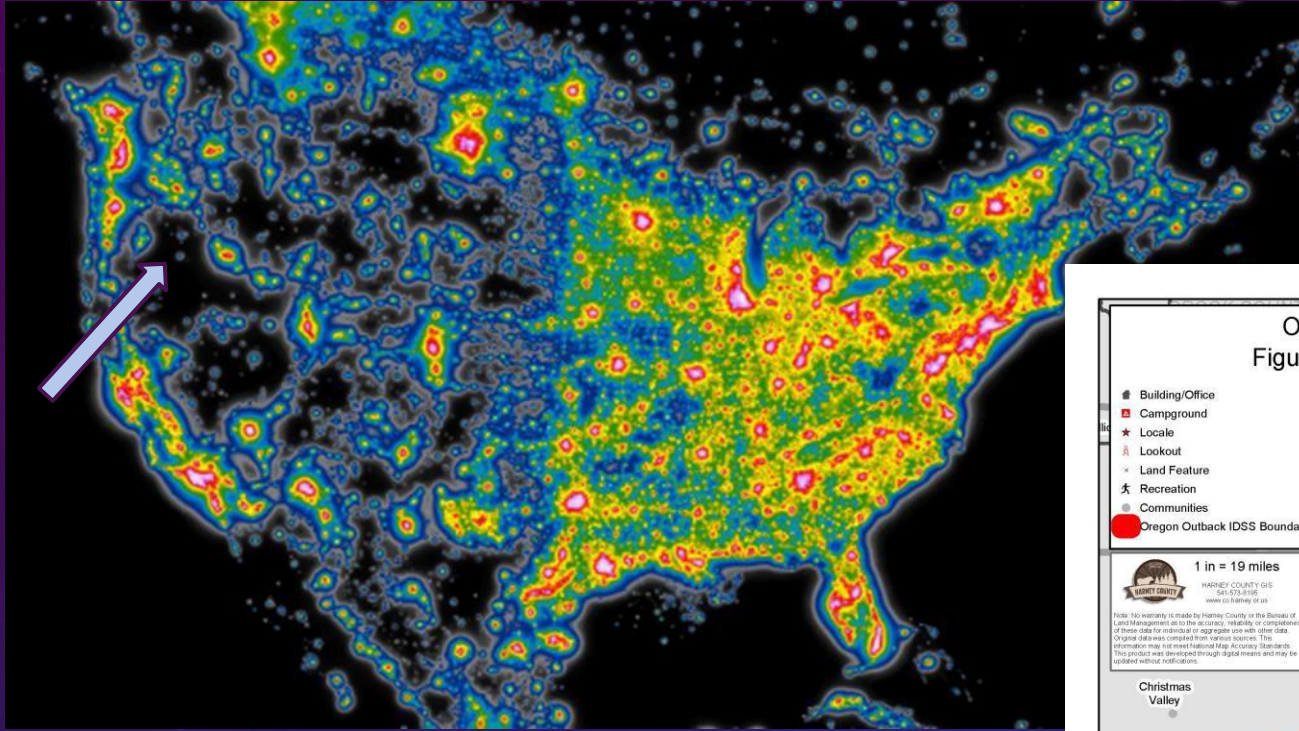
- 11.4 million acres over three counties
- Total of ~ 315 lights on public land (including schools)
- 4 other BLM sites in Harney and Malheur (15+ lights; 13+ need retrofits)
- 7 fixed, continuous sky quality monitoring sites



A heatmap visualization of Oregon, showing intensity levels across the state. The map uses a color scale from dark blue (low intensity) to red and white (high intensity). County boundaries are outlined in white. A specific region in the southern part of the state is highlighted with a yellow border. The word "OREGON" is centered in white text.

OREGON

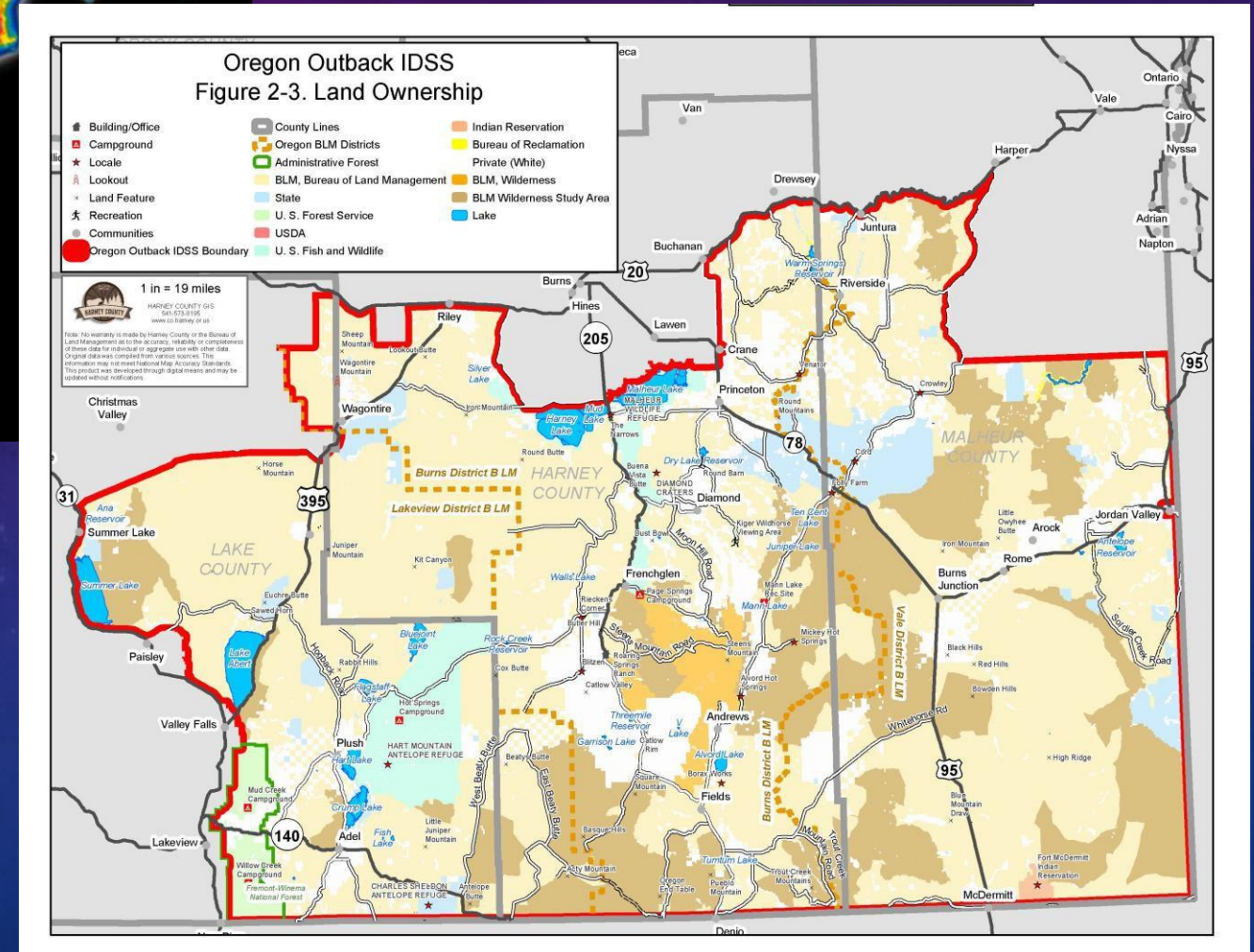




Phase 1 Ownership: 90% public
Ultimate Area Ownership: 85% public

3-County Landscape Includes:

- Two national wildlife refuges
- Portion of Fremont-Winema National Forest
- BLM wilderness area, wilderness study areas, areas of critical environmental concern
- State rangelands; state wildlife areas (similar to refuges)
- Scenic roads and byways
- Geological wonders (escarpments, hot springs, lava flows, alkali lakes)
- Priority habitats for several wildlife species



KEY PLANNING ELEMENTS



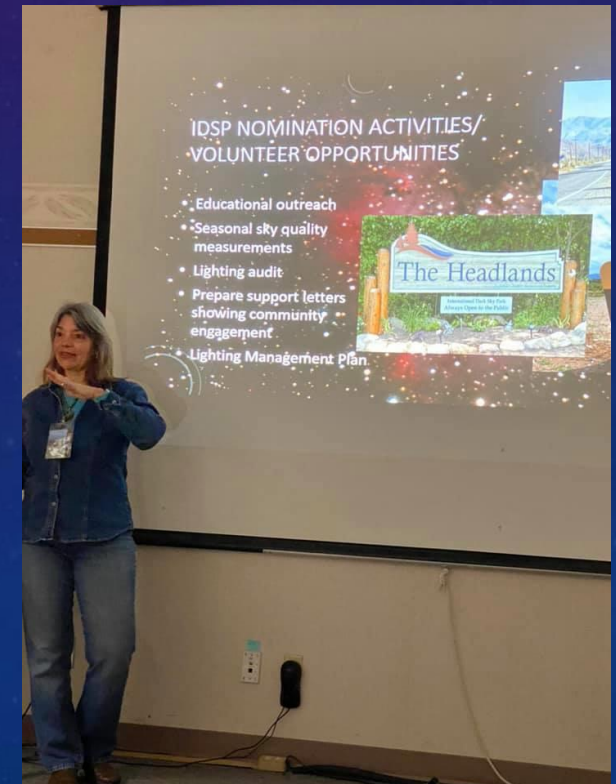
- Established the Oregon Outback Dark Sky Network
 - Fostered partnerships among a range of stakeholders
 - E.g., Agencies, PLAYA Summer Lake, Friends of the Owyhee, Chambers of Commerce, Libraries, RCA, DarkSky Oregon
- Established a Steering Committee (eventually morphed into the Land Manager Committee)
- Established a wider “Project Team” of partners
- Established project alternatives (e.g., sanctuary vs. reserve; multiple places versus landscape-scale place; alternative boundaries)
- Worked through the alternatives analysis with multiple stakeholder group meetings
- Created and executed a public outreach program
- Established and maintained a social media communication plan with specific goals and objectives
- Wrote an instruction manual; recruited and trained people for lighting inventories
- Developed and agreed upon a single Lighting Management Plan (LMP) for all federal and state agencies within sanctuary boundary



OREGON OUTBACK DARK SKY NETWORK



- “Voluntary grass-roots initiative to build an alliance of communities, businesses, local governments, ranchers, state and federal agencies, tribes, and night sky enthusiasts to support a set of shared principles resulting in mutual community benefits and the long-term conservation of our starry night heritage.”



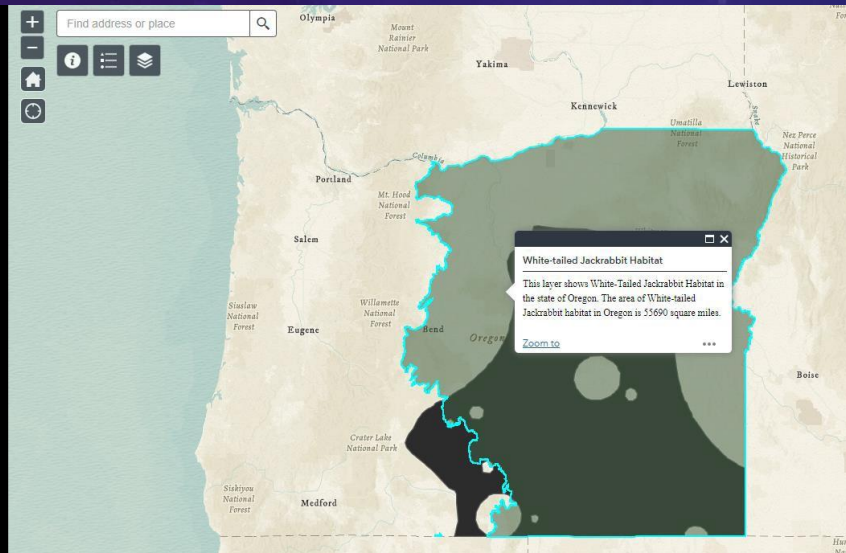
LANDSCAPE-SCALE PROJECT BENEFITS



- Conserves limited human resources in a remote area
- Attracts positive attention to the dark sky movement across the Pacific Northwest Region
- Ecosystem-level habitat protection for Oregon Conservation Strategy Species and birds using the Pacific Flyway, e.g.:
 - Sage grouse; white-tailed jackrabbit
 - American pronghorn; bighorn sheep
 - Migratory birds (greater sandhill crane; American avocet, etc.)
- Sky quality protection within the largest pristine dark sky zone in the lower 48 states
 - Massacre Rim IDSS also within same zone
- Aligns with BLM's dispersed recreation policy in the Outback
- Economic opportunities for multiple internal

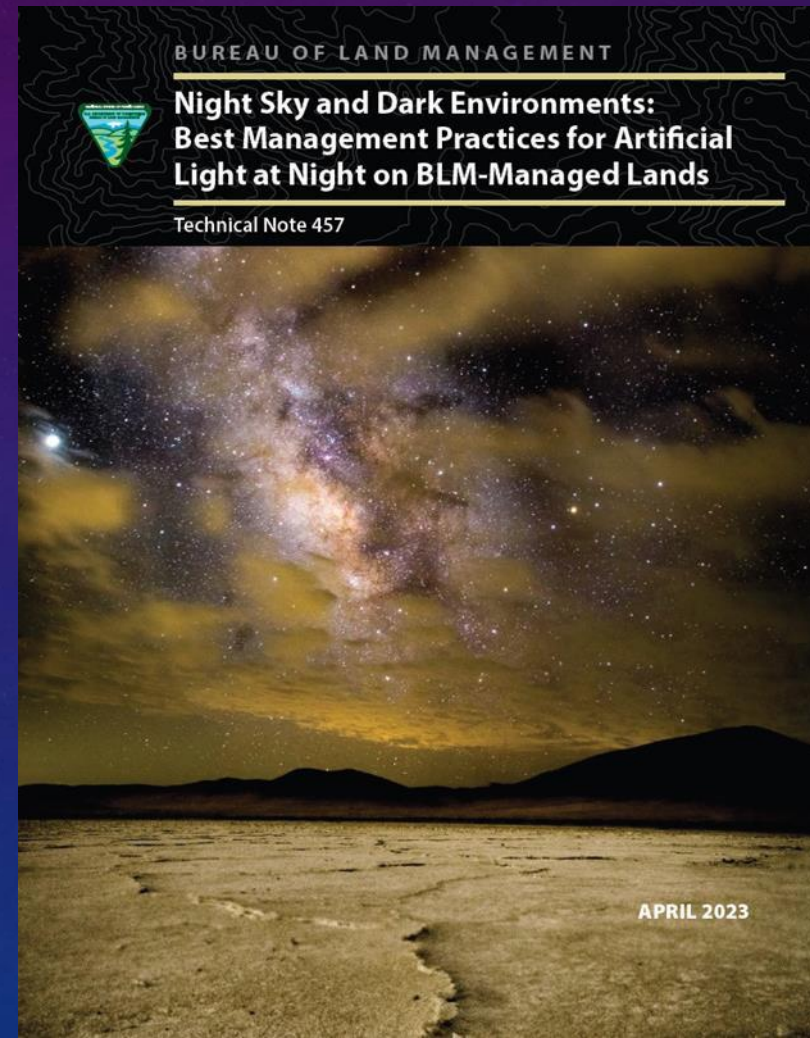


Approximately 46% of the white-tailed jack rabbit's core habitat is located underneath the darkest night skies in Oregon. Protecting this patch of dark night sky is important to the survival of this species. [Click here](#) to view the ODFW page with information about the White-tailed Jackrabbit's Oregon Conservation Strategy Species information.



BLM TECHNICAL REPORT #457

- Had expected report of BMPs in 2020/2021; published in April 2023
- Addresses the environmental, cultural, and health and safety needs for better lighting design decisions
- Offers guidance that aligns with DarkSky International outdoor lighting principles
- Suggests lighting audits at developed BLM sites
- Suggests working with a lighting designer before adding or modifying lights
- Suggests pursuing international dark sky certification, where applicable
- Aligns with the LMP developed for the sanctuary



THE ROLE OF “PRECEDENCE” IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

- Leveraged “precedence” to move the project forward
 - Matched peer to peer staff and project elements from prior USFS, BLM, and USFWS certifications (e.g., Boundary Waters Wilderness Area IDSS, Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve, Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, Massacre Rim IDSS)
 - Used Stewart Island IDSS in New Zealand for public/private mix example and DarkSky staff comfort
 - Used CIDSR certification and plans for large SW Texas and SW Colorado Reserves to help local residents understand that if certification didn’t infringe on property rights in other rural western areas, it won’t infringe on their rights
- Concerns of being “precedent-setting” stalled the project
 - Federal, state agency concerns: Would following LMP guidance on Outback public lands create the same expectations on all lands state-wide?
 - Rancher concerns: Would having a “sanctuary” pave the way for multiple new federal land restrictions in the Outback?
 - DarkSky International concern: Would certifying such a large area as a



PROTECTIONS GAINED AT PROTECTED REFUGES

- 59% of public lights in Harney County found on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
- 61% of public lights in Lake County found on Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge and ODFW's Summer Lake Wildlife Area
- Lake County: Went from 25% LMP consistency to 87%
- Harney County: Went from 30% LMP consistency to 94%
- Many lights on the refuges were dusk to dawn; many lights replaced with motion detection and less blue light (best option for wildlife protection)
- Most lights were unshielded; now they are



PAST AND LIKELY FUTURE PROCESS CHALLENGES

- Myth-busting that brighter lights are better and safer
- Myth-busting that dark sky place certification = government regulation
- Engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders across a remote area
- Engaging short-staffed and fiscally constrained federal and state agencies in unofficial business
- Engaging schools and ODOT regional offices with no directives on outdoor lights or land management
- ONE Lighting Management Plan agreeable to 17 land managers
- Addressing significant staff turnover at every level
- Changes in elected officials
- Conducting lighting inventories across an area the size of two New Jerseys with few “volunteers.”
- Addressing retrofits where the majority of lights were/are non-compliant with the LMP

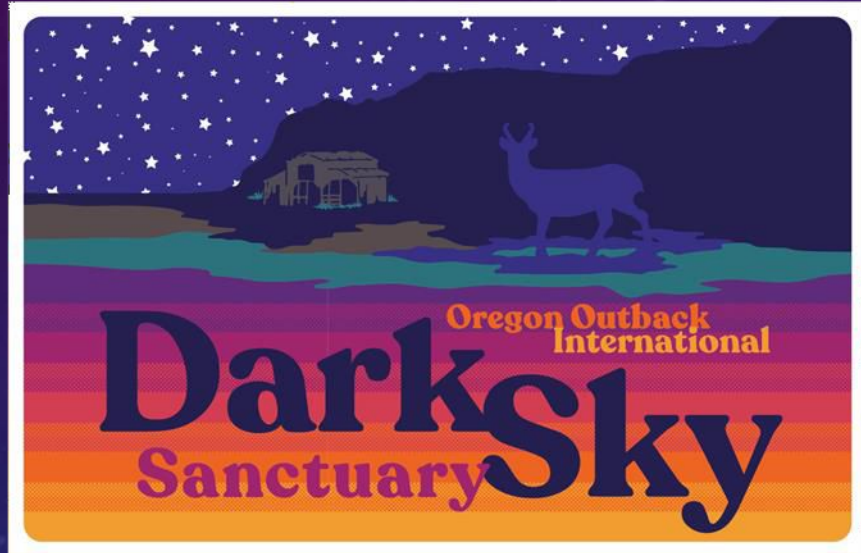
OREGON TOURISM DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP MODEL

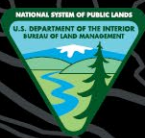
- Mission Alignment with Agencies
- Destination Capacity
- Destination Development
 - Activity Areas
 - Campgrounds
 - SUPs
- Community Engagement & Outreach



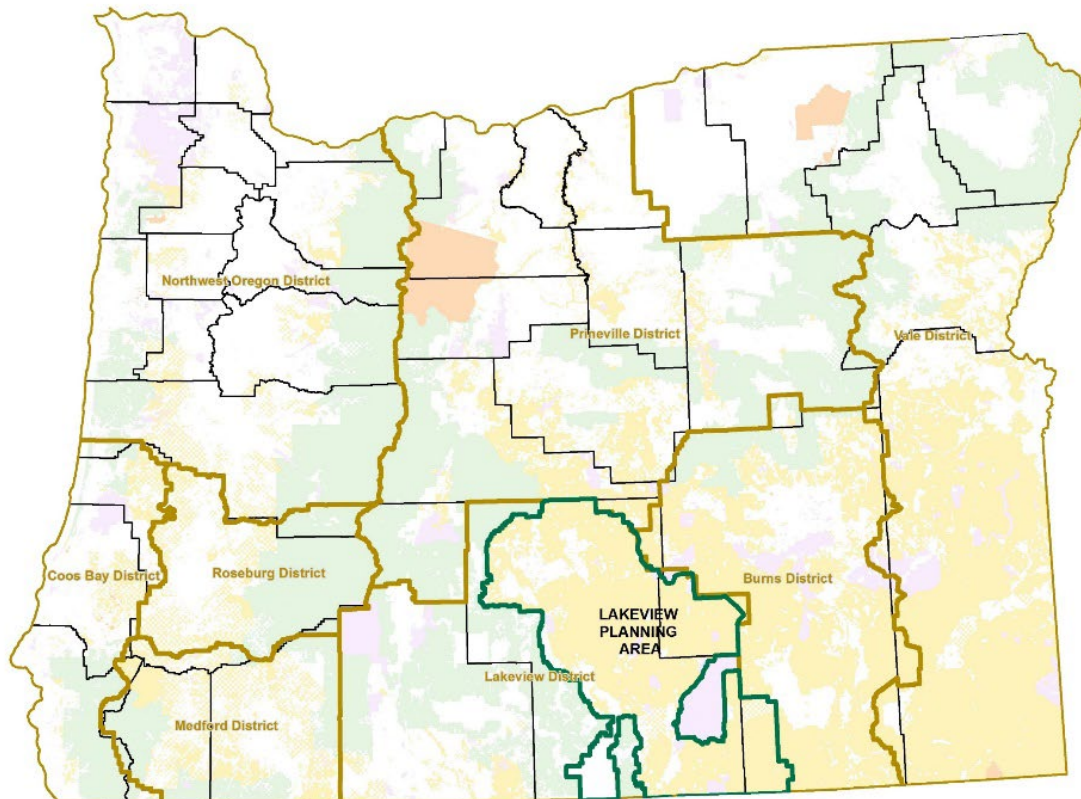


QUESTIONS?
???





Draft Lakeview Resource Management Plan Amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement



Lakeview Planning Area

The Lakeview Field Office is located in south central Oregon. There are **3.2 million acres of public land** located in the planning area. The area is characterized by a basin and range topography with remote canyons as well as high desert and mountain systems.



Background / Purpose and Need

The RMP Amendment has a Narrow scope to comply with the 2010 SA by:

1. Determining how LWC units will be managed;
2. Addressing a full range of alternatives with respect to OHV use; and,
3. Considering the reduction of grazing when:
 - A grazing permit is voluntary relinquished
 - Standards for Rangeland Health are not achieved due to current livestock grazing



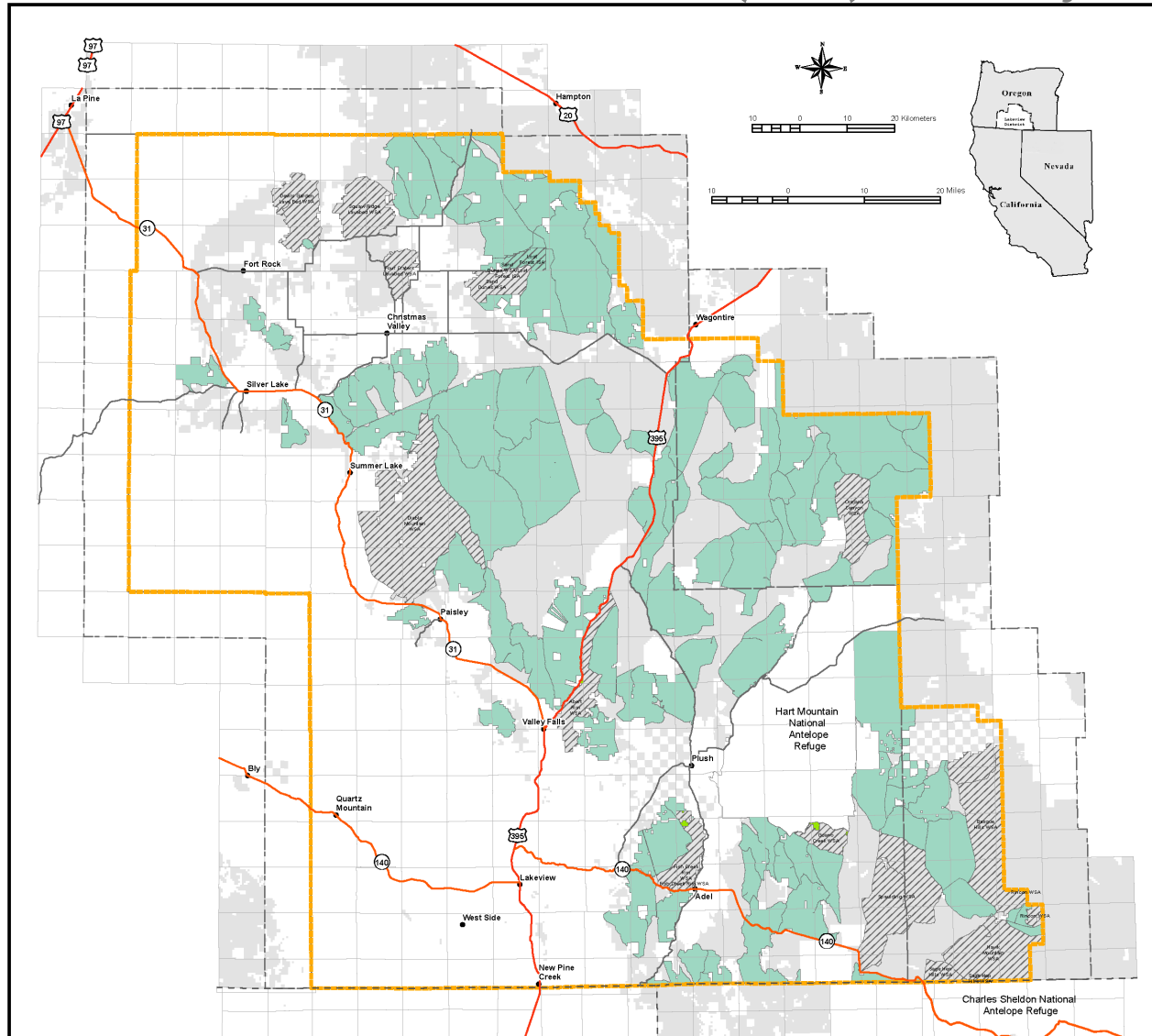


Work Done So Far

- 2010 Issued Notice of Intent (NOI)
- 2011 Public scoping and tribal consultation – 2010-2011
- 2012 Scoping Report
- 2013 Put on Hold for Sage-Grouse Planning
- 2015 Wilderness Inventory Review –Lakeview & Vale
- 2016-2018 Wilderness Re-inventory
- 2019 Put on Hold until SE Oregon Complete
- 2020 completed re-inventory of 2.7 million ac. Identified 1.65 million ac. of LWC in 106 inventory units. Previous inventory identified 7 small units (1,187 acres).



Lands With Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) Inventory Results





No Action Alternative

Continue under the 2003 Lakeview RMP/ROD, as amended by the 2015 Greater Sage-grouse RMP Amendment.

- Continue to manage the 106 inventory units (1,654,103 acres) as required by the 2010 SA, under which the BLM cannot authorize actions that would:
 - 1) diminish the size of an inventory unit or
 - 2) cause the unit to no longer meet the criteria for wilderness characteristics.
- Continue existing OHV allocations and livestock grazing management direction.



Alternative A

- Continue management under the 2003 Lakeview RMP/ROD, as amended by the 2015 Greater Sagegrouse RMP Amendment/ROD.
- Apply no additional protections for 106 units with wilderness characteristics.
- Continue existing OHV allocations and livestock grazing management direction.



Wilderness Characteristics Management Categories Alternatives B-E

Category A (Don't Protect) : Prioritize Other Multiple Uses

No protection measures specifically for Wilderness Characteristics

Category B (Balance) : Balance LWC with Other Multiple Uses

Rights-of-Way avoidance

VRM Class III (if not already a higher class)

Best management practices

Category C (Protect) : Prioritize Protection of LWC

No new major rights-of-ways

Land Tenure Zone 1 – Retention

VRM Class II (if not already a higher class)

202 WSAs: Managed according to the WSA Manual

Right-of-Way exclusion

Land Tenure Zone 1

VRM Class I

Closed to Leasable / Salable Minerals



Alternative B Summary

Wilderness Characteristics:

- 202 WSAs: 34 units & portions of 2 (273,705 acres)
- Protect (Category C): remaining 77 units & portions of 2 (1,381,142 acres)

OHV:

- All WSA and Category C units would be closed to OHV use.

Grazing:

- Grazing allocations are not changed
- Remove grazing within entire pastures or allotments if Rangeland Health (RH) Standards are not met due to current grazing.
- If a permit is voluntarily relinquished grazing use would be removed/reduced in WSA, ACEC, RNA's, OR Critical ESA Habitats.



Alternative C (Preferred Alternative) Summary

Wilderness Characteristics:

- Protect (Category C): 26 whole units & portions of 4 units (411,033 acres)
- Balance (Category B): 71 whole units & portions of 2 units (1,161,199 acres)
- Don't Protect (Category A): remaining 5 whole units & portions of 3 units (74,529 acres)

OHV:

- OHV use limited to existing routes across planning area, including all wilderness characteristics units.

Grazing:

- Grazing allocations are not changed
- If pasture or allotment is not meeting RH Standards due to grazing, then grazing is removed until standards are met or making significant progress.
- If a permit is voluntarily relinquished within a WSA, grazing in that area would be reduced or eliminated for the life of the plan amendment.



Alternative D Summary

Wilderness Characteristics:

- Protect (Category C): 2 whole units as Category C (4,671 acres)
- Balance (Category B): 41 whole units & portions of 18 units (1,066,919 acres)
- Don't Protect (Category A): remaining 45 whole units & portions of 18 units (582,355 acres)

OHV:

- Most of planning area would be limited to existing or designated routes.
- OHV open on 70,573 acres, including the Christmas Valley Sand Dunes.

Grazing:

- Most grazing management would be same as No Action.
- If a RH assessment determines one or more standards are not being met due to factors other than grazing, the authorized officer shall consider taking action, including changes in grazing, to make progress toward RH standards and land use plan objectives.



Alternative E Summary

Wilderness Characteristics:

- Protect (Category C): 26 whole units (372,218 acres)
- Balance (Category B): 68 whole units (1,109,160 acres)
- Don't Protect (Category A): remaining 12 whole units (168,512 acres)

OHV:

- 26 Category C units would be limited to existing routes
- No changes in the rest of the planning area.

Grazing:

- No changes (same as No Action Alternative)



Table 3-2 Wilderness Characteristics Allocations by Alternative

Management Objective	No Action	Alternative A	Alternative B**	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E
Units managed under the Settlement Agreement	106 units (1,654,103 acres)	0	0	0	0	0
Units managed as new 202 WSAs*	0	0	34 units and portions of 2 units (273,705 acres)	0	0	0
Units managed under new objective to protect wilderness characteristics (Category C)	0	0	77 units & portions of 2 (1,381,142 acres)	26 units & parts of 4 (411,033 acres)	2 units (4,671 acres)	26 units (372,218 acres)
Units managed under new objective to balance wilderness characteristics with other multiple uses (Category B)	0	0	0	71 units & parts of 2 (1,161,199 acres)	41 units & parts of 18 (1,066,919 acres)	68 units (1,109,160 acres)
No new objective for wilderness characteristics (Category A)	0	0	0	5 units & parts of 3 (74,529 acres)	45 units & parts of 18 (582,355 acres)	12 units (168,512 acres)
Category C setbacks***	0	0	0	7,276 acres	166 acres	4,211 acres

* This table does not include existing WSAs, which are addressed separately in the Wilderness Study Areas section.

** Alternative B includes both the 106 Wilderness Character units (1,654,103 acres) identified during this planning effort and 7 existing units (1,187 acres) that were previously identified during the development of the *Lakeview RMP/ROD* (BLM 2001a, 2003b).

*** Under Alternatives C, D, and E, the BLM would designate setbacks from the boundaries of Category C units. These setbacks would provide management flexibility to adapt to other resource needs, threats, and opportunities along the unit boundaries of the unit. Wilderness characteristics within the setbacks could be substantially reduced or eliminated so their acreage is not included in the Category C unit totals in this table.



OHV Area Designations by Alternative

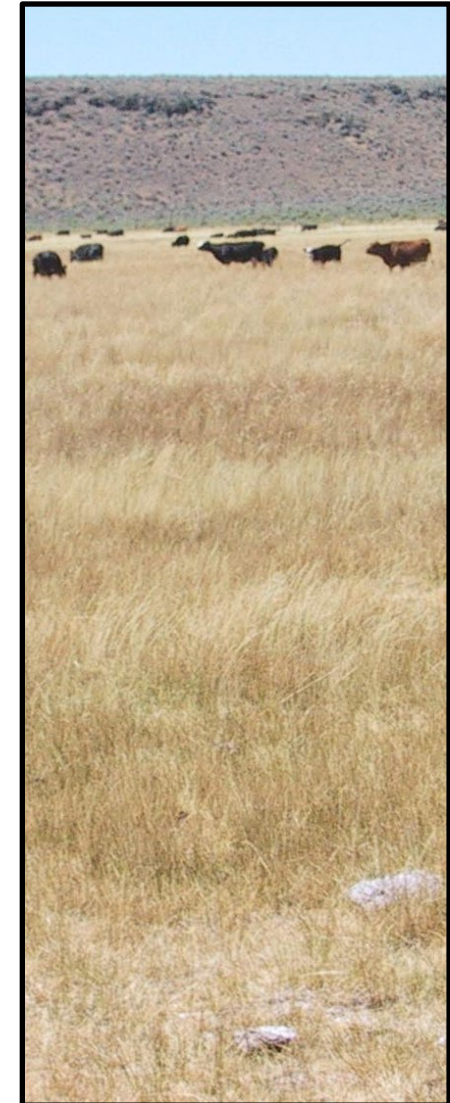
	No Action / Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D	Alt E
Open	476,174	252,569	0	70,573	466,798
Limited - Designated	384,930	125,764	384,193	384,193	384,193
Limited – Existing	2,339,555	681,928	2,807,904	2,737,306	2,341,105
Closed	10,809	2,143,923	11,285	11,285	11,285





Livestock Grazing Changes by Alternative

	No Action / Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D	Alt E
Areas not Meeting Standards for Rangeland Health Due to Livestock	No Change	Suspended for the life of the plan in Pasture / Allotment	Temporarily removed until meeting standards or making significant progress toward meeting standards	No Change - in areas where Livestock is a causal factor.	No Change
Voluntary Permit Relinquishment	No Change	Remove Grazing for the Life of the Plan in LWC, WSA, ACEC, RNA, and Crit. ESA	Remove Grazing for the Life of the Plan in WSA.	No Change	No Change



Next Steps – What Happens Now?

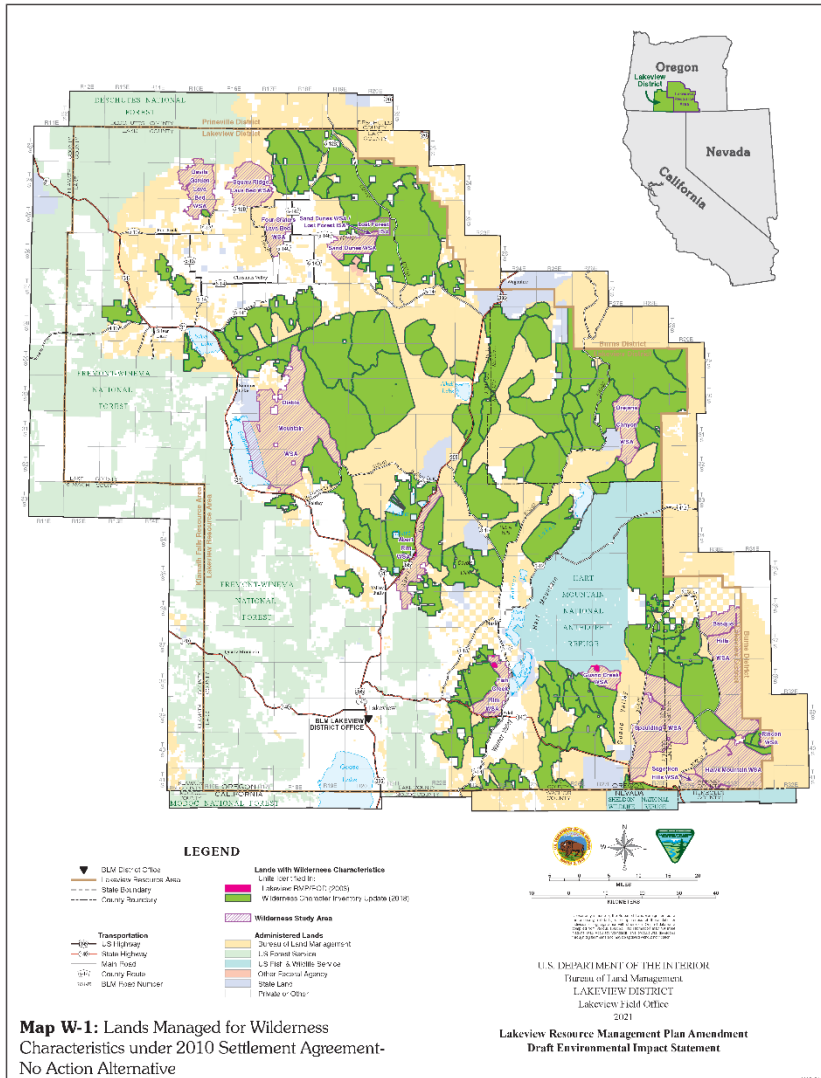
- **90 Day Public Comment Period** (June 7 – Sept.5)
- **Public Meetings** (Late June – Early July)
- **Proposed RMP / Final EIS**
- **Governor's Review Period / Protest Period**
- **Record of Decision**





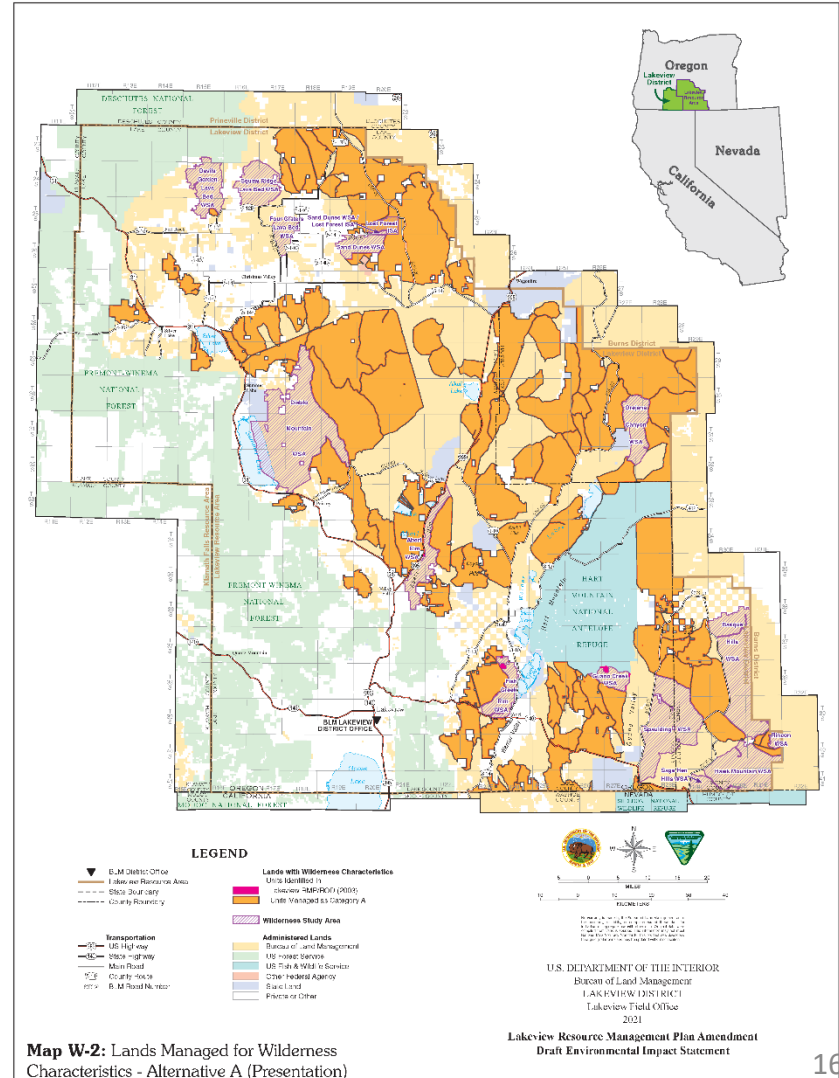
No Action

106 areas protected under SA (green)



Alternative A

106 areas managed for other multiple uses (orange)

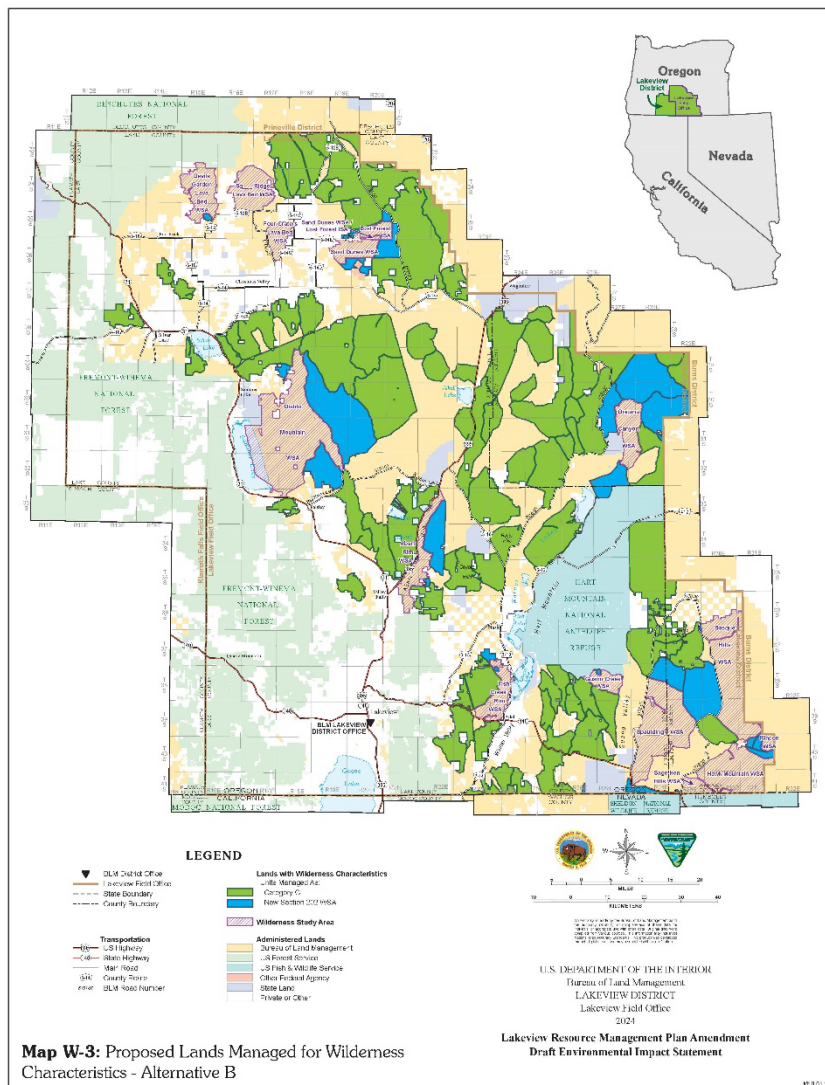




Alternative B

106 areas protected: 34 & 2 partial WSA (blue)

77 & 2 partial Cat. C (green)

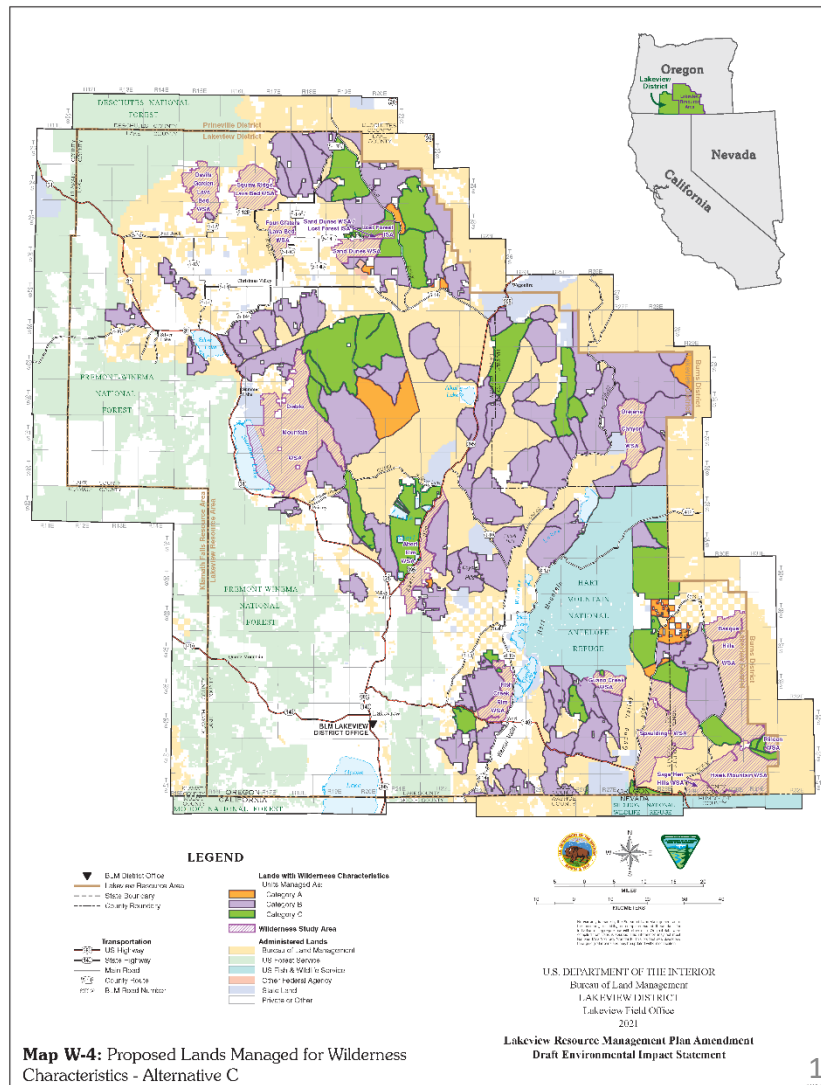


Alternative C - Preferred

26 and 4 partial areas protected (Cat C) (green)

71 and 2 partial balance (Cat B) (purple)

5 and 3 partial not-protected (Cat A) (orange)



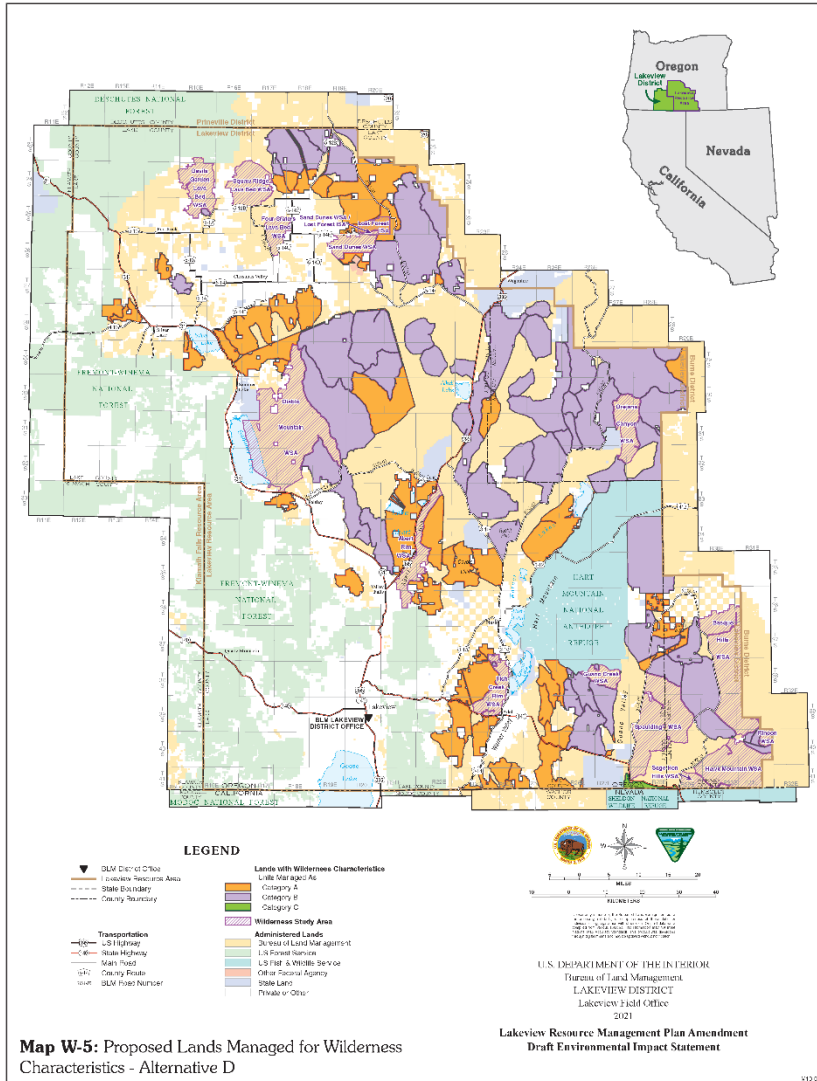


Alternative D—

2 areas protected (Cat C) (green)

41 units and 18 partial balance (Cat B) (purple)

45 units and 18 partial not protected (Cat A) (orange)

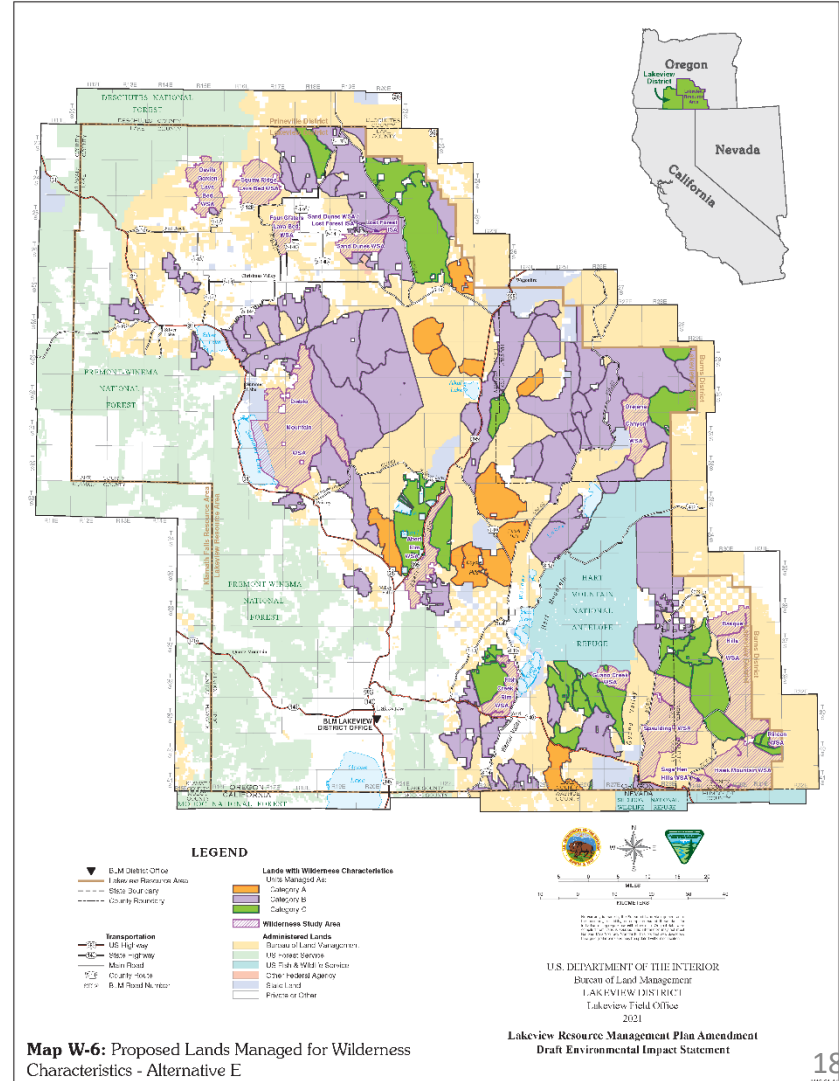


Alternative E – RAC Input

26 protected (Cat C) (green)

68 balance (Cat B) (purple)

12 not protected (Cat A) (orange)





Questions?

