

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision - 2014

Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests



March 14, 2014

Dear Member of the Public:

We are pleased to announce the release of the Blue Mountains National Forest Proposed Revised Land Management Plan (also known as the Forest Plan) and associated Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). After more than ten years of collaborative work with the public, local, state, and tribal governments, the DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan are available for you to read, review, and submit your comments during a 90-day comment period that begins March 14, 2014.

The Blue Mountains National Forests consist of 4.9 million acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands within the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla, and Malheur National Forests (including those portions of the Ochoco National Forest administered by the Malheur) (see attached map). The Hells Canyon National Recreation Area is not included in this analysis because the HCNRA Comprehensive Management Plan was revised in 2003 and is incorporated, without change, into the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land Management Plan.

A Forest Plan is a document that guides land management decisions (project level planning) for a period of about 15 years. It is strategic in nature and does not approve projects or actions on NFS lands. For example, it does not close specific roads, trails, or areas - further NEPA and public engagement is required for these types of site-specific level decisions.

A series of public meetings have been scheduled (see end of letter for meeting dates, times, and locations). The meetings are designed to share information about the DEIS and Proposed Revised Blue Mountains Forest Plan, explain the commenting process, answer questions, listen to public input, and provide an opportunity for you to visit with one of us or our Forest specialists. The comment period is an opportunity for you to be involved in the decision-making process, to offer thoughts on alternative ways the Forest Service can accomplish what is proposed, and to comment on the agency's preferred alternative and analysis. We hope you are able to attend one or more of these meetings.

This Forest Plan Revision effort began in 2003 with a series of 60+ public workshops in more than a dozen communities. Primary consultation partners include representatives from county governments, the states of Oregon and Washington, tribal governments and local staff of four federal agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Environmental Protection Agency and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)).

A co-convener group was established in 2004, involving county and state cooperators, and Tribal governments. The co-conveners have been working collaboratively with the Forest Service in providing feedback for the DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan.



for the greatest good

USDA Forest Service is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

In addition, meetings were held with other individuals and groups over the years. After seven years of collaborative work with the public, and local, state and tribal governments, the proposed action was released to the public for review and comment in March 2010.

During scoping in 2010, we received 4,174 comment letters; of which 95 percent of those letters were form letters. All 4,174 comment letters were analyzed and based on that analysis, six main issues were identified, which helped develop the range of alternatives in the DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan: The six issues include: 1) Ecological resilience (restoration); 2) Economic and Social Well-being; 3) Access; 4) Livestock Grazing and Grazing Land Vegetation; 5) Old Forest; and 6) Recommended Additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The alternatives developed from the six issues are described in Appendix A of the DEIS. Alternative A is the no-action alternative, and would maintain the management direction from the 1990 Land and Resource Management Plans, as amended. Alternative B is a modified version of the proposed action which was released in 2010, and Alternative E is the preferred alternative in the DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan. The Proposed Revised Land Management Plan is based on the preferred alternative.

The DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan are not final and do not contain decisions. These draft documents and your comments provide the basis for the development of the Final EIS, Forest Plans, and Records of Decision. Again, the comment period runs for 90 days from the date of publication in the Federal Register, currently scheduled for March 14, 2014. Although comments are welcome at any time, they are most helpful to us if received early.

Comments which are most meaningful and will be of the greatest help are those comments which address strategic direction for management of the national forest, or what the Forests should look like or provide for in the future (desired condition). At the end of this letter is information about how to comment, including examples of meaningful (substantive) comments, steps for using the new electronic comment format, and laws regarding the objection process and who qualifies (occurs during the release of the Final EIS).

Please share your comments about the DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan electronically through the link provided below, by mail, by fax, or at one of our public meetings. Please indicate which Forest your comments are applicable for if your comments are only regarding a specific Forest (Malheur, Umatilla, or Wallowa-Whitman). If you need assistance in submitting a comment and/or working through the electronic system, please call 541-523-1246 or 541-523-1302.

- **Electronic Mail:** <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/BlueMountainForestPlanRevisionComments>
- **Postal Mail:** Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team
P.O. Box 907
Baker City, OR 97814
- **Fax:** (541) 523-6392

The DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan can be downloaded from our web site:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/BlueMtnsPlanRevision>. We encourage you to download the documents from the web. These versions are more user-friendly because the documents are easily searchable for sections you are interested in, and it saves money in printing/shipping costs. Printed copies are available to read at local libraries and Forest District Offices. Compact discs (CDs) and a limited number of printed copies are also available upon request. Requests can be made by sending an email to: bluemtnplanrevision@fs.fed.us, or by calling 541-523-1302 or 541-523-1246.

To have standing in the objection process, comments must be substantive and include the names and addresses of commenters. Anonymous comments will be accepted and considered; however will not provide standing for objection. The Forest Service will use the “predecisional administrative review process,” also referred to as the “objection process” described in 36 CFR 219 Subpart B of the 2012 Planning Rule (Federal Register, Vol. 7, No. 68, p 21162-21276). This process gives an individual or entity an opportunity for an independent Forest Service review and resolution of issues before the approval of a plan revision. Subpart B identifies who may file objections to a plan revision; the responsibilities of the participants in an objection; and the procedures that apply to the review of the objection (36 CFR 219 Subpart B, §219.50). Individuals and entities who have submitted substantive formal comments related to this plan revision during the opportunities for public comment for this decision may file an objection. All “substantive” comments must be addressed in an appendix to the EA/EIS or in the project record for a decision documented through a decision memo (40 CFR 1503.4).

We appreciate your participation in the Forest Plan revision process. Your comments on the preferred alternative and the DEIS will assist us in developing the final EIS, final Forest Plans, and Record of Decision. We look forward to meeting and speaking with you at one of the public meetings.

Sincerely,



**Acting Forest Supervisor
Malheur National Forest**



**Forest Supervisor
Umatilla National Forest**



**Forest Supervisor
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest**

PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULE

Following is the public meeting schedule and locations with doors opening at 5:30 until 8:30 pm. The outline will include a formal presentation starting at 6:00, question and answer session to follow, and time to talk with the Forest Supervisors and specialists. There will be a process for providing comments at the meeting. The Proposed Revised Forest Plan and DEIS is available on the Forest Plan web site at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/BlueMtnsPlanRevision> in a searchable PDF format. You may also request a CD (also searchable) or printed copy by emailing us at bluemtnplanrevision@fs.fed.us or calling 541-523-1246 or 541-523-1302.

DATE	LOCATION
3/17/2014	John Day, OR – Federal Building, Juniper Hall ▪ 431 Patterson
3/18/2014	Burns, OR – Chamber of Commerce Community Center ▪ 484 N. Broadway Center
3/19/2014	Long Creek, OR – Long Creek Community Center ▪ 201 West 2nd Street
3/20/2014	Enterprise, OR – Cloverleaf Hall ▪ 668 NW 1st St. (Highway 3)
3/25/2014	Baker City, OR – Baker County Fairgrounds ▪ 2600 East Street
3/26/2014	La Grande, OR – Blue Mountain Conference Center ▪ 404 12th Street
3/27/2014	Halfway, OR – Lions Hall ▪ 235 Lion Street
3/31/2014	Portland, OR– Red Lion Convention Center ▪ 1021 NE Grand Avenue
4/1/2014	Pendleton, OR – Pendleton Convention Center, W Rms 3 & 4 ▪ 1601 Westgate
4/2/2014	Heppner, OR – Heppner City Hall ▪ 111 North Main
4/3/2014	Dayton, WA – Fair Grounds Youth Building, ▪ 1 North Pine
4/4/2014	Kennewick, WA – Benton PUD Auditorium ▪ 2721 West 10th Avenue



Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision
P.O. Box 907
Baker City, OR 97814



for the greatest good