

To determine the effectiveness of elk habitat management prescriptions, standards, and guidelines during plan implementation, the three Blue Mountain Forests (Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman) will develop and implement a coordinated monitoring program. Elk habitat condition, including road density, cover quality (satisfactory and marginal), cover size and spacing, forage quality and quantity, and any other appropriate factors, will be evaluated on a project basis and monitored on a watershed basis. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Washington Department of Wildlife will be invited to cooperate in the development and execution of the monitoring and evaluation program. This program will be initiated within one year of Plan implementation for the three Blue Mountain Forests. The results will be evaluated yearly. Appropriate adjustments to the three Forest Plans will be initiated within three to five years if warranted.

The Forest will work with the States and other entities thru the Blue Mountain Elk Management Initiative, to address questions of public and private land interaction with elk habitat management, and other potential strategies for minimizing impacts on elk habitat during plan implementation, project design and execution, and monitoring.

During the next ten years, we anticipate that studies at the Starkey Experimental Forest and Range will yield new insights into the relationships between management of forest land and elk. The decisions we are making in this plan are, for the most part, reversible. New information that becomes available as part of the Starkey studies can be incorporated into the next land management plans, or by amendment to this plan if considered necessary.

ISSUE AREA : Roadless Areas

- Should some or all of the Forest's roadless areas remain roadless, or be opened to roaded development? Should Pine Creek study area be recommended to Congress for wilderness classification?

The Forest currently has 18 separate roadless areas comprising 180,948 acres. Some people enjoy the recreation experience available in areas which have many characteristics of wilderness but fewer restrictions. Such areas can be characterized as providing semiprimitive nonmotorized or motorized recreation opportunities. Maintaining the undeveloped character will mean excluding such areas from regulated timber harvest and road construction. In areas providing for motorized use, off-road vehicle use may continue; mineral exploration and extraction could continue in both types of area.

Areas maintained in an undeveloped state will also be eligible for future wilderness consideration. National and Regional environmental groups such as the Wilderness Society, Native Plant Society, and Oregon Natural Resources Council are opposed to development of these areas stating that in many cases there is no need for development and they should remain undeveloped rather than foreclose on future wilderness possibilities. One of these areas, Pine Creek, was analyzed in this planning process for potential inclusion in the National Wilderness System because it was designated for further planning review by the RARE II Final Environmental Impact Statement. These same groups as well as local environmental groups, some hunters, and some local residents favor roadless management of these areas because they believe it protects sensitive plant species, wildlife habitat, water quality and other amenity values, better than management geared toward consumptive uses.

Others such as the mining and timber industry associations and businesses, many local residents, and local governments state that the management of these areas has been in limbo long enough. They want to develop access and the resources in these areas to end the uncertainty about their availability. They state that the resources in these areas need to be managed so that they can contribute to local industrial and economic needs. They believe that wildlife habitat can be improved and the vegetation will be in a more vigorous condition if the resources are managed for consumptive uses (primarily wood fiber production).

Three of the current roadless areas, Malheur River, Flag Creek, and North Fork Malheur River have been affected by the 1988 legislation adding two rivers to the Wild and Scenic River Act. The rivers, the Malheur and the North Fork Malheur, both have scenic segments, only the Malheur River has a wild segment. Acres within wild river designation will have no timber harvest and no road building. Acres within scenic river designation may be available for timber harvest and road construction after development of river management plans. For more information see ROD, ISSUE, WILD AND SCENIC

During the past year analysis has been underway to reassess the "outstandingly remarkable" qualities of the rivers mentioned above. On March 5, 1990 I signed a decision notice establishing the Wild and Scenic River boundaries based on the outstandingly remarkable values of the rivers. The Forest Plan has incorporated these new boundaries. Should my decision notice of March 5, 1990 be appealed and subsequently changed, the Plan will be amended.

The State of Oregon and other individuals have brought to my attention two concerns, which I will discuss next. The first is increasing ASQ in selected wildlife emphasis areas. The second concern is specific to McClellan Mountain and Dry Cabin.

This Plan has two management areas for wildlife emphasis, one that has scheduled timber harvest (Management Area 20) and one that does not (Management Area 21). Management Area 20 has scheduled harvest which contributes to the ASQ. Management Area 21 does not have scheduled harvest yet this prescription still allows for non-scheduled timber harvest "to accomplish wildlife habitat or fish habitat objectives, as established in a project-level environmental analysis" (FOREST PLAN, MANAGEMENT AREA 21, STANDARD #10). The State of Oregon and others felt that ASQ could be scheduled from Dixie Butte, Jumpoff Joe, and Nipple Butte, all located in Management Area 21. I seriously considered this possibility but felt that data was currently lacking to ensure a routine, scheduled harvest. Since these areas are roadless, there has not been as much data collected for them as compared to other areas of the forest.

In response to the Governor's concerns, and due to the lack of data for these areas, I have asked the Forest Supervisor to complete an integrated resource analysis for Jumpoff Joe, Nipple Butte, and a portion of Dixie Butte. This process will encompass data collection and analysis for all resources, such as wildlife, recreation, timber and more. After data collection and analysis has been completed I feel we will be in a much stronger position to see if data supports scheduled timber harvest to meet wildlife objectives. If indeed it does, NEPA analysis will be completed and the Plan can be amended to move these areas into the suitable land base (Management Area 20). This will require additional monies to accomplish and the requested budgets will need to be altered to reflect the necessary increase in dollars to complete this workload. In summary, I do not feel that I can schedule harvest from these acres at this time but will consider the State's request to do so after additional data collection and analysis has been completed.

The State of Oregon requested a hazard reduction analysis for Baldy Mountain and Glacier be completed. Baldy Mountain is in Management Area 21, and Glacier is in Management Area 11, both which allow non-scheduled harvest if in accord with management area objectives. I thought this was a reasonable request and have asked the Forest Supervisor to complete an integrated resource analysis area for both areas. If the analysis shows a need to reduce fire hazard levels to accomplish management area objectives, this activity can occur under the existing prescriptions. This project too will require additional monies to accomplish and the requested budgets will need to be altered to reflect the necessary increase in dollars to complete this workload.

Dry Cabin was in Management Area 20, scheduled timber harvest in Alternative I. The State of Oregon and others have requested that we take a look at the possibility of taking the southern two-thirds of the area out of the suitable land base and into Management Area 21. I have reviewed the data on this area and found it to be marginal timber growing land at best, contributing less than 1 MMBF annually.

to the ASQ. The land is characterized by stringers of timber which would be difficult to log and require expensive logging systems. More importantly this area is appropriate for wildlife emphasis and could not support a scheduled harvest regime while simultaneously meeting wildlife objectives. The land allocation adjacent to the south is semiprimitive nonmotorized (Management Area 10) and allocation of southern Dry Cabin into Management area 21 will be more consistent with the adjacent objectives. For these reasons it is my decision to place the southern two-thirds of Dry Cabin into Management Area 21. Changes to the suitable land base acreage and outputs have not been made to the Plan, nor are they reflected on Alternative I maps.

Over 50 citizens from Mount Vernon as well as the State of Oregon have voiced a concern about the land allocation for McClellan Mountain in Alternative I. I have listened to their concerns and deliberated over what the desired future condition for the area should be. The citizens of Mount Vernon would like to see ORV use permitted on the area. The State of Oregon would like to see the area emphasize wildlife objectives while scheduling timber harvest.

I feel that it is possible for ORV use and wildlife emphasis to be compatible if the area is managed for semiprimitive motorized recreation on **designated** roads and trails only. I do not feel that these values are compatible with scheduled timber harvest. With this in mind I have decided to change the **eastern** portion of McClellan Mountain **only** from Management Area 10 (semiprimitive nonmotorized) into Management Area 21 (wildlife emphasis without scheduled harvest). A standard has been added to allow motorized recreation on designated trails after completion of site-specific analysis, which will include analysis of soils, watershed and wildlife to assess their compatibility and to analyze the environmental impacts. If NEPA analysis shows that ORV trails and wildlife objectives are compatible and the impacts to the environment are acceptable, then ORV trails may be designated for motorized use. All other changes have not been incorporated into the Plan, nor are they reflected in Alternative I maps. The remainder of McClellan Mountain (western and central portions) will remain semiprimitive nonmotorized recreation just like in Alternative I.

Where the management strategy is to develop a previously undeveloped area, the Forest will minimize permanently open roads if not needed to meet management objectives. Provision is made for removal of trees when volume is lost through catastrophic events, when it meets the area's objectives.

The Jumpoff Joe Roadless Area is unique in that its acreage straddles across two national forest boundaries. The northern portion is located within the Umatilla National Forest, while the southern part is within the Malheur. This raises the concern regarding how consistent the two forests treat this area in their respective plans. In the Malheur plan, the area is treated by prescribing a wildlife emphasis with no scheduled timber harvest, and it is not included in the Malheur's suitable timber base. In the Umatilla Plan, it is treated as a scenic area and is included in the Umatilla's suitable timber base, although no scheduled timber harvest is scheduled to come off these acres. I feel these two different approaches are acceptable for a couple of reasons. First, the two forests are separate administrative units in slightly different settings. Second, the end result on the area in both plans is the same, no harvest is scheduled to come off of these acres. This means that although the plans technically treat the Jumpoff Joe differently, the forest uses will not be effected differently.

The following is a summary of the decisions I have made regarding roadless areas. The acres displayed here incorporate the changes I have discussed above but again, these acreage changes have not been made to the Plan.

Approximately 75,034 acres (44% of the current roadless area inventory) will be managed with no scheduled timber harvest and no additional roads (through semiprimitive motorized or nonmotorized and the wild portion of the wild and scenic river allocations). These acres consist of two roadless areas in their entirety and parts of six others. These include: Aldrich (8,609 acres); Shaketable (8,977 acres); parts of McClellan Mountain (13,917 acres), Bear Creek (former North Fork Malheur River) (2,710

acres); Malheur River (3,066 acres); Glacier Mountain (14,578 acres); Myrtle-Silvies (9,855 acres); and Greenhorn Mountain (13,322 acres). Greenhorn Mountain is also known as Vinegar Hill-Indian Rock Scenic Area, Management Area 7, (See Appendix J, Allocation of RARE II Acres by management area).

The acres mentioned above (75,034) are to be managed in an unroaded condition, but for multiple use. Although some may argue that this is creating "de facto wilderness", we in fact allow many activities which are not allowed in wilderness areas. The many uses allowed in these unroaded areas that cannot occur in wilderness include structural habitat improvements, recreation facility improvements such as sanitary facilities and primitive camp sites, and under certain conditions, special uses such as electronic sites. In addition, the use of mechanical equipment will be allowed in the maintenance and administration of lands in the unroaded allocations.

Approximately 14,274 acres in, or adjacent to, two other roadless areas will be managed with a "wildlife emphasis - with scheduled timber harvest" prescription. These include 5,229 acres in the Dry Cabin Wildlife Emphasis Area (Management Area 20A), and 9,045 acres in the Utley Butte Wildlife Emphasis Area (Management Area 20B).

Also, 37,476 acres in, or portions of, six roadless areas will be managed with a "wildlife emphasis - no scheduled timber harvest" prescription (Management Area 21). These areas include Jumpoff Joe (4,006 acres); Baldy Mountain (5,380 acres); Dixie Butte (6,895 acres), and Nipple Butte (5,795 acres); McClellan Mountain (4,800 acres) and Dry Cabin (10,600 acres). In these areas timber harvest will be allowed only if it is needed to meet wildlife objectives.

While roads in the wildlife emphasis areas, with and without scheduled timber harvest (Management Areas 20A, 20B, and 21), will be allowed, additional road construction will be minimized. In these areas all roads will be obliterated or closed to vehicle traffic once project activities are completed.

Before timber harvesting and road building takes place in any former RARE II roadless area, an area transportation analysis will be completed for it and the surrounding area.

Approximately 2,646 acres of the Dixie roadless area will be allocated to the General Forest Management Area. However, these acres will be managed to emphasize winter recreation potential.

Those areas not selected for unroaded management were assigned to a variety of management emphases. Developmental activities will occur in all these areas to varying degrees. In some areas the activities will occur over much of the land area, significantly reducing its roadless character. In other areas, varying amounts of undeveloped land area will remain.

It is my decision not to recommend Pine Creek for wilderness classification at this time. The Pine Creek area will be managed primarily to maintain big-game winter range habitat. The remainder of the area will be managed primarily to protect bald eagle winter roosts and maintain old growth.

ISSUE AREA : Economic Stability

- How will management of Forest resources affect local communities?

The Malheur National Forest comprises about 39% of Grant County's acreage and 5% of Harney County's acreage, as well as small acreages in Baker and Malheur Counties. Because of the substantial acreages, distinct economic ties, and the people's use patterns, the Forest's primary zone of influence has been determined to be Grant and northern Harney counties. Industries and communities in adjacent counties are also affected by resource management policies on the Forest.