

NEWS RELEASE

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The Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision will be Completed Using the 2004 Planning Regulations

The Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests have decided to complete their on-going forest plan revisions under the recently approved 2004 Forest Planning Regulations.

The three Forests, collectively referred to as the national forests of the Blue Mountains, began their four-year revision effort in the fall of 2003 using Forest Planning Regulations adopted in 1982. The 2004 regulations give the three Forests the option of continuing to revise their forest plans using the 1982 regulations or switch to the 2004 regulations to complete their revisions.

Several features in the 2004 regulations factored into the decision to adopt them, including use of a collaborative public process; a clear commitment to working closely with tribes and other agencies; consideration of current science; and the emphasis on social, economic, and ecological sustainability. While these are all consistent with the 1982 regulations, they are emphasized more strongly in the 2004 regulations.

The new regulations call for increased public involvement in all phases of Forest Plan development, from beginning to end. While the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team has been working with the public since last June to develop the plans collaboratively, the new regulations will allow that collaborative work to continue on through looking at options before settling on a revised Plan.

"A key strength in the 2004 regulations is the thorough process it establishes for evaluating sustainability for species of concern and species of interest," said Dave Schmitt, Team Leader for the forest plan revision. "The new regulations ensure the diversity of plant and animal communities and ecological integrity," he added.

The 2004 planning regulations facilitate adaptive management by allowing the Forest Service to respond quicker as new science becomes available, as on-the-ground conditions change, or as social values evolve. Also valuable is the increased emphasis on monitoring contained in the new regulations, and in tracking a few key Forest plan aspects using an environmental management system (EMS). The EMS is a system to review and evaluate activities related to environmental impacts and requires independent audits.

An overview and discussion of the 2004 Forest Planning Regulations will be included in Round Three of Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Community Collaborative Workshops. These workshops, which will be held in 10 communities across the area in April and early May, will provide participants with an excellent opportunity to learn more about the new regulations.

For more information, please contact Tami Paulsen, Public Affairs Specialist, at 541-523-1332 or Dave Schmitt, Team Leader, at 541-523-1248 or visit the forest plan revision website for a workshop schedule at www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/blue_mtn_planrevision/.



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