



USDA Forest Service
Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests

Wildland Fire Suitability in Forest Plan Revision

Revised May 9, 2006

Background

The National Forest Management Act (NMFA) requires the identification of the suitability of lands for resource management. The 2005 Planning Regulations require that the “**responsible official, as appropriate, shall identify areas within a national forest system unit as generally suitable for uses that are compatible with desired conditions and objectives for that area.**”

The Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team will determine general suitability for prescribed fire, wildland fire use, and appropriate fire suppression response.

Process

The Revision Team used the following criteria to identify suitability:

1. Fire use is specifically prohibited by law, regulation or policy (no such prohibitions exist).
2. Public use levels are high enough over a large enough area that public safety concerns cannot be addressed on an individual incident or project basis.
3. Expected fire effects would slow down movement toward the desired conditions or attainment of resource objectives *or* use would result in an unacceptable risk to other ownerships.
4. The size of the area is smaller than the *characteristic fire size* (wildland fire use only) for the fire regime(s) involved.
5. Fire use is incompatible with other resource objectives or allocations tied to legal protection mandates, such as provided for by the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, or other law; and areas of high public use.

Product

Applying the above criteria resulted in a determination that all national forest land in the Blue Mountains is *generally suitable* for wildland fire use, prescribed fire, and a minimum suppression response of “monitor” under the appropriate conditions.

The Probability for the Implementation of Wildland Fire Use Map shows those areas most likely to have wildland fire use, or a monitoring suppression response applied during the primary fire season (considering the current high fuel hazard occurring in much of the dry forest environment). The following areas would generally not have wildland fire use applied during the main fire season:

- Wildland-urban interface areas
- Municipal watersheds
- Starkey Experimental Forest
- National forest land within two miles of private lands
- Recreation infrastructure areas

How this Relates to the Revised Forest Plans

The maps, criteria, and desired conditions will be used to develop future site-specific projects and an annual fire management plan that will discuss more detailed strategies for the use of fire.