



File Code: 1920

Date: June 7, 2007



Dear Interested Party:

We have been working on revising the land management plans that will guide the management of the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests for the next 10 – 15 years. Since we began this effort in 2003, hundreds of people have helped us develop parts of the revised plans. We appreciate your involvement and look forward to continuing our work together. On that note, I want to be sure you are aware of a recent development.

The United States District Court, Northern District of California, ruled on March 30, 2007, that the Forest Service's adoption of the 2005 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (2005 Planning Rule) violated the Administrative Procedures Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act. The Court remanded the matter to the Forest Service to correct the violations. Pending compliance, the Court enjoined the Forest Service from using the 2005 Planning Rule. This means we cannot use the 2005 Planning Rule to guide our revision effort. As a result, we have suspended work that is *directly associated* with the 2005 Planning Rule, such as issuing the draft proposed revised plan as we had hoped to do this fall.

At a national level, the Forest Service has initiated actions to address the violations identified by the Court. A notice of intent to develop an environmental impact statement (EIS) on development of a new planning rule was published in the Federal Register on May 11, 2007. A draft EIS is scheduled to be released for comment in June 2007, with a final EIS and rule to be released in November 2007.

While we wait for another planning rule to be issued, the revision team is continuing to work on aspects of the plan that are permitted under the Court's ruling, including analysis that will be needed regardless of what rule we use to complete the revision. Examples of important analysis that we are continuing to work on include:

- Watershed modeling – assessing watershed conditions to evaluate aquatic species viability (primarily threatened, endangered, and sensitive fish and other stream-dependent plant and animal species).
- Vegetation modeling – evaluating current vegetation conditions (kinds, numbers, and sizes of trees) and trend data as well as fire risk and forest health.
- Social/Economic modeling – evaluating potential effects of various management activities on forest users and local communities and economies.
- Wildlife modeling – evaluating current wildlife habitat conditions and trends, and fire, insect, and disease risks.
- Roadless area analysis – completing the updated inventory and evaluation of roadless areas to determine how these areas should be managed.



- Desired conditions – describing the ecological, economic, and social conditions that we expect to exist in the future.
- Documentation files and process papers.

We will continue to use information and comments received in past public meetings.

We will post more information about the revision effort to our website as it becomes available. The address is www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/blue_mtn_planrevision/. For those of you who are interested, we have posted copies of the Court's ruling and the Chief's letter outlining how forests undergoing revision will comply with the Court's ruling.

Thank you for your patience. If you have any comments or questions, please don't hesitate to write us at blue_mtn_planrevision@fs.fed.us or the post office address above or call me at 541-523-1248.

Sincerely,

/s/ David C Schmitt

DAVID C. SCHMITT
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