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Subject: Moving Forward Following the 2002 Fire Season

A central theme in the Umpqua National Forest Plan is protecting the environment while providing the goods and services that people need. Last summer's fires affected about 88,000 acres—roughly nine percent of the Umpqua National Forest. Understanding our future management in the context of these events is important. In order to accomplish this task, we have completed two documents: the Wildfire Effects Evaluation Project (WEEP) report and a Watershed Restoration Business Plan Update.

WEEP assesses the 2002 fire effects at a watershed scale. WEEP addresses fire effects to a variety of natural and cultural resource issues within the fire areas. Some objectives of WEEP include:

- Building a public record of the effects of the fire on the various natural and cultural resources found within the fire area
- Establishing a baseline from which to evaluate change over time
- Update existing Watershed Analyses within the fire areas
- Providing needed information for future project proposals like salvage timber sales or restoration projects

The second document is a Watershed Restoration Business Plan Update to account for the impacts from the 2002 fires. This is a broader look than the 2000 Plan and necessarily encompasses the entire Forest. The focus of this update is to strengthen the terrestrial and fire-related information in the existing Watershed Restoration Business Plan, and to make recommendations as to which parts of the Forest have higher priorities for terrestrial restoration work. This is intended to complement the aquatic restoration strategies already established. Restoration projects may include reforestation, thinning, treatments for fuel reduction, prescribed fire, noxious weeds eradication, timber sales and harvest of other forest products.

Taken together, these documents provide us with a roadmap to continue implementation of our Forest Plan. WEEP gives us a clear picture of resource conditions after the 2002 fires. The Restoration Business Plan Update provides a clear set of investment and work priorities based on the needs of society and potential improvements to land conditions.

WEEP and the Watershed Restoration Business Plan Update are not decision documents. They provide information and priorities for implementation of the Umpqua National Forest Plan, but they do not make any plan or project decisions. I believe by taking the time to look at the bigger picture now, we can work much more efficiently in the future.

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