

Dear Interested Party:

You are invited to comment on the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Kahler Dry Forest Restoration Project proposed by the Heppner Ranger District, Umatilla National Forest. The Kahler project planning area is approximately 31,000 acres in size and is located in Wheeler and Grant Counties, Oregon, approximately 40 miles southwest of Heppner, Oregon.

The Kahler project area has seen relatively recent damage from defoliating insects and uncharacteristic wildfire effects associated with the 1996 Wheeler Point fire. The causes of these symptoms are related to historical changes in species composition, forest structure, and stand density, in part due to past suppression actions and harvest. If composition, structure, and density are not moved back within their historical ranges of variation, the insect and fire problems will continue into the future. Treatment of the project area will help foster early seral recruitment, lead to increased individual tree vigor, and increased resilience to wildfire and insect related disturbance that will incorporate and address wildlife and aquatic habitat issues associated with the current landscape.

There are 3 alternatives analyzed in the EIS: Alternative 1 is the No Action alternative, under which implementation of proposed activities would not occur at this time. Alternative 2, the proposed action and preferred alternative includes timber harvest activities across approximately 12,000 acres using harvester/forwarder, tractor, and/or skyline logging systems, mastication equipment, and hand-felling. The alternative includes cutting of trees in approximately 680 acres within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs). Alternative B also includes the harvest of trees with stem diameters greater than 21 inches at breast height within portions of activity units.

Alternative 3 analyzes the project area with less commercial thin units, modified unit boundaries, or changes to unit prescriptions to retain marginal and satisfactory cover for elk in larger patches distributed across the landscape. Timber harvest in Alternative 3 would be approximately 11,500 acres, of which an additional 150 acres (approximate) of non-commercial juniper.

Under both action alternatives prescribed fire would be utilized within the entire 31,000 acre boundary, and changes are proposed to the transportation system.

You may view and download the DEIS at the following internet address <http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=40712>. If you would like a copy of the DEIS (CD or paper), please contact John Evans at 541-278-3869 or email at johnhevens@fs.fed.us. Also on this website is a link to subscribe to email updates. This link is located on the right-hand side of the page, under the "Get Connected" tab. By subscribing to the Kahler project, you will automatically be notified of any updates to the Kahler web page. You can also submit your comments online by using clicking the button "Comment on this Project".

Instructions for comments

It is important that reviewers provide their comments at such times and in such a manner that they are useful to the agency's preparation of the environmental impact statement. Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and comments. The submission of timely and specific comments can affect a reviewer's ability to participate in subsequent objection process or judicial review. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment will be part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however,

anonymous comments will not provide the respondent with standing to participate in subsequent objection process or judicial review.

Comments can be mailed to the Responsible Official, Kevin Martin, Forest Supervisor, at 72510 Coyote Rd., Pendleton, Oregon 97801 or by fax to (541) 278-3730. Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours (between 7:45 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday), via telephone (541) 278-3716, TDD/TTY (541) 278- 3995, or in person.

Electronic comments not submitted on the above website must be submitted as part of the actual e-mail message or as an attachment in Microsoft Word, rich text format, or portable document format only and sent to: comments- pacificnorthwestumatilla@fs.fed.us. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than those listed above, in other formats, or containing viruses will be rejected. For electronically mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of the comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Comments will be accepted for 45 days following the date of publication of the notice of availability (NOA) in the Federal Register which is expected to occur on October 10, 2014. The publication date of the NOA in the Federal Register is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for a proposed action in a DEIS. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure their comments are received in a timely manner, before the end of the comment period .

Only those individuals who submit written comments specific to the project during the comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will have standing to file an objection (36 CFR 21 8.7).

The final EIS and decision document for this project will be mailed to those who request them and/or to those individuals who submit comments during the 45-day comment period. If you have questions please contact John Evans, Project Lead, Umatilla National Forest, 72510 Coyote Road, Pendleton, Oregon, 97801, phone (541) 278-3869, or email johnhevens@fs.fed.us

I appreciate the interest you have shown in this project and request your continued assistance in the management of forest resources in the Kahler area.

Ann Niesen
District Ranger

Date

Honorable Gary Burke, Board of Trustees, Chairman
CTUIR (Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation)
46411 Timine Way
Pendleton, OR 97801

cc: Audie Huber, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager

Honorable E. Austin Greene Jr., Tribal Council Chairman
CTWS (Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation)
1233 Veterans Drive, PO Box C
Warm Springs, Oregon 97761

Cc: Clay Penhollow, Natural Resources