Dove Vegetation Management Project

Inventoried Roadless Areas and Other Undeveloped Areas Report

Prepared by:
Lori Bailey
NEPA Coordinator

for:
Emigrant Creek Ranger District
Malheur National Forest

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Affected Environment

Inventoryed Roadless Areas

As part of the Land and Resource Management Planning process (LRMP 46 CFR 219.27 (c)) the 1990 Malheur National Forest Plan identified areas of at least 5,000 acres, without developed and maintained roads, and substantial natural conditions. These areas were called Inventoryed Roadless Areas (IRAs). The IRAs for the Malheur National Forest can be found in Appendix C of the LRMP Final Environmental Assessment.

On 1/12/2001, the Department of Agriculture adopted the Final Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR), intended to protect and conserve inventoried roadless areas on National Forest System lands. Since adoption of the 2001 RACR, the term IRA has been defined to refer to areas identified in the set of maps published for the 2000 FEIS for that rule. The IRAs identified in the 1990 Malheur National Forest LRMP, Appendix C were included in the Final EIS RACR.

The 9,699 acre Utley Butte Inventoried Roadless Area is partially (1,695 acres) within the Dove project area.

Utley Butte Inventoried Roadless Area

History

This area was inventoried in RARE and enlarged during the RARE II inventory. Under the South Fork Planning Unit Environmental Impact Statement and the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement, this area was allocated to non-wilderness uses. In 1990, the Malheur National Forest Plan and FEIS allocated most of the area to wildlife emphasis and some to old growth management. Since the Forest Plan was approved, approximately 6 acres have been harvested from the area primarily within the current wildlife emphasis areas. There are 0.50 miles of classified road that have been buffered out of the inventoried roadless area.

Geography/Topography

Spoon, Alder, Utley, Rail, and Corral creeks drain the Utley Butte area (all tributaries to the South Fork John Day River). The resulting draws are relatively steep near the southern boundary of the area and the western edge of the area. The topography of the area can be described as steep, primarily north-facing slopes and flat-topped ridges. Elevation of the area ranges from 5,000 to 7,163 feet. Soils in the area range in depth from 4 to more than 30 inches. There is a combination of soils derived from volcanic ash and loamy or loamy/clayey soils, with the ash soils being more productive. Ash soils are more predominant in the western and southern portions of the area, although they occur throughout. For the most part, the erosion hazard for the area is high while the compaction and displacement hazard is low to moderate. All of the area is covered by Tertiary-age volcanic-rocks, which include Miocene-to-Pliocene and Pliocene volcanic flow rocks, and Pliocene welded tuffs.

Vegetation/Ecosystem

This area is 77 percent forested. Vegetative distribution on the north-facing area is characterized by trees in the bottoms, on side-slopes, and on gentle flat-topped ridges. Grass and low shrubs are found on steeper side-slopes and rocky areas. Ridges and south slopes support ponderosa pine and juniper with a mountain-mahogany understory. Ground cover is generally sagebrush and various bunchgrasses. Conifers are primarily confined to drainages and the northern slopes.
Overstories consist of ponderosa pine and fir with some western larch. Understories are mainly white fir and Douglas-fir with grass and forbs as ground cover. Streamside vegetation generally consists of alder and willow. This vegetation is mainly confined to upper drainages since lower drainages have little or no streamside vegetation.

**Current Uses**

Big-game hunters are offered an experience considerably different from that of hunting on intensively managed forestland. At present, recreation use is limited to hunting during the fall and some hiking and sightseeing during other seasons. There is suspicion that motorized users access this area from private lands. In addition, forest roads may be open to motorized traffic on the north end of the area.

**Key Attractions**

The major attraction of this area is the large ponderosa pine. In addition, the roadless area offers opportunities for solitude, to "get away from it all", and to enjoy "peace and quiet without motorized intrusions." The main viewpoint is Snow Mountain Lookout. Various species of big game animals are available for hunting, and viewing.

Figure 2. Utley Butte Inventoried Roadless Area and the Dove Project area.
Areas with Undeveloped Character

Areas with undeveloped character include acres of land that have no history of harvest activity and do not contain forest roads and are not inventoried roadless areas, or a designated wilderness area. They are stand-alone polygons of varying acreages all less than or equal to 4,999 acres within the project planning area.

There are no Forest-wide or management area standards specific to undeveloped lands in the Malheur Forest Plan. All lands, including undeveloped lands, are managed consistent with Forest-wide standards and guidelines and by designated Forest Plan management area allocations.

The Dove Project Area was reviewed for areas of undeveloped character using GIS generated maps. One hundred-sixteen individual polygons were identified as other undeveloped lands. Many individual polygons were located both inside and outside the project area. Individual polygons of other undeveloped lands less than an acre were eliminated from further study because no special or unique resource values were identified and the description of effects to individual pieces of land less than one acres are better disclosed as part of the other resources environmental effects analysis in previous sections in this chapter. The table below shows the number, size class, and acres represented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Polygons</th>
<th>Size Class</th>
<th>Total Acres</th>
<th>Total Acres in Project Area</th>
<th>Non Forested Acres in Project Area</th>
<th>Acres Treated in Proposed Action</th>
<th>Acres Treated in Alternative 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>1 to 99 acres</td>
<td>1,944</td>
<td>1,595</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>100 to 499 acres</td>
<td>5,081</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>2,528</td>
<td>2,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>500 to 999 acres</td>
<td>2,515</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1,000 to 4,999 acres</td>
<td>21,515</td>
<td>15,753</td>
<td>1,599</td>
<td>10,331</td>
<td>10,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>116</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>31,054</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,163</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,966</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,361</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,113</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About nine percent of other undeveloped lands in the project area are considered non forest or non-vegetation. The majority of the approximate 22,163 acres of other undeveloped lands are allocated in Forest Plan management areas MA1-2 General Forest/Rangeland, and MA4A Big Game Winter Range Maintenance. Both allocations allow that timber be managed on a scheduled basis, all types of prescribed fire may be used to accomplish management objectives, and road reconstruction and maintenance are permitted within Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Past management and current developed conditions within the project boundary reflect the intent and decisions made in the Forest Plan (as amended), and reflects consistency with Forest Plan management area allocations.

Any areas with unique ecological values within the project area are currently maintained for those values with Forest Plan standards and guidelines for management area allocations such as, MA4A Big Game Winter Range Maintenance, MA13 Old Growth, and RHCAs. See the EA, Chapter 1, pp. 1-6 to 1-7, for brief descriptions of goals associated with each Forest Plan management area allocation.

No special or unique resource values in undeveloped lands have been identified by project resource specialists in their environmental analysis for the implementation of any alternative analyzed in detail. However, resources are present in these other undeveloped land such as, soils, water quality, vegetation, fuels, air quality; plant and animal communities, habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; noxious weeds, roaded modified and roaded natural recreation, semi-primitive non-motorized and motorized recreation, scenery, and cultural resources. The affected environment for each of these resources is the same as disclosed in previous sections of this chapter and not reiterated here.
Figure 1. Undeveloped Areas Greater Than 1,000 Acres, Dove Project Area

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Environmental Consequences

Methodology
A GIS analysis was performed that removed past harvest that is still evident on the ground and roads that are still evident on the ground. Refer to the files.

Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis
The cumulative effects analysis boundary for areas with undeveloped character is the full extent of those areas. Therefore, undeveloped character extends beyond the project area boundary but is bounded by the farthest out polygons. Refer to Figure 3.

Past, Present, and Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis
Past, present and reasonably foreseeable activities that are relevant to this resource are displayed in the Dove EA, Chapter 3.

Alternative 1 – No Action

Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects
By definition, direct and indirect effects (40 CFR 1508.8), and cumulative effects (40 CFR 1508.7) result from the proposed action, and thus are not germane to the No Action alternative. Therefore, under the No Action alternative there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to the Utley Butte IRA or the other areas of undeveloped character because no activities would occur in these areas. The affected environment would remain unchanged, except by natural processes and ongoing management activities.

Consequences of No Action may occur because the landscape would continue developing complex fuel loads. A wildfire may burn more extensively and kill more trees within timbered stringers in grass/tree mosaic. There would be more dramatic impacts (more acres turned black) to visual quality caused by a wildfire compared to a prescribed fire, however, it would be a natural occurrence and expected condition of the landscape.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action and Alternative 3

Direct and Indirect Effects

Effects on Nine Characteristics of Inventoried Roadless Areas
The Proposed Action alternative does not propose any activities within the Utley Butte IRA therefore there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to the nine characteristics of IRAs. Alternative 3 proposes prescribed fire on about 1,695 acres.

High Quality or Undisturbed Soil, Water, and Air

Soil - DeBano et al. (1998) states that low to moderate intensity fires have minimal effects on soil infiltration, citing sources that document infiltration rates as near normal in areas affected by low intensity fires. Prescribed fire would generally be low to moderate intensity, resulting in little
change to soil structure or infiltration capacity and minimal amounts of surface runoff; resulting in minimal surface erosion. Regrowth after spring burns would be effective in preventing soil erosion and downstream sedimentation. Due to varying conditions and fuel densities, prescribed fire is expected to spread in a mosaic pattern, burning some areas and bypassing others. As a result, patches of unburned ground distributed across the landscape will act as sediment capture sites until the burned patches revegetate.

Water - Riparian zones, characterized by wet fuels, should inhibit combustion and maintain a buffer that reduces sedimentation into an associated stream channel. Fire may creep into riparian areas and be allowed to burn in order to reduce conifer densities and stimulate riparian species such as aspen and willow. Effects on water quality would be minimal due to the buffering influence of riparian areas. In the short-term, the prescribed fires may produce small amounts of sediment into the project area tributaries as groundcover may be consumed in small areas of moderate to high intensity burning. In the Blue Mountains, groundcover usually returns to or exceeds pre-burn levels within 3-5 years (Johnson 1998). Sediment yields, however, are expected to be insignificant for the following reasons: (1) low intensity burns, (2) timing of burning (3) mosaic burn patterns, (4) moist/wet riparian conditions will reduce fire severity.

Air Quality – Any smoke from prescribed fire treatments would comply with the Oregon Smoke Management Implementation Plan and would be implemented following the guidelines in the plan. Emissions from prescribed burning would be less than emissions caused by a wildfire. Additionally, prescribed fire will take multiple years to implement. This lag time will limit how much smoke is created in any given year.

Sources of Public Drinking Water

There are no public drinking water sources identified within the Utley Butte IRA in the Dove project area.

Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities; Habitat for Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Candidate, and Sensitive Species and for those Species Dependent on Large, Undisturbed Areas of Land

Plants – There are no federally threatened, endangered, or proposed plant species documented or suspected to occur on the Malheur National Forest. All known populations of sensitive plants would be buffered from ground disturbing activities by approximately 100 feet. Additionally, a botanist would be consulted before burning occurs in areas with known sensitive plant populations. These protections should adequately ensure that there are no direct or indirect impacts from project activities to the known populations of sensitive plants. Therefore, there would be No Impact (NI) to known populations of sensitive plants.

The effects of prescribed fire on the Malheur broad habitat association groups are the same as those described in the sensitive plant section of the Dove EA.

Terrestrial Wildlife Species – Proposed prescribed burning in the Utley Butte IRA under Alternative 3 would have No Effect, No Impact, or Beneficial Impacts on all terrestrial TES species; except fringed myotis. Because there would be a potential for loss of roosting habitat by prescribed fire, activities May Impact Individuals or Habitat, but Will Not Likely Contribute to a Trend Towards Federal Listing or Cause a Loss of Viability to the Population or Species (MIIH) determination is given for fringed myotis; but a Beneficial Impact (BI) determination is
also given for the mid to long term due to improvement in foraging habitat and riparian restoration treatments.

Proposed prescribed burning in the Utley Butte IRA under Alternative 3 is not expected to contribute to a negative trend in viability for all terrestrial management indicator species.

Aquatic Species — No threatened or endangered aquatic species occur or are suspected to occur within the project area. Two sensitive species occur in the project area, redband trout and Columbia spotted frog. Proposed prescribed burning in the Utley Butte IRA under Alternative 3 May Impact Individuals or Habitat, but Will Not Likely Contribute to a Trend Towards Federal Listing or Cause a Loss of Viability to the Population or Species (MIIH) determination is given for redband trout and Columbia spotted frog; but a Beneficial Impact (BI) determination is also given for the long term.

Proposed prescribed burning in the Utley Butte IRA under Alternative 3 is not expected to contribute to a negative trend in viability for all aquatic management indicator species.

Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and Semi-Primitive Motorized Classes of Dispersed Recreation

The Utley Butte IRA is primarily designated for providing semi-primitive non-motorized, and roaded natural recreational settings. The primary recreational use is likely big game hunting and other dispersed recreation activities (e.g., camping, hiking).

Effects to semi-primitive classes of recreation, including isolation from the sights and sounds of man, would be affected by the increase of human presence and activity during the time of proposed burning. Smoke may reduce the quality of the experience for recreationists that may be in the area, but it would be of short duration.

Natural Appearing Landscapes with High Scenic Quality; Reference Landscapes

For a few years after prescribed burning within the IRA, burned areas would display a blackened color until grasses, brush, and herbaceous species recover. Dead trees, particularly small trees (saplings to poles) would be evident over a 5 to 10-year period. Few overstory trees are expected to be killed.

Fireline construction is not proposed in the IRA, blackline would be utilized. Landscape prescribed burning would require the cutting of snags that pose a hazard to workers, and the limbing-up (pruning) of other trees incidental to prescribed burning activities. The sight of cut snags could affect the natural appearing landscape and sense of solitude for some. This activity would not affect natural integrity because fire is a natural condition on the landscape and influenced the development of the forest community. Effects on apparent naturalness would be minimal and of short duration during implementation of the prescribed fire.

Traditional Cultural Properties and Sacred Sites

There are no known traditional cultural properties or sacred sites within the portion of the Utley Butte IRA proposed for prescribed burning under Alternative 3.
**Other Locally Identified Unique Characteristics**

There are no other locally identified unique characteristics in the portion of the Utley Butte IRA proposed for prescribed burning under Alternative 3.

**Other Undeveloped Areas**

The table below is a summary showing the changes in acres after implementation of biomass removal activities for other undeveloped lands by alternative. This table only includes other undeveloped lands within the project area, because other undeveloped lands outside the project area would not be impacted by proposed activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>Acres Prior to Activity</th>
<th>Acres Remaining After Biomass Removal</th>
<th>Acres Changed</th>
<th>Percent of Area After Implementation</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Action</td>
<td>22,163</td>
<td>22,163</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>No change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Action</td>
<td>22,163</td>
<td>7,802</td>
<td>(-14,361)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>(-65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative 3</td>
<td>22,163</td>
<td>8,050</td>
<td>(-14,113)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>(-64%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under the Proposed Action and Alternative 3, biomass removal and associated activities would occur on approximately 14,361 acres and 14,113 acres of other undeveloped lands, respectively. Effects to undeveloped areas greater than 1,000 acres are also displayed in Table 1. Under the Proposed Action and Alternative 3, biomass removal and associated activities would occur on approximately 10,331 acres and 10,121 acres of other undeveloped lands greater than 1,000 acres, respectively. Prescribed burning in other undeveloped lands would have no impact to the designation of other undeveloped lands.

In areas where proposed project activity would occur on other undeveloped lands, the impacts to soil, water quality, air quality; plant and animal communities; habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; recreation; noxious weeds; and cultural resources, etc. are the same as disclosed for areas of proposed project activity in previous resource sections of this chapter and are not reiterated here. Environmental effects to resources in other undeveloped lands due to the implementation of proposed project activities would be consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Forest Plan management area standards and guidelines.

Other undeveloped lands with no proposed activities would remain the same as described in the affected environment. They would still remain free of developments such as forest roads or timber harvest units. They would still not be considered inventoried roadless areas, or a designated wilderness area.
Figure 2. Undeveloped Areas Greater Than 1,000 Acres, Dove Project Area
Figure 3. Undeveloped Areas Greater Than 1,000 Acres, Dove Project Area
Cumulative Effects

Roadless Area Characteristics in the Utley Butte Inventoried Roadless Area
Since the Forest Plan was approved, approximately 6 acres have been harvested from the area primarily within the current wildlife emphasis areas.

For IRAs in which project activities would occur when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, where project activities would occur, cumulative effects to soils; water quality; air quality; plant and animal communities; habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; recreation; noxious weeds; and cultural resources are disclosed in Chapter 3 and specialist reports and are not reiterated here.

Present projects proposed in the Izee Range Allotment EA that overlap in time and space with the prescribed burning in the IRA include grazing, water developments and constructing fences. Cumulative effects would be minimal because the Malheur National Forest Post Fire Grazing Interim Guidelines would be followed.

Fuels treatments and future wildfires would cumulatively change the composition and structure of vegetation, which could affect some forest visitor’s sense of naturalness and remoteness. For a few years burned areas would display a blackened color. There are no other known future projects in the IRA.

Other Undeveloped Areas
Past harvest and road building have reduced the acreage of other undeveloped areas across the watershed. No future projects have been identified that would further reduce other undeveloped areas within the project area.

Dove project, when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions for other undeveloped lands, where project activities would occur, would reduce the acres of other undeveloped lands. These areas would have the same cumulative effects to soil, water quality, air quality; plant and animal communities; habitat for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; recreation; noxious weeds; and cultural resources which are disclosed in previous sections of this chapter and are not reiterated here.

The Malheur National Forest Access and Travel Management EA would restrict motorized off road travel across the forest. This would have no cumulative effects on other undeveloped lands across the project area.

The Flat/Upper Camp Creek project area is adjacent to the northeast boundary of the Dove project. Other undeveloped polygons that spill over into the Flat project area that would be treated under Flat would have cumulative effects to other undeveloped lands, potentially reducing the acres of undeveloped lands. However, because the Proposed Action for Flat has not been developed, the magnitude of the effects cannot be determined.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans
This analysis complies with relevant laws, regulations, policies and/or the Forest Plan.