



for the greatest good



BLUE MOUNTAINS
FOREST PLAN REVISION - 2015
Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman
National Forests

Meeting Notes

Public Meeting on the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision

Hosted by Baker County, High Desert Partnership, and the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
Baker City, Oregon | Nov. 9, 2015

These notes reflect the best efforts of the notetaker to capture the discussion of meeting participants, but in no way are these notes a word-for-word transcript as the notetaker may have unintentionally missed some statements or dialogue. Also, the notes do not attempt to correct or clarify any statements made by participants.

Participants: J. Sollinger, H. Sollinger, Richard Isaacson, Jerry Johnson, Sherry Johnson, Kody Justus, Bill Harvey, Lorrie Harvey, Patrick Braswell, Tork Ballard, J.V. Hays, Dorothy Mason, Dan Radice, Karen Logan, Dave Noble, Pam Noble, Dan Marshall, Don Williams, Terry Speelman, C Logan, Mike Kee, Rogel Music, Susan Crum, Howard Bartkus, Eli Shorey, Diane Bloomer, Terris Webb, Ramona Webb, Jimmy Sullivan, Jan Alexander, Ken Alexander, Richard Mills, Carrie Matthews, Karen Wagner, Dale Pappan, Dick Fleming, Andy Ballard, John Phillips, Robert Armbruster, Chuck Chase, Billie Jo George, Terry George, Bruce Munger, Noel Munger, Elden Doser, Wendy Franklin, Harold Preston, Mike Dyke, Martin Pawelek, Wanda Ballard, Christina Witham, Russ Witham, Corey Younger, Elvin Carter, Garth Johnson, Tim Shively, Leo Castillo, JoAnn Marlette, Gary Marlette, Ted Bloomer, Frank Mason, John Creighton, Ramona Creighton, Ed Hardt, Paul Castilleja, Terry S., Susan S., Nathan Jacob, Alice Knapp, Mark Bennett, Arthur Sappington, Frances Preston, Todd Arriola, Ron Carpenter, Jack Southworth (facilitator)

US Forest Service (USFS) participants: Tom Montoya, Jeff Tomac, Sabrina Stadler, Dennis Dougherty, Maura Laverty, Matt Burks, Gunnar Carnwath, Bethany Parker, Kathryn Gray, Peter Fargo (notetaker)

Organizations represented: Baker County, Baker City, Eastern Oregon Mining Association, Senator Jeff Merkley's Office, Oath Keepers of Oregon, Forest Access for All, City of Sumpter, Citizens for Public Access, Locked & Loaded 4x4, Supertalk Radio AM 1450, Virtue Mine, Baker County Press, High Desert Partnership, and USFS

Introductory Remarks

Jack Southworth, Facilitator with High Desert Partnership: Good evening. Welcome folks; please take a seat and we will get started. We are here to talk about the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision. We have held several other public meetings, which some of you have attended, and those discussions focused on portions of the draft Plan related to access, wilderness, grazing, and pace and scale of forest restoration. The Forest

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Service is here to listen to your thoughts on these topics and other issues that you may be concerned about. We have some guidelines for a respectful dialogue this evening, and I want to emphasize these before we start. Let's be professional and respectful with our language; please focus on the issues, not any individual person; please hold your applause, since applauding for some and not others can be intimidating and make people feel uncomfortable sharing their views; also please be brief with your comments, because there are many people here, and we need to leave time for everyone to speak. Let's begin with a few words from Bill Harvey and Tom Montoya.

Bill Harvey, Baker County Chairman: Thank you, Jack. I'm excited to have you all here. I appreciate your support, and we need to hear your thoughts tonight. Many of us have been to a lot of meetings, and I want to thank you for your input. Let's do something a bit different tonight; share something that you may not have heard yet. Get your points across, but please be respectful. We will disagree on some topics, but I think we can still work together.

Tom Montoya, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor:

- Thank you, Bill, Jack, and everyone for coming. I'd like to begin with some introductions of Forest Service folks in the room who are here to listen and participate tonight. (Tom introduced each USFS employee and asked them to stand.)
- I'd like to take a few minutes to share where we have been, what we have heard at these meetings, and where we're going.
- First, why are we here? We are here to talk about the draft Forest Plans for the Blue Mountains National Forests, including the Wallowa-Whitman. I have the feeling that a lot of people want to talk about Access tonight, and that's good. We're also open to input on other topics. Keep in mind that we will hold specific meetings over the next few weeks about the pace and scale of restoration, including timber volumes, and also about grazing.
- So what is a Forest Plan? As you may already know, a Forest Plan defines the ecological, social, and economic goals of a National Forest, and it guides the future management of a wide variety of natural resources and uses. We are required by law to prepare a Forest Plan and revise it every 15 years to address changing conditions.
- You might be wondering about our timeline. Many people in this room have been working on these draft Forest Plans for a long time. Forest Plans are designed to last about 15 years, but for a number of reasons, the Plans we currently use have been around much longer, since 1990. I hope you'll agree that it's time to move toward new Forest Plans for the Wallowa-Whitman, Malheur, and Umatilla National Forests.
- Before we finalize the Plans, we wanted to take a step back and give folks an opportunity to let us know if we overlooked anything in the draft Plans. Are there any new ideas, showstoppers, or creative solutions that we haven't considered? Please let us know. That is why we are here tonight.
- Change is challenging though, and you might be asking, "What's in it for me?" Here's an analogy that might help. I want to be healthy, and I want my doctor to write prescriptions based on current information – not just what he or she learned in school 25 years ago. In the same way, if we want healthier forests, we need to manage them using the latest information. That's why we do forest planning. The current Forest Plans are from 1990, and a lot has changed over the past 25 years. I think we all deserve better.
- Let's talk about a few specifics...
- I have heard concerns about the term "Road Density." That term is in the 1990 Plan, which we still use today. I'm glad people brought up Road Density, because I agree it's not always the best way to measure

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the impact of roads or trails. We are thinking differently about “Road Density.” We are looking at a range of alternatives that allow us to focus on where roads or trails may affect specific resources – e.g., where they interact with water, where they affect sensitive wildlife such as elk.

- Here are some other things I have heard in these Forest Plan meetings...
- Some people use words like “Open Forest” and “Closed Forest.” Personally, I don’t think that kind of language paints the right picture. Your National Forests have always been open and will continue to be open to you. However, they are open to different uses, in different areas, and at different times. That is essential to balancing the many uses we have on these forests.
- Some have people have asked us to look closer at the recreational opportunity spectrum —including motorized vehicles, quiet hiking, and everything in between. This is important, because we manage for multiple uses. Can the same acre of land accommodate all uses at all times? No, and that’s why we have management areas with compatible uses. There is enough room for everyone, but we need to be willing to compromise and share the forest.
- Another common comment is the need for Handicapped Access. I agree 100% that we need to ensure a variety of opportunities for disabled folks to access their National Forests. We take this very seriously. At the same time, I want to be sure we are on the same page. Legally speaking, an ATV is not a wheelchair, so we simply cannot open every square mile of the forest to ATVs for disability reasons. Still, I’m very glad people brought this up: We need to provide reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities, and I think we can better emphasize the disability language in the draft Forest Plan. Beyond the Plan, I’ve asked District Rangers to reach out to community members with disabilities to continue bringing those important considerations into local projects.
- “Designated Routes” is another term that some people don’t want in the Forest Plan, yet other people think it’s essential. Some people want to be able to drive off the roads and trails, and they don’t want the Forest Plan to influence their ability to do this legally. I get that. I also want to be transparent with everyone: We are required by national policy to designate roads and trails, and I don’t have the authority to change that. The Wallowa-Whitman is one of a handful of National Forests in the country that has not yet designated roads or trails, which means this Forest is out of compliance with national policy. At the same time, it is fair to ask whether we must include the words “Designated Routes” in the new Forest Plans. That is a question we will be discussing.
- This last example is telling. There are some things that local Forest Service people simply cannot change on our own, because they are required by national policy. There are other things that we can adapt to local needs, and I would love to work together on those things. For instance, many people tell us they are doing maintenance on our roads and trails, so they can keep using them. Thank you for that. I’d love to coordinate that kind of work with local user groups.
- In closing, I have been impressed by a few other things in these meetings. I have heard a lot of passion from everyone, which tells me we all care deeply about our National Forests; otherwise we wouldn’t be here. I have heard that folks who live in Eastern Oregon have a unique connection with the land. For a lot of us, the Blue Mountains are literally *home*, and many of us rely on the forest for our *life* and *livelihood*. I really respect that. Many of you have come to these meetings time and time again, and some have traveled great distances to share your insights. Thank you for taking the time to be here again tonight.

Facilitator: Who are you, what’s your relationship to the forest, and what’s your concern *and* solution? Keep in mind that you can share your concerns, but I’m going to challenge everyone to offer a solution for every concern. I’m also going to ask you to follow our guidelines and respect others.

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- The forests are in bad health; the Forest Plan Revision needs to help forests get to better health. We need to cut the time it takes to get these Forest Plans done. We are taking a stand now to make sure we get something accomplished. I'm asking the Forest Service to take a stand too. It's time to challenge the EPA. I look forward to working with Tom.
- From La Grande; was a manager at Boise-Cascade; know that even when you're at the bottom, you can make tremendous change; you must be willing to challenge the USFS bureaucracy, the EPA, and others; I want more areas on the Wallowa-Whitman NF open to travel; I propose the USFS work toward a true balance; open roads; more timber harvest. I believe that our government has become tyrannical, and we have reached a point where we need a change. I feel the USFS has hastened the path to bad government.
- Mining Association; open roads are a key factor in mining; need to be able to go in/out. Too much road being closed in the Wallowa-Whitman with no NEPA that I could see. It's a problem when fighting fires; you should consider the health and well-being of the County when closing roads. Also, there could be \$2 billion of mineral deposits out there; we need to be able to access them.
- Under what statute do you have the authority to close roads? [Response from Forest Supervisor: Under the Travel Management Rule, Executive Orders of the President, regulations coming out of the Council for Environmental Quality.]
- I'm part of off-road group, Locked & Loaded. We call it off-road, but we take the roads. We love our forests and don't want access to be denied; want roads to remain open but think they should be managed. Forestry, timber, harvesting has to happen; thinning; mining too. People come from other states and towns, and they bring economic benefits to the community.
- From Prairie City, OR. My father was a logger; I served 47 years with the Forest Service. Travel Management is totally optional; only by choice do we implement it. No use should be restricted at the exclusion of another. The draft Plan does not reflect the loss of resources to 2015 fires. The Plan references how motorized use disturbs wildlife, but traditional cultural knowledge refutes that; Plan asserts that the primary use of water is for cold-water fisheries, but it is used by local residents and agriculture; Plan does not acknowledge historical properties; Plan does not look at the Executive Order for federal action to address economically depressed areas; many counties in Eastern Oregon have high levels of poverty; local communities will suffer if there is reduced access. Solution: Keep the 1990 Plan with no designation of routes. Another solution: Coordination with Counties.
- Thank you, Tom and staff, for the restart. We need to protect our "working landscape" for multiple use; we need to value the community's values and culture; access; Baker Co. is the 40th largest cattle county in the U.S., so we need to ensure no impact on ranchers. It's really sad to see what happened on Dooley Mountain. Minerals: If someone submits an application, and the County doesn't act within 150 days, then they get to do it; the same should go for the USFS. We need to make sure we are adequately funded to meet these requirements. "The most important decision on the landscape will be made by the local population." (J.W. Powell) Folks, that is us. We are the stewards here, and we know in our hearts what is best. Why would we promote anything different than good stewardship. I look at my neighbor, the Forest Service, and wonder why they can't take good care of the land, because of national policy. We as a community need to stand up and help the USFS do what we know is right.
- I was president of the Oregon Cattleman's Association; you can push all the paper and ink you want on these plans, but you need to be able to stand up to EPA and others. I lost a family ranch / permit we had since 1850, because of an endangered species.

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- All the years I've been in the forest, I have not seen the USFS pick up any trash; I have followed their rigs and picked up after them; saw them felling trees across creeks, but they tell us we can't do that.
- I think the USFS needs to support us; we live here, but USFS employees come and go; we provide comments, and many people here have good comments, and I just get a letter saying "thank you." Mining access needs to be protected. We're important, but we sure don't feel like it.
- I'm with the Mining Association; National Forests started as Forest Reserves; President promised the people that they would have the use of the forests for mining, grazing, and logging; look at the 1905 Use Act; forests were supposed to be for the use and benefit of grazing, mining, logging of the local people.
- Eastern Oregon resident; in 2012 the Travel Mgmt. Plan was scrapped, because of the efforts of many people here; if it had not been scrapped, 4000 miles of road would have been closed; many government plans talk about involving local people, but they didn't count on us getting involved on the level that we did; the challenge is bigger than Eastern Oregon; it is at the level of the United Nations; the Earth Summit in 1992; the word "sustainable development" comes from that meeting; the plan is to get local people out of the country and into the cities, but we defeated the Travel Mgmt. Plan in 2012. The original intent of the lands of Oregon are for us to use as we see fit. The solution is at hand; Counties taking management of federal lands back into local hands. Thinned forests; added fire breaks to roads; harvested timber; saw economic benefits overnight. There is an Oregon bill on the Transfer of Public Lands. As soon as you become a state of this Union, the lands become yours. When our natural resources are stagnating and rotting, we need to look to our Congressmen and put pressure to bring lands back to local control; we need an office of the County Forester.
- I work with the Forest Service; I'm a Baker County resident; I have been here for five years; I met my wife here, and our daughter was born here. I'm really glad to be here tonight.
- I would like to talk about wilderness; when there is fire, people can't get into the wilderness to fight it, because there are no roads; all they can do was build a big swath around it. Firefighters were really helpful this summer. We ride our quads for hours a day, and we are the eyes/ears of the forests; we call authorities if we see anything out of the ordinary; I also see a lot of waste; trees fall down and we can't use them; they just rot.
- We know elk are not afraid of motorized vehicles; Tom said his hands are bound on a lot of what we want to talk about, so why are we here? [Tom Montoya: I think there are opportunities for us to use your input; for example, Management Areas and Suitable Uses.]
- We used to respect the USFS; now you are closing roads and not respecting our heritage; I think you're working against the public and not listening to what we tell you.
- From Sumpter; think about the economic impacts; you ask for overlooked issues; I have not received any feedback about what went on in meetings and what will be done. I respect USFS employees, but we clearly have an issue with Washington, DC. The Designated Route issue puts a burr in your saddle, because it limits your freedom. My concern is that you're going to close my favorite Road #190, where I went in the snow with a friend from Eugene; need to use common sense when we're thinking about road closures.
- I resent having to be here tonight to defend my right to go into the mountains. We lost jobs in the timber industry, you say because of economic conditions, but it's because you cut the supply off. The owl was part of it, but now they are dying anyway.
- USFS plans depend on models; same with Spotted Owl; we can't trust the universities. Can you say the best science has been used in the Plan? [Tom Montoya: We do use the best science that we have available; if you disagree or feel you have something better, please let us know.]

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- Tom, thank you for addressing the disability issue. I don't agree with everything you said, but I appreciate that you are thinking about our input. I want you to know that many people do use ATVs like they use wheelchairs; I know I do. We shouldn't have to beg to keep our freedoms.
- Look at the mining resources; our minerals have not been evaluated since before the Wilderness Act of 1964. Let's make that a viable industry in this state.
- President of a mining co. Used to be a forester in the timber industry; was in charge of road construction/repair. USFS was founded for agriculture, timber, mining, and water. The Multiple Use Act had a section on roads. The Presidential Proclamation in the CFR has the appearance of being contrary to the Constitution; I don't think the USFS has to follow it. Multiple Use Act states that timber production is part of the management of these lands; I don't see any timber cut in this plan; restoration is not the same as the final cut; restoration does not bring money to county or schools; that needs to be addressed in the plan. [Timber harvest is addressed in the Forest Plan.]
- Mining is the most important industry in our country; all business and industry is dependent on it. It is the basic foundation of our economy. Mining has the highest multiplier factor of any industry. Last year, \$26.80 for every dollar that came out of the ground. Our forefathers were very wise and wanted to stimulate this part of the economy; now we are getting to the point where some are trying to get rid of it. We need access to mineral deposits.
- Eastern Oregon Field Rep. for U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley. Here taking notes; want to be part of the process; don't necessarily have any answers; you have a lot of them; I am learning from you. A couple platitudes to share: (1) You have to go slow to go fast; (2) All of us are better than some of us; (3) The more the merrier; I hope the merrier part is coming.
- Range specialist for Forest Plan Revision. Here to take notes and answer any questions.
- Been here for over 50 years; there is nothing more beautiful than these Eagle Cap mountains; Obama has an agenda to destroy these mountains; he needs to be impeached.
- My parents started grazing cattle on the National Forest, and I have too. We have come to a place where we've made this so complicated that we've missed the whole point. Use common sense: (1) Are the plants healthy? (2) Are we maintaining the wildlife populations? Ranchers would have been out of business long ago if we worked like this.
- I have lived in Baker all my life, and I'm retired. Local USFS people are put on the front line, and their hands are tied behind their back. The federal government doesn't care about you and me; they have an agenda; look at Agenda 21. They want to change our lives entirely; remove people from rural communities and relocate; leave the rest of land off base for your and my use. Solution: Remove USFS from incompetent management of the forests and return them to the states.
- From Halfway, OR. We are up there because of the mountains. Everything I'm doing when we're not working is in the mountains; that is our life. Local management is best; it is the locals who have the solutions; to me it comes down to who is managing the land; nobody will make a decision like the locals; it is their land. I'm going to give your plan back to you until you have fully coordinated with the County.
- I want to address the roads; I want to go hunt, fish, recreate, cut wood. A solution: More roads. My feeling of an "open forest" and yours are worlds apart. Designated Routes leads to a "king's forest." I hope we can come to a solution; I hope the solution will be more roads.
- I am surprised that you would bring Travel Mgmt. into the Forest Plan. John Lawrence told us the Forest Plan has absolutely nothing to do with Travel Management, so I don't think you have been honest with us. When did the Forest Service become a regulatory agency? You spend more time regulating us than

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- managing the land. The handicap issue is discriminatory. Everyone has the right to be in the forest; whether they are on an ATV or otherwise, they have the right to be there.
- Seems that every time I go exploring in the forest, I run into a tank trap and don't get to see what I want to see. Any road that is closed in the Forest is a reduction in infrastructure that was paid for in this country. You have to follow your own guidelines in the Forest Service Handbook to meet the user needs and desires; you are not meeting our needs. The trees that were killed by the fires, have any of them been cut yet? No. Those trees need to be cut before the snow flies, and I saw snow this morning. That's management. The Forest Service has shown that it cannot manage the forests. We need somebody else. Sorry about that. [Response from Forest Supervisor: We are moving forward with salvage fairly rapidly.]
 - My retirement dream was to buy a place off the grid. I found the perfect place up in the Elkhorns next to a stream, but the owner said I couldn't access it because the road was closed. It had a nice wood stove, but he said I couldn't get enough firewood, also because the roads are closed. I'm not the only one who has (or had) this dream. Can you imagine retiring with a lifelong dream and not being able to attain it, because of closed roads?
 - The USFS needs to stop sending letters to private landowners offering to pay us to log our property. Instead of paying us, use that money to clean up your own land.
 - I grew up here in Baker County. I'd like to speak to the process more than actual management practices; I'd like to commend the Forest Service for the way you are conducting your planning meetings; past meetings had a feeling of intimidation and not an open forum like this; I'd like to talk about some things that got us to this point of mistrust. The Travel Management Plan looked like the Forest Service was managing people instead of the resource; the public input was immense. You've told us this plan is needed, because the last plan is too old. The reason the Travel Mgmt. Plan was scrapped was, in part, because it wasn't in compliance with the 1990 Plan. It appears that this Plan is to pave the way for Travel Mgmt., so it seems like a foregone conclusion. The fact that we are here bothers me. I sit on the County's Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC); a lot of these concerns and comments are not new to me; you would be surprised how many disagreements we had on our Committee; by the time we worked through it all, we had a good representation of the County. Another frustration is the East Face Restoration; many projects look great; we see what you're capable of, but it looks like we have to give up our roads to get it. That's like extortion. Instead of having these meetings, spend more time speaking with our County Commissioners and NRAC.
 - Access is everything. A Designated Route system is a "closed system" and won't be accepted if it closes any access for wood cutters, hunters, ranchers, etc. Almost everyone in this room has been raised in an "open system." It is a significant amendment to go from open to closed. After 150 years, it sounds like a radical agenda to me. This is as significant as anything I've ever heard. We need to throw this Plan out and go back to the 1990 Plan and do away with the Road Densities in that document.
 - I logged for 40 years, starting in 1971; retired in 1994. We were working on a sale below Granite. We had to leave a big tree, because there was a hawk's nest in it. The hawk would screech and swoop at us. Forest Service came out to identify the hawk, but they didn't know what it was. Came out with a tape recorder to tape the hawk screech...[just kidding]
 - Grew up on a ranch in Haines. On the Chamber of Commerce; concerned about local businesses; natural resources of timber, mining, and agriculture have a huge effect on our economy and the success of our businesses.
 - Desired Conditions in the plan reflect the Agency's desired conditions, but you need to ask us. There are too many rules and regulations; the roads have been there for 40, 50, 60, 70 years. They weren't causing

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problems then or now. Even tourism is dwindling, because of the closing of roads. When you designate more wilderness, you are taking away a promise that you made to us to have that timber harvest. The reason we don't have a timber industry anymore is because they shut it down; was not because it wasn't needed. Twenty-four processing plants shut down in Eastern Oregon. Wilderness is a killer. If you count everything that acts like wilderness, it's nearly \$2 billion acres. Solutions: Travel Mgmt. says you have to have a plan; it doesn't say you have to close roads. It also says you have to coordinate. The Plan needs to be based on the needs of Baker County—not someone else or something else. Needs to be based on the needs of people who have lived here all their lives.

- It is all about access and always will be about access; top-down management isn't working; we have not utilized the resources of local people; elk use roads as much as humans do; use the resources you have; don't pound people into the dirt; if you want to see the bigger picture, look at UN Agenda 21.
- The 1990 Plan was more user-friendly and made sense; sound management practices. Fires have destroyed places that my family went; our historical gathering sites. The Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision promises to preserve more land; our water quality and landscape erosion will be a concern now; Designated Routes do not work. Mr. Montoya, you can be a hero in our community if you choose the no-action option.
- Concerned about the United Nations and aggressive environmentalists. I want to read a letter from our U.S. Congressional Representative: Litigation has had a profound impact on the Forest Service. Litigation has led USFS employees to "bulletproof" their documents instead of focusing on good management; the result is thicker and thicker environmental documents, delays, and increased costs; these do not translate into a better environment; instead the greatest threat to wildlife is catastrophic wildfires; USFS employees are demoralized; community economies are suffering; our forests are dying and burning up at an alarming rate; also disease and pestilence are affecting the forests. Environmental litigation has reached a state of crisis. It's time that we work with the Forest Service and encourage them to take a stand against the environmentalists.
- Thank you for your input on logging, mining, etc.
- Access is important; we do have access; it is a matter of where different types of access are appropriate and where we have conflicts.
- There is a wide range of alternatives; look again at the no-action alternative.

Closing remarks: Tom Montoya, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor

- Thank you all for your input.
- I heard a lot of opinions. For example, somebody suggested that I would be a hero if I took no action on the Forest Plan. I have to ask, would I be a hero if I proposed cutting twice as much timber as we do today? That is what's in the Preferred Alternative of the draft Forest Plan, but people still don't seem to like it. Please take a look at the details of the proposal and consider whether they improve on the status quo.
- Also, it's important to note that I will influence the final decision, but this is not my decision. The final decision will be made by the Regional Forester.
- I appreciate the dialogue tonight. I hope you like this style; I like that it gives everyone a chance to have a voice in the room. Thanks for being here; we will do our best to take your input and use it to improve the draft Forest Plans.