

USFS Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision Meeting | April 2, 2014 | Heppner, OR

Notetaker: Melissa Thom, EnviroIssues

Approximate Attendance: 30

Questions (Q), Responses (R), and Comments (C)

Q: What does the change in the definition for old growth mean? Will it change how many acres of old growth is designated?

R: It allows us some more flexibility and better habitat for wildlife that's dependent on the kinds of trees we want to work hard to restore on the landscape. Please talk with our silviculturist in the open house area for more details on acreage.

Q: Your presentation said there would be no reduction of permitted grazing use, but the plan shows a reduction in utilization of 15%. The fisheries people were happy with the 45% utilization standards as we have now.

R: Just to clarify, the plan actually shows a reduction in utilization of 10%. The preferred alternative is what we refer to as the accelerated restoration alternative. 35% was agreed to by the forest supervisors after a recommendation from the forest plan team. It will help us meet the desired conditions at a faster pace. On your allotment, if you've already been through consultation, we've already made an agreement with NOAA and USFWS on what they will accept and that's what we will keep. If you have 45% percent right now, you will keep it.

Q: Can I get that commitment in writing? The plan says 35% instead of 45%, for uplands.

R: Those are guidelines and the site-specific NEPA on your allotment will be when we determine the actual best use. Your allotment plan will always trump the forest plan because it's a specific decision. The commitment in writing would be Kevin Martin's or Ann Nielson's decision document. That's a good comment for you to send in during the comment period.

Q: What was the court case you mentioned on non-motorized vehicle use? That's a large block on the map and you're recommending more around the edges. There are roads in there that are currently open.

R: The inventoried roadless process started in the 1970s; roadless areas were designated by the Clinton administration through a decision in 2001. It went through a public process just like this. That decision was then litigated and went through the court system. But ultimately the decision still required us to designate roadless areas. Since these areas have been designated, some roads have been built inside them for site-specific projects, so that would be where you might find roads. Any decisions about specific road closures stay at the local level and go through a public process. If there are any roads in roadless areas that you're aware of that we're not, please provide that as a comment.