

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision—2014

Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests



Social

In a Nutshell (Preferred Alternative)

Because of their social and economic importance to the Blue Mountains, Elk are highlighted and tied to the Social Well Being Goal of the plan. Desired conditions were developed specifically for elk. They were also identified as an indicator of access management.

Definitions

Desired conditions for elk-

- Areas exist in the landscape that contain a mosaic of forage and cover with minimal or no motor vehicle access through forage areas.
- For landscapes where hunting occurs, restricting motor vehicle access is emphasized to the degree that elk can effectively use cover and topography as security.
- Use by elk may be minimized in some areas to meet other goals of management across mixed ownerships such as reducing damage on adjacent private lands.

The new plan requires a paradigm shift as Desired Conditions are the major drivers of the current plan and therefore it is important to understand all of the desired conditions and how they affect wildlife. The vision for elk management is influenced by other desired conditions in the plan. For example-

- Rangeland and forest land vegetation
- Access management
- Hunting and fishing
- Culturally significant foods



for the greatest good

Document Sections

Discussion for Rocky Mountain elk can be found in the *Blue Mountains National Forests Proposed Revised Land Management Plan* in the following section:

Part 1 – Vision: 2.5 Rocky Mountain Elk pages 58-59

Part 2- Strategy: 1.2 Species Diversity page 105 and page 113

Part 3- Design Criteria: WLD-HAB-13 page 118

Analysis for elk can be found in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in the following sections:

Vol. 2, Chapter 3 – Rocky Mountain elk, pages 291-305

- Domestic livestock grazing in relation to Rocky Mountain elk, Pages 315-17

Hunted Species- pages 327-328

Vol. 3, Appendix B – Methodology

FAQs

Q1. Are there specific management areas established for elk (e.g., winter range)

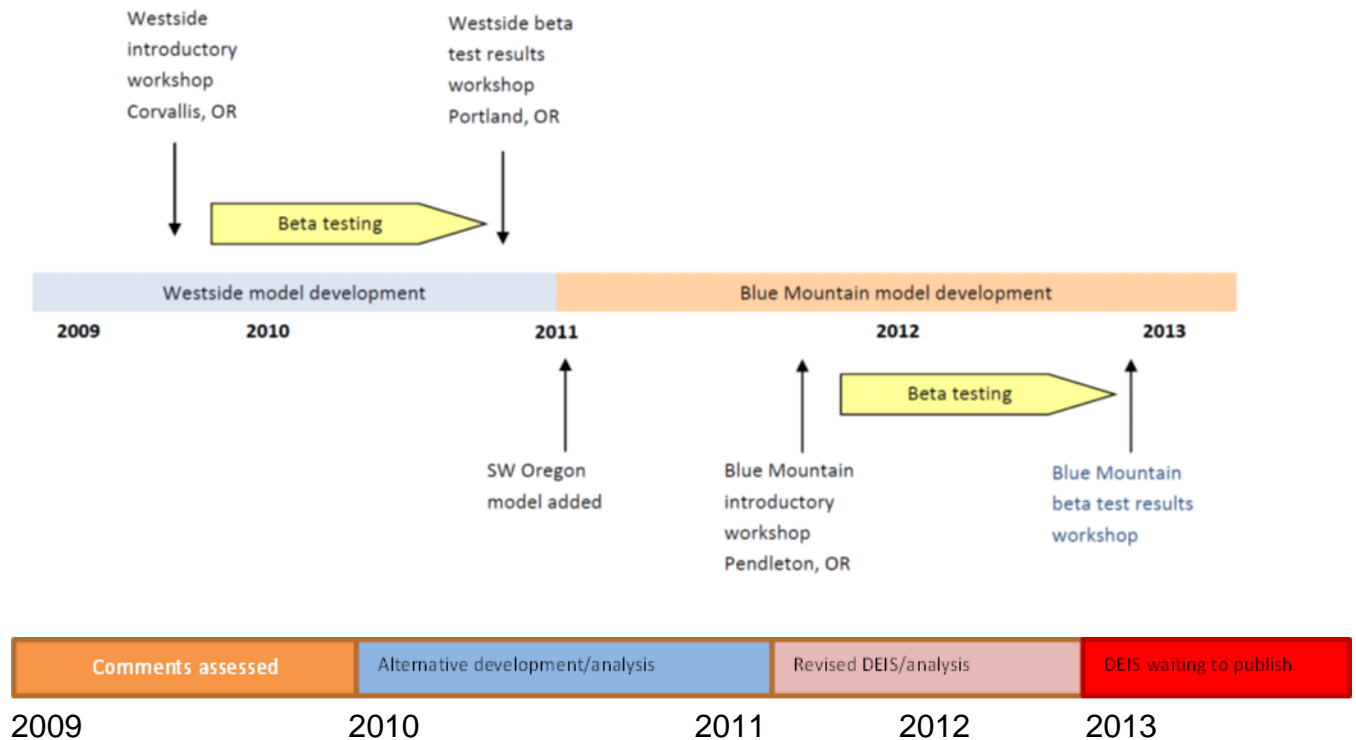
A1. The action alternatives do not draw a hard line around elk ranges as found in the current forest plans. It was felt that elk use of the landscape is based on habitat attributes found in an area and these attributes can change due to fires, active management, predator presence, and snow depth. Winter range mapping was done in 1990 for the current forest plans. An extensive mapping effort of winter range was conducted in 1997 by Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and in 2009 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife finalized a new mapping effort. Comparing these three efforts illustrates the problems associated with hard lines, as each effort increased the amount of winter range for each forest, and in general there is less than 50% overlap between the efforts.

Q2. Was the new forage/habitat selection model used in the development of the current plan revision?

A2. No- The model for the Blue Mountains was still being developed at the time plan alternatives were being crafted. During the time that the DEIS analysis was being finalized, the Blue Mountains model was being beta tested with the final testing not completed until after the DEIS analysis had been completed. The model predicts where elk choose to be in terms of a probability of selection and



when one or more of the four variables change, the probability of elk selecting a given unit of habitat also changes. It will have utility in planning projects based on the current plan. Below compares development of the model with the progress of the plan revision DEIS.



Q3. Does the current plan revision consider the management objectives of the state fish and game departments?
 A3. Yes- under the social well being goal, one of the desired conditions under **2.4 Hunting and Fishing** is to support Oregon and Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife management objects (page 58 of the proposed plan).

Q4. Are elk an MIS species?
 A4. Yes- but only for the Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla National Forest. They were chosen as indicators of how well these two forests implement the plans direction for providing security for wildlife.

Additional Resource Information



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