

News Release

Umatilla National Forest

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Heppner Ranger District Hosts Open Houses Public Input Requested on West-End OHV Project Proposed Action

The Umatilla National Forest, Heppner Ranger District is seeking comments on a proposed action that would develop a system of roads and trails for off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel within the West-End Project area. "We've developed the proposed action based on the information we received during the past 18 months of public and agency involvement, open houses, public meetings, newsletters, website information and one-on-one contacts," said Tom Mafera, Heppner District Ranger. "We've worked hard to ensure that those who use and value this area were involved in the development of the proposal."

The Heppner District initiated the West End OHV project in response to the 2005 Travel Management Rule; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use. The rule calls for the designation of roads, trails and areas open to motorized travel to provide better opportunities for sustainable motorized recreation and high-quality access for all users while protecting natural and cultural resources, increasing public safety and reducing effects on big game.

Designated routes for motorized travel are already in place on most of the Umatilla National Forest. The Forest's one exception is the 91,000-acre West-End OHV Project Area which is currently open to Class I and Class III OHVs for off-road travel. The West-End OHV Project Area is located on the west side of the Heppner Ranger District and includes all Forest Service lands west of Forest Road 22 (Morrow County Road 670/Grant County Road 3). No decisions will be made concerning private or county lands.

Under the West-End OHV Project Area proposed action, the majority of roads currently open to motorized travel would remain open to OHV travel. Designated roads and new trails would provide access to key destination areas, create loop opportunities, and offer connections to other trail systems on the forest and to the Morrow County OHV Park. The proposal would also place seasonal restrictions in the Monument Winter Range and eliminate cross-country travel within the 91,000 acres.

A second series of open houses are scheduled in early March to review maps and discuss the proposal. "We're very interested in hearing what people have to say about the proposed action," said Mafera. "The comments we receive will be useful as we consider alternatives to this proposal." Open houses are scheduled for:

- **March 4**, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., at the Heppner Ranger District Office, 117 Main Street in Heppner, OR
- **March 5**, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., at the Senior Center in Monument, OR
- **March 6**, from 7:00-9:00 p.m., at the Wheeler Co. Family Service Center in Fossil, OR

"We're pleased with the public's response and interest in this project," said Mafera. "Our upcoming open houses will offer another opportunity to provide specific feedback for us to consider in the design of the designated system."

Those unable to attend can provide their input in writing, through our website, by calling, or stopping in at the district office. A map of the West-End Area proposal and the project description can be found on the Forest website at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/recreation/westend_ohv/index.shtml. For more information please contact the Heppner District Office at 541-676-9187, 117 South Main Street, P.O. Box 7, Heppner, Oregon 97836.

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