

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Fremont-Winema
National Forests

September 2002

FREMONT - WINEMA NATIONAL FORESTS

Monitoring and Evaluation Report

Fiscal Year 2001



KEY FINDINGS

Ecosystem Restoration: Over the last few years, the Upper Klamath Basin and the Chewaucan Watershed have been the focus of extraordinary ecosystem restoration efforts in agricultural lands, wetlands, forested uplands, and riparian systems. In the Klamath Basin, the endangered species, water quality, and water quantity problems, with their associated agricultural, tribal, and social and economic impacts have demanded Presidential and Congressional attention and attracted millions of dollars for study and active restoration. The Fremont and Winema National Forests have been and are now cooperating and partnering with the Klamath Tribes, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Forestry, US Environmental Protection Agency, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Klamath and Lake Counties, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Hatfield Upper Klamath Basin Working Group, local communities, the Resource Advisory Committee and local watershed councils to restore habitats and improve water quality and quantity across the area. Data collection, large-scale wetland restoration, riparian habitat enhancement, and the addressing of point and non-point source pollution problems are progressing full speed in and around the Winema and Fremont National Forests.

The Forests' efforts to improve ecosystem conditions have expanded well beyond the scope envisioned in the Forest Plans. For example, the Winema's Plan included an estimate of ten acres per year of watershed improvement. In the ten years where figures are available, that average has been nearly 130 acres per year. The level of restoration activities is further revealed in the category of habitat improvement where, for example, the Fremont improved more than 300% of the acres estimated in the Forest Plan during 2001. The Forests completed other related activities that were not discussed in the Forest Monitoring Plan.

Monitoring revealed that all of the 39 culverts on fish bearing streams on the Winema and 305 of the 339 monitored culverts on the Fremont are barriers to fish passage. The focus on resolving these problems was in the Chewaucan watershed during 2001 where culverts at Bear Creek and Swamp Creek were replaced with fish-friendly structures. Funding has been secured for two more replacements on Ben Young Creek, also in the Chewaucan, and funding has been requested for more. The Winema and Fremont Resource Advisory Committee, formed in accordance with the "Secure Rural Schools and Community self-Determination Act of 2000," is supporting these types of activities on both private and federal lands. The Forests have also been removing roads from our transportation system and returning those lands to productive forests. In 2001, 118 miles of road were decommissioned on the Fremont and 8 miles were decommissioned on the Winema. We have also improved road crossings at meadows, constructed permeable road fills to allow water passage and placed gravel on roads to reduce erosion.

Employee Involvement. The Forests' employees have chaired and served on TMDL (total maximum daily load) committees for water quality limited rivers and lakes. Their leadership and expertise has been provided on watershed restoration projects in the Upper Klamath Basin, Chewaucan, Camas and other watersheds. They have worked closely with local watershed councils. The Forests have been actively participating in the Hatfield Upper Klamath Basin Working Group, responsible for many of the significant and effective restoration efforts to date. In addition, Forest employees provide direct technical assistance to Community Action Teams across Klamath and Lake Counties.

Implementation of Standards and Guidelines continues to be a focus of Forest monitoring. During 2001, the Forest Management Team and resource specialists examined several areas of the Forests to see whether projects were being implemented in accordance with Forest Plan standards and guidelines. With very few and minor exceptions, appropriate standards and guidelines are being implemented. For example, an erosion problem was discovered at a new trail in the Digit Point Campground. The sediment was immediately contained and a permanent solution was implemented.

Threatened, endangered and sensitive species are doing well where there is sufficient information to make an informed judgment. Bald eagles continue to do well on both Forests. Of the 39 active nests identified on the Winema 24 were productive, producing 36 young. Eighteen nests were found on the Fremont National Forest in 2001, ten were productive, producing sixteen young. Fifteen bald eagle nest site plans were completed and/or updated on the Winema National Forest. A baseline for bald eagles on the Winema National Forest was developed using 1990 as the base year. A baseline for northern spotted owls, using 1994 as base year, was also developed in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A spotted owl demographic study is ongoing, part of which is conducted on the Klamath Ranger District. A Late Successional Reserve (LSR) assessment was completed and approved by the Regional Ecosystem Office for LSR numbers RO232 and RO233 on the Chemult Ranger District. Lynx hair-capture surveys and camera surveys again failed to find lynx on the Winema National Forest. Camera surveys did not find wolverine. Western sage grouse strutting-ground (lek) surveys were conducted on the Fremont National Forest, but no sage grouse were found. Oregon spotted frog were found at sites on the Upper Williamson River. A genetic study of spotted frogs indicates that spotted frogs in the Klamath Basin appear to be somewhat genetically isolated from other populations in Oregon, but that there is no reason to believe that any of the populations suffer from inbreeding as yet. Yellow rail monitoring continues in marshlands on and adjacent to Upper

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF OUTPUTS AND SERVICES

| Monitoring Item | Winema NF | | Fremont NF | | Comments |
|--|-----------|-------|------------|--------|--|
| | Plan | 2001 | Plan | 2001 | |
| Allowable Sale Quantity MMCF/Year | 19.4 | 2.6 | 24.7 | 2.5 | Both Forests continue to sell less timber volume than anticipated in the Forest Plans. A Regional amendment to the Forest Plans, Eastside screens, eliminated harvest of trees over 21 inches in diameter but did not change the planned harvest levels, thus current volumes are less than planned. |
| Timber Sale Program Quantity MMCF/Year | 34.7 | 4.8 | 28.0 | 3.8 | |
| MMBF/Year | 166.8 | 25.0 | 154.8 | 19.7 | |
| Dead Lodgepole Sold MMCF/Year | 11.5 | 0.6 | - | 0.4 | Mortality in lodgepole pine on the Winema has returned to near normal levels. Dead LPP was harvested earlier in the planning period, thus harvest volumes now are significantly less than planned. |
| MMBF/Year | 40.2 | 3.0 | - | 1.9 | |
| Ponderosa Pine Sold MMCF/Year | 8.8 | 0.8 | - | 0.3 | A Regional amendment to the Forest Plans, Eastside screens, eliminated harvest of trees over 21 inch diameter but did not change the planned harvest levels, thus current volumes are less than planned.. |
| MMBF/Year | 53.9 | 4.4 | - | 1.4 | |
| Silvicultural Treatments (Ac/Year) | | | | | |
| Commercial Thinning | 2,700 | 992 | 7,500 | 2,109 | |
| Overstory Removal | 1,600 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Regeneration Harvest | 500 | 0 | 8,900 | 0 | |
| Selection Harvest | 8,400 | 1,391 | 12,500 | 1,106 | |
| Salvage Cut | 13,700 | 0 | - | 1,818 | |
| Reforestation (Ac/Year) | 6,400 | 288 | 4,000 | 1,802 | |
| Timber Stand Improvement (Ac/Yr) | 14,400 | 2,906 | 8,000 | 9,360 | |
| Fuel Treatment (Ac/Year) | 27,600 | 1,709 | 20,000 | 3,269 | Activity limited by weather |
| Road Construct/Reconstr (Miles) | | | | | |
| Forest Road Program | 22 | 46 | - | 0.3 | |
| Timber Purchaser Roads | 31 | 7 | 156 | 0.0 | |
| Total Road System (Miles) | 5,517 | 6,091 | - | 6,775 | |
| Road Access Mgmt (Miles) | | | | | |
| Open for Use | - | 4,591 | - | 4,907 | |
| Closed to Use | - | 1,500 | - | 1,868 | |
| Road Access Type (Miles) | | | | | |
| Passenger Car | 510 | 482 | - | 954 | |
| High Clearance Vehicle | 2,120 | 2,379 | - | 3,953 | |
| Intermittant Access | 2,887 | 3,230 | - | 1,868 | |
| Developed Rec Construction (PAOT) | 695 | 0 | - | 2 | |
| Trail Construct/Reconst (Miles) | 124 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Permitted Livestock (AUM) | 13,000 | 9,608 | 70,100 | 76,523 | |
| Range Improvement | | | | | |
| Structures | - | 0 | - | 2 | 2 miles of new fence on the Fremont NF |
| Acres | - | 0 | - | 0 | |
| Habitat Improvements | | | | | |
| <u>T&E Species</u> | | | | | |
| Structures | - | 0 | - | 0 | |
| Acres | - | 645 | - | 0 | |
| <u>Other Species</u> | | | | | |
| Structures | - | 8 | 1,450 | 0 | |
| Acres | - | 702 | 1,100 | 3,944 | |
| Watershed Improvements | | | | | |
| Structures | - | 0 | - | 0 | |
| Acres | 10 | 50 | 250 | 200 | |

Klamath Lake. A management review was conducted for the pumice grapefern sensitive plant study. Numerous planned forest activities were analyzed for effects to Lost River, shortnose, Modoc suckers, and bull trout. Recovery projects are being implemented for bull trout.

Other wildlife populations continue to be affected by habitat changes. Lack of timber harvest activity, fire, blow-down or other natural disturbance is allowing cover to increase thus continuing the reduction of forage for mule deer and possibly adversely affecting mule deer populations. Deer cover surveys and habitat suitability model use continues for planned activity areas. Neotropical migratory bird monitoring continues. Surveys in planned activity areas continue for goshawk, great gray owl and aspen habitat. A study of white-headed woodpecker continued on the Chemult Ranger District.

The Forest's timber program includes vegetation management projects designed to restore sustainable forest conditions and watershed health in landscapes where risk of catastrophic fire or insect loss is high. These projects combine both non-commercial and commercial means. Some of them use timber sales and provide commercial products that will help sustain local communities economically, though this is not their primary purpose. These projects are designed to sustain old growth conditions; protect spotted owl habitat connectivity between Late Successional Reserves and Crater Lake National Park; rehabilitate meadows, hardwoods, and riparian habitats; reduce the risks of fire, tussock moth, budworm, and root rots; and allow the reintroduction of fire's function in the system. These projects also include road closures, obliteration, and relocation. After ten years, less than 40% of planned timber harvest has occurred. Several factors caused this. They include continuing appeals and litigation over virtually every timber management project that is proposed. The Eastside Screen amendments (Forest Plan Amendments 7 and 8) limited the types of trees that can be harvested, but did not adjust the allowable sale quantity for the Forests accordingly. The low levels of timber harvest continue to have adverse effects upon mule deer habitats that are losing the critical forage component. This situation continues to depress economic activity in the area and compounds problems with other floundering sectors in the economy. The Fremont and Winema National Forests are scheduled to begin development of a Forest Plan revision in 2005. The revision process will re-address the relationships between timber management, wildlife habitat, and socio-economics, as recommended over the last several years by the Forest's interdisciplinary team.

Forest health concerns are related primarily to the effects of too many trees on the landscape caused by decades of fire suppression and limited stocking control. This overcrowding results in too little water and too few nutrients getting to each tree to maintain good tree health. With the trees stressed, they are more susceptible to attacks by mountain pine beetle on the pine trees, and fir engraver on the white fir trees. The drought in 2001 added additional stress, and we expect to see increased mortality particularly in the pines. Past mortality in the white fir will continue to be a problem due to the increased fire danger those dead trees present. Management of the stocking levels in the forest is ongoing, but we will continue to have overstocked stands due the financial and procedural limitations on the amount of work we can accomplish in a year.

Outputs of goods and services shows, numerically, what the Forest has produced in comparison to what was planned. Since implementation of the Forest Plans, the Forests have produced well below planned levels in all categories that involve ground-disturbing work, except reforestation and watershed improvements. This highlights the major emphasis on ecosystem restoration. The timber related outputs are low for the reasons discussed above. The recreation related outputs are generally low due to insufficient funding to do the planned work. Permitted livestock use is low due to low demand from potential permittees.

From the social and economic aspect, Forest Service activities have been well below planned levels, thus the associated activity in the local economy has been much less than originally anticipated. The Klamath County agricultural sector was severely affected during 2001 as a result of curtailment of water deliveries. This translates to unemployment rates still well above the national and state averages (11.1% in Klamath County and 15.4% in Lake County in March of 2001). The "Secure Rural Schools and Community self-Determination Act of 2000" has now eliminated the linkage between National Forest receipts and payments to the states. Thus, National Forest activities no longer directly affect county budgets. During 2001 some funds provided under that Act were used for ecosystem restoration activities on the Forests and contributed to increased economic activity. Sectors of the economy other than agriculture and those directly affected by Forest Service programs have displayed mixed performance.

For more information about forest monitoring see: www.fs.fed.us/r6/winema/management/monitoring.shtml

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