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FREMONT - WINEMA NATIONAL FORESTS

Monitoring and Evaluation Report

Fiscal Year 2003



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 2003, the Forest improved wetland wildlife habitat and natural water storage and release characteristics on 256 acres, just at Round Meadow. The Forests completed other related activities that were not discussed in the Forest Monitoring Plan.

The Winema and Fremont Resource Advisory Committee, formed in accordance with the "Secure Rural Schools and Community self-Determination Act of 2000," is supporting restoration activities on both private and federal lands. The Forests have implemented many projects with these funds, including several that reduced the impacts of roads and others that addressed hazardous fuels accumulations.

Employee Involvement. The Forests' employees helped complete the Upper Klamath Basin Water Quality Restoration Plan in 2003. Their leadership and expertise has been provided on watershed restoration projects in the Upper Klamath Basin, Chewaucan, and other watersheds. They have worked closely with most of the seven local watershed working groups and councils. Forest employees are members of the technical review team assisting in the development of the Upper Williamson Watershed Assessment for the Klamath Basin Ecosystem Foundation (funded by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board). 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.

Implementation of Standards and Guidelines continues to be a focus of Forest monitoring. The Forest continues to make changes in allotment management to insure compliance with programmatic biological opinions developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Post timber sale monitoring in the Upper Thomas Creek watershed revealed 5% detrimental compaction (Plan standard is 20%) and that was the result of a sample point that fell on a road. A review of the Helirock Timber Sale revealed that defaults and delays in harvest have resulted in the stressed trees dying and falling, thus losing old-growth characteristics and making the trees considerably less valuable than at the time the sale was originally awarded. Researchers believe certain areas in the vicinity have escaped fire considerably longer than the history of fire suppression. The review team identified a need to examine these areas to determine whether they are inherently more stable or simply have high fuel accumulations that put them at high risk of fire now. A review team found that stands harvested in the Nannie and Giddyup Timber sales (Klamath District) reduced stress on some of the larger trees, but the stands were not opened enough to have a major effect on the long-term retention of old-growth characteristics. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives have identified a need for vegetation removal, including commercial timber harvest, within late successional reserves in order to help retain those characteristics into the future. Two timber sales that did exactly that, Hornet and Scout (Chemult District), were also reviewed. Vegetation removal is expected to allow these stands to retain their old-growth characteristics for another 20 to 40 years.

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. Forty-two active bald eagle nests were identified on the Winema. Nineteen active nests were found on the Fremont National Forest in 2003. The four bald eagle nest sites that burned on the Fremont in 2002 were re-established close to the original nests in 2003. A spotted owl demographic study, involving the Klamath Ranger District, continued. Spotted frog monitoring, including egg mass surveys and water quality sampling, continued in Jack Creek on the Chemult District. The Forest is also a cooperator in a Master's research project to determine the effects of grazing on spotted frogs. Flights over wilderness did not detect wolverine denning. Yellow rail monitoring continues in marshlands on and adjacent to Upper Klamath Lake. A pumice grape fern sensitive plant study continues. A red root yampa site was expanded by about an acre by planting tubers and seeds. The carnivore surveys in the Goodlow Mountain area, noted last year, continued. A total of twenty mammal species, including ten carnivore species, were detected in the area. Numerous planned forest activities were analyzed for effects to bald eagle, Lost River, shortnose, and Modoc suckers, and bull trout. Recovery projects are being implemented for bull trout. Monitoring of Bull Trout in Threemile Creek revealed no brook trout or brook/bull hybrids for the third straight year. It appears the population is now pure bull trout and the risk of competition/hybridization with brook trout has been eliminated. Recovery projects are being planned and implemented for bull trout including removal of brook trout and bull trout/brook trout hybrids from Long Creek.

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF OUTPUTS AND SERVICES

Monitoring Item	Winema NF		Fremont NF		Comments
	Plan	2003	Plan	2003	
Allowable Sale Quantity MMCF/Year	19.4	5.9	24.7	2.7	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	6.6	28.0	2.7	
MMBF/Year	166.8	33.6	154.8	14.0	
Dead Lodgepole Sold MMCF/Year	11.5	0.6	-	0.1	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	3.3	-	0.6	
Ponderosa Pine Sold MMCF/Year	8.8	3.9	-	2.5	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	19.8	-	12.9	
Silvicultural Treatments (Ac/Year)					The focus of harvest has changed to thinning, selection and salvage harvests, with no regeneration harvests occurring. The factors affecting the harvest volume also have affected the number of acres harvested.
Commercial Thinning	2,700	5,596	7,500	33	
Overstory Removal	1,600	0	0	0	
Regeneration Harvest	500	0	8,900	0	
Selection Harvest	8,400	0	12,500	300	
Salvage Cut	13,700	1,285	-	2,599	
Reforestation (Ac/Year)	6,400	773	4,000	2,000	With no regeneration harvests, there is little or no planting needed for harvested areas. Most reforestation work is for wildfire restoration or involves site preparation for natural regeneration.
Timber Stand Improvement (Ac/Yr)	14,400	2,728	8,000	4,040	Appropriated funds limit the amount of TSI. Alternative funds like the Payments to Counties funds and appropriated wildlife funds are providing most of the funding for TSI.
Fuel Treatment (Ac/Year)	27,600	4,845	20,000	15,020	
Road Construct/Reconstr (Miles)					
Forest Road Program	22	4	-	0	
Timber Purchaser Roads	31	0	156	0	
Total Road System (Miles)	5,517	6,283	-	6,750	
Road Access Mgmt (Miles)					
Open for Use	-	4,783	-	4,882	
Closed to Use	-	1,500	-	1,868	
Road Access Type (Miles)					
Passenger Car	510	482	-	954	
High Clearance Vehicle	2,120	2,407	-	3,865	
Intermittant Access	2,887	3,394	-	1,931	
Developed Rec Construction (PAOT)	695	0	-	0	
Trail Construct/Reconst (Miles)	124	0	-	0	
Permitted Livestock (AUM)	13,000	10,891	70,100	64,667	Non-Use for resource protection was granted for approximately 500 head, due to drought concerns. Seasons were shortened on some allotments up to one month.
Range Improvement Structures	-	0	-	20	Fences damaged or destroyed in the Toolbox and Winter Fires were replaced.
Acres	-	0	-	0	
Habitat Improvements <u>T&E Species</u>					* These outputs are no longer separated by Forest. Structures are no longer tracked. Outputs in this category are: Habitat Restored/Enhanced Fish: 10 miles of stream, 59 acres of lake T&E Fish: 7 miles of stream Wildlife: 10,172 acres T&E Wildlife: 10 acres
Structures	-	0	-	0	
Miles	-	*	-	*	
<u>Other Species</u>					
Structures	-	0	1,450	0	
Acres	-	*	1,100	*	
Watershed Improvements Structures	-	0	-	0	256 acres at Round Meadow on the Chemult District (Winema) plus 13 acres of instream work, 83 acres of road decommissioning, and 20 acres of riparian fencing on the Fremont
Acres	10	256	250	116	

Other wildlife populations continue to be affected by habitat changes. Lack of timber harvest activity, fire, blow-down or other natural disturbance continues to allow canopy 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. Partnerships for neotropical migratory bird monitoring continue. 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 Fremont National Forest participated in a herpetological survey of the Goodlow Mountain and Gerber area. The survey found no threatened, endangered or sensitive species.

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. Some of these projects 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 12 years, a small fraction of planned timber harvest has occurred. Regional Foresters' Amendment 2 (screens) limited the types of trees that can be harvested, but did not adjust the allowable sale quantity for the Forests accordingly. Timber harvest within the range of the northern spotted owl has been very limited due to the cost and difficulty in developing adequate compliance with legal requirements. This situation continues to depress economic activity in the area and compounds problems with other sectors in the economy. The Fremont and Winema National Forests are scheduled to begin development of a Forest Plan revision in 2005, but that will likely be delayed until 2006 for budgetary reasons. 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 and 2002 added additional stress that has led to increased mortality in lodgepole pine, on the Paisley District, and white and Douglas fir, on the Klamath District. 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. The outbreak of the Pandora Moth reported last year, continued into 2003. Further defoliation is expected in 2004. The defoliation reduces growth, but seldom results in mortality unless the trees are also stressed by drought, as they have been in this area.

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. Unemployment rates are still well above the national and state averages (8.0% in Klamath County and 6.6% in Lake County in August of 2003). 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 2003 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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