



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture  
Forest Service

Malheur National Forest  
431 Patterson Bridge Road  
P.O. Box 909  
John Day, OR 97845

Umatilla National Forest  
2517 S.W. Hailey Avenue  
Pendleton, OR 97801

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest  
1550 Dewey Avenue  
P.O. Box 907  
Baker City, OR 97814

---

File Code: 1950-3

Date: June 2, 2005

Dear Reveiwer:

As you may be aware, the Malheur, Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla National Forests have been working on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Blue Mountain Land Exchange - Oregon. This letter is to notify you of the status of the project, how to obtain a copy of the document and the procedures to comment on the project.

The DEIS analyzes the proposal to exchange land between Clearwater Land Exchange-Oregon, a third-party facilitator, and the Forest Service, US Department of Agriculture. The affected counties include Baker, Grant, Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wallowa. The lands involved are located within the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests of the Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6). All three Forests have proposed to acquire and convey lands located within their boundaries.

The purpose of the Proposed Assembled Land Exchange is to provide for acquisition and protection of sensitive resource lands and more efficient cost effective management of National Forest System lands through consolidation of Federal lands. The DEIS has given detailed consideration to and disclosed the effects of four alternatives - Original Proposed Land Exchange, No Action, Purchase, and Deed Restriction Alternatives.

At the time of publication of the DEIS, a preferred alternative had not been identified. Analyses of the alternatives and ongoing negotiations have given some indications of parcels that may not be included in the final preferred alternative. On the Umatilla National Forest, The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation have expressed concerns with conveying of parcels FU21, FU3E and FU4 which have been identified as sensitive cultural areas (from oral history and meetings). These parcels will likely not be conveyed into private ownership.

The analysis brought to light concerns about facilities. On the Malheur National Forest, parcel PM30 would likely not be acquired if the existing non historic structure remains. Parcel PM26 has a historical structure that the Forest cannot afford to maintain, so that parcel will likely not be acquired.

A formal comment period has been established to collect your written comments about this draft EIS. The comment period ends 45 days from the date of publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. Following the review period, we will analyze and respond to comments, and use the information to finalize the preferred alternative, the Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Record of Decision.

Comments should be as specific and substantive as possible. For a comment to warrant a response, it must address the adequacy of the analysis, issues, alternatives or process. It is helpful if comments refer to specific pages, sections or chapters of the DEIS. Commentors who may wish to appeal any eventual decision that results from the Blue Mountain Land Exchange environmental analysis process must submit comments in accordance with 36 CFR 215.6. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who commented, will become part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.



Comments will be accepted by mail, e-mail, fax, or in person. Comments can be mailed to Jean A. Lavell, Wallowa-Whitman NF, P.O. Box 907, Baker City, OR 97814; or e-mailed to [comments-pacificnorthwest-wallowa-whitman@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificnorthwest-wallowa-whitman@fs.fed.us). For more information or to obtain a copy of the DEIS, contact Jean Lavell, Project Coordinator, 541-523-1230. The DEIS is also available on the internet at [www.fs.fed.us/r6/w-w/projects/bmle](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/w-w/projects/bmle).

Sincerely,

/s/ Richard E. Markley  
RICHARD E. MARKLEY  
Acting Forest Supervisor