

DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION - 1999

- Integrated Pest Management 46. Protect resource values through the practice of integrated pest management.
- Research Natural Areas 47. Protect existing and recommended areas for the research natural areas System to provide: (a) baseline areas against which effects of human activities can be measured, (b) sites for study of natural processes in undisturbed ecosystems, and (c) gene pool preserves for all types of organisms; especially rare, threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.
- Fire 48. Initiate initial suppression action that provides for the most reasonable probability of minimizing fire suppression costs and resource damage, consistent with probable fire behavior, resource impacts, safety and smoke management considerations.
49. Identify, develop and maintain fuel profiles that contribute to the most cost-efficient fire protection program consistent with management direction.

C. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION OF THE FOREST

This section describes what the future Malheur National Forest should be like if the management direction contained in this Forest Plan is implemented. It summarizes the anticipated physical changes which would result from carrying out planned management practices at two points in time: at the end of 10 years and at the end of 50 years (RPA planning horizon).

1. The Forest in 1999

Pacific Northwest Strategy

Opportunities for the Forest to help enhance the vitality of surrounding communities will occur through a Regional initiative called the Pacific Northwest Strategy. It is envisioned that the Pacific Northwest Strategy will be a new focus of operation for many people, one that empowers Forest Service people and local citizens to look and work beyond the traditional boundaries. At the same time, it reaffirms and emphasizes working with other government agencies, local businesses, and the communities themselves in a spirit of interdependency and cooperation that has always existed at the local Ranger District level. As the strategy becomes an integral part of doing business, its central focus will be to foster and enhance communication, cooperations, and partnerships.

Recreation

There will continue to be a variety of recreation settings in which activities and experiences can be enjoyed. The area in which unroaded experiences can be gained outside wilderness will have decreased from 180,836 acres to 101,330 acres. Wilderness acres will remain the same as today at 81,320 acres.

Dispersed recreation opportunities will be emphasized on approximately 5% of the Forest outside the wilderness. Of this, 14,578 acres will be managed for semiprimitive motorized recreation opportunities and 62,392 acres will be managed with emphasis on semiprimitive nonmotorized recreation opportunities.

There will be 5 fewer developed campgrounds than today leaving a total of 20 developed campgrounds. These 20 campgrounds will continue to be managed as developed recreation facilities. Some of these campgrounds may be expanded to accommodate site-specific demands. An additional campground to accommodate recreational vehicle travelers and bicyclists is proposed for development in the Austin Area. The 5 sites previously managed as campgrounds will be managed as dispersed recreation sites. These sites have a minimum of developed facilities, usually no more than a vault toilet structure. Table A-1, Appendix A, displays the Forest's projected construction/reconstruction schedule for the campgrounds.

Vegetative management plans for campgrounds will be completed over the decade. Appendix A, Table A-3 outlines the necessary management practices that will need to be completed to maintain healthy, vigorous growing trees and shrubs in all campgrounds level 3 and above.

Trails

The trail system will have increased by 465 miles to 1,116 miles. Of these miles, 10.5 miles will be constructed in wilderness, increasing the wilderness trail miles to 138 miles. With 110 miles of snowmobile trails and as much as 94 miles of all terrain vehicle/off highway vehicle trails to be added to the system. There will also be approximately 118 miles of mountain bike and 79 miles of cross-country ski trails developed over the decade. Nineteen trailheads will be constructed and 11 reconstructed. Appendix A, Table A-2, displays the specific trails or trailheads that will be constructed and added to the system or reconstructed if the necessary funding is received.

Wild and Scenic

The character of the wild and scenic river corridors will be maintained in a natural or near natural condition. By the end of the first decade, detail river management plans will have been completed and activities will be occurring as outlined.

Cultural Resources

By 1999 about 90% of the Forest will have been surveyed for cultural resources. Surveying emphasis will have shifted from areas subject to impacts such as timber sales, to areas not subject to impacts such as wilderness. The updated overview, site evaluation, and data recovery will have increased our knowledge about the prehistory and history of the Forest and led to better management of cultural resources. Public education and interpretive projects will be enhancing the enjoyment, understanding, and involvement of the public in cultural resource management, especially through partnership. Additional properties will have been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

Visuals

The managed forest outside the viewshed corridors will have an altered appearance. A mosaic of cutting patterns of varying shapes, sizes, and arrangement will become more evident and the average tree size will be reduced. Fewer large-diameter old growth ponderosa pine will be found outside of viewshed corridors, old growth areas, semiprimitive areas, wilderness areas, bald eagle winter roosts, and wild and scenic river corridors.

Vegetative manipulation which will alter the character of the landscape will have begun within visually sensitive areas (viewshed corridors). These alterations will vary from not being evident to being obvious, while still borrowing from the natural character of the landscape. Nineteen viewshed corridor plans will be completed within the decade.

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Fish and Wildlife

Approximately 215,000 acres of old-growth habitat occurs across the Forest. This includes 47,690 acres of dedicated old growth stands and 25,000 acres of replacement old growth stands distributed across managed forest lands. Riparian areas, visual corridors and semiprimitive unroaded areas provide travel routes between old growth units.

Many of the recently harvested riparian area stands of lodgepole pine will have been reestablished and will have attained sufficient size to once again provide shade and water temperature regulation in the affected streams.

- Wildlife species which utilize riparian areas will be responding positively to improved riparian vegetation conditions. The production of both anadromous and resident fish will be greater than it is now. Smolt habitat capability for Chinook salmon and steelhead trout will have increased to approximately 350,000 smolts. Most of the identified structural habitat improvement work on anadromous streams will have been completed (approximately 30 structures per year). Substantial work will also have been accomplished on resident streams (approximately 50 structures per year).
- Approximately 8,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat improvements will have been completed by the end of the first decade. The types of improvements which will have occurred include prescribed burning, seeding, browse planting, pruning, mechanical disturbance, and fertilizing to enhance forage production. Other projects will include aspen stand enhancement and riparian vegetation plantings.

Big-game habitat effectiveness will increase through vegetation manipulation and road management. Total forest open road mileage will be reduced approximately 30% to meet HEI standards within each of the seven watersheds. Total cover will decrease to 51%. Close coordination on forage utilization by big game and livestock and application of enhancement techniques will result in increase of browse condition and forage quality and quantity.

An aggressive access management plan will have helped reduce road densities to at least 3.2, 2.2 and 1.5 miles of road per square mile area in summer range, winter range and wildlife emphasis areas respectively. Many watersheds will have achieved even lower road densities, approaching the desired levels of 1.0 mi/mi² in winter range and 1.5 mi/mi² in summer range.

Habitat for cavity excavators and cavity nesters will be provided Forest-wide; at natural levels in wilderness areas, Vinegar Hill-Indian Rock Scenic Area, bald eagle winter roosts, and research natural areas, at 80-100% of potential population levels in dedicated old growth and riparian areas, at 60-100% in wildlife emphasis areas, and 40% in the general forest and elk winter ranges. Snags will be well distributed and green replacement trees will be available to provide snag replacements through time.

Bald eagle winter habitat will have been maintained and viable populations of other candidate species for listing as Threatened or Endangered will have been maintained.

American peregrine falcons will have been reintroduced in the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness and other suitable areas of the Forest, as part of the recovery effort to reestablish this species in the western United States.

Range By 1999, modified grazing strategies will have been applied to selected allotments which will increase the rate of improvement in the riparian vegetation. Some will be showing dramatic improvement by the end of the decade. Other riparian areas within allotment pastures will also show improvements due to reduced utilization of grasses and shrubs. Woody shrubs will be more prevalent. Some existing gullies will have been treated and as revegetation occurs erosion will be reduced. Ninety allotment management plans will be updated within the decade.

Timber By 1999, 279,176 acres of forested lands will have been sold for harvest. Of these 63,006 acres will receive overstory removals and their existing understories will be managed and 64,242 acres will be treated through the use of uneven-aged management techniques in visual foreground areas, wildlife areas, riparian areas, and in the general forest. Utilization of biomass residue will have been increased throughout the decade, in balance with long-term site productivity and habitat diversity.

Lands The current changes in ownership and use of intermingled private lands will continue. There will be fewer parcels of non-Federal land intermingled with Federal lands.

Roads The principal roads will be readily identifiable. They will have paved or gravel surfaces and look suitable for passenger car use. Signs will assist the traveler in finding their destination. The other roads will appear less inviting for use. They will look rough or primitive, but most are available for use by the more experienced traveler.

By the end of the decade, 618 miles of new road will have been constructed for a total of 9,188 miles of road. Approximately 30%, or 2,688 miles, of these will be closed to vehicle traffic or obliterated and removed from the transportation system.

Road construction will have declined, yet some new roads will need to be constructed. Timber purchaser roads will continue to be built to the standard needed for log haul. Most of these will be single-lane, unsurfaced roads. New culverts, widening, more turnouts, and surfacing will be added to some existing roads in timber sale areas. Surface rock replacement of crushed rock on main haul roads will occur. Additional paving will occur on some existing roads. Roads will be reconstructed where the existing curves are too sharp, where grades are too steep, where culverts will not allow fish passage, or where the existing road is too close to a stream. Some bridges will be reconstructed and new bridges will be constructed.

2. The Forest in 2039

Pacific Northwest Strategy Each community will have capitalized on its uniqueness and involved its citizens in the development of a desired future. The activities associated with the Pacific Northwest Strategy will continue to support the goals and plans of resource-dependent communities.

Recreation A variety of recreation opportunities will still exist on the Forest. Roadless recreation outside wilderness will still be available at the same level it was at the end of the first decade. Wilderness will still be at 81,320 acres.

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The existing developed recreation sites will still accommodate the anticipated demand during the majority of the summer and fall use seasons. Most of these sites will have been constructed to accommodate the increased use and some of the more used facilities will have been expanded to meet demand. No new campgrounds will have been constructed.

The Forest will continue to provide areas where semiprimitive recreation opportunities both motorized and nonmotorized can be experienced. These areas will be sought after by recreationists in attempt to deviate from the swift pace of urban living.

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| Trails | The trail system will have increased to 1,155 miles. No additional miles of trail will have been added to the wilderness areas beyond the 10.5 miles completed in the first decade. |
| Wild and Scenic | The wild and scenic rivers on the Malheur will provide a river setting where future generations can still experience a feeling of being in an area unaffected by development activities. This will be an area where one can enjoy the scenic beauty of a river corridor. |
| Cultural Resources | By 2039 the entire forest will have been surveyed and re-entry survey will be rare. There will be an excellent understanding of area prehistory and history due to the synthesis from several generations of overviews and numerous data recovery projects. Advances in archaeological methods will have significantly changed the amount of information recoverable from sites and the ways we manage them. Primary concern will have shifted from the management of sites in the field to the management of data and collections. Management plans will have been written and implemented for most National Register districts and properties. Site enhancement, and interpretation and public education will continue to be a very large part of the cultural resource program. |
| Visuals | <p>Vegetative manipulation will have created more stand diversity within the visually sensitive areas. A variety of species and multilevel stands will be evident. These changes will continue to be designed to maintain a natural appearance and to accentuate large diameter trees. Changes in landscape character within the most sensitive viewshed corridors will be subtle; changes within the less sensitive viewshed corridors will be more obvious.</p> <p>The managed forest outside the viewshed corridors will have an altered appearance. The evidence of logging activity will be very obvious. A mosaic of cutting patterns of varying shapes, sizes, and arrangements will be very evident and the appearance will be that of an intensively managed younger forest. The large diameter old growth pine will be found only in viewshed corridors, old growth areas, roadless areas, wilderness areas, bald eagle winter roosts, semiprimitive areas, wild and scenic river corridors, and those acres where uneven-aged management is being practiced in the general forest. Additionally, replacement snags will be retained over the entire forest and these may or may not be ponderosa pine.</p> |

Fish and Wildlife

Old-growth habitat will exist on approximately 121,000 acres Forest-wide and will be found within designated old growth areas, semiprimitive areas, wilderness areas, and bald eagle winter roosts. In addition, there will be 25,000 acres of old growth replacement stands being managed of which some additional acres will be at or near old growth. Viable populations of mature/old growth dependent species will be maintained.

All riparian areas in less than desirable condition will have been improved to provide for all riparian-dependent resources. These improvements will have been brought about by better control and administration of livestock use in riparian areas, reduced timber harvest in forested riparian areas, more road closures and obliteration, completed watershed and fisheries habitat improvement projects on all priority streams, and increased or reestablished riparian hardwood communities. Bank stability, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, and aesthetics will all have improved. Streamside vegetation will be more diverse and abundant with native species

Anadromous fish production potential on the Forest will have about doubled. Resident fish habitat capability will have also increased substantially. Wildlife species which utilize riparian areas will respond positively to improved riparian conditions.

Satisfactory cover will have increased slightly; total cover approaches the optimum level, and distribution and size of cover stands will improve slightly. Forage quantity and quality will have improved as a result of habitat improvement techniques, and a reduction in total cover. Big game populations should experience a slight increase in conjunction with an increase in habitat capability. Road management is a major element in balancing habitat effectiveness needs and the hunter recreation experience with other resource activities and public uses of the Forest.

Access management planning will be an aggressive program. Road closures, both year-round and seasonal, will have achieved road densities of 1.0 mi/mi² in big game winter range and 1.5 mi/mi² in big game summer range.

Habitat for cavity excavators and cavity dependent species will continue to be provided through time at the levels outlined for the year 1999

Approximately 40,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat improvement projects will have been completed by this time. The types of improvements that will have occurred include prescribed burning, seeding, and fertilizing to enhance forage production in winter range; aspen stand enhancement; and riparian vegetation planting.

Bald eagle roosts will continue to be maintained and increased use of the roosts should be evident from a larger population of bald eagles in the Pacific States. As outlined in the bald eagle recovery plan, there should be two or three pairs of bald eagles established in nesting territories on major river systems on the Forest. Populations of the American peregrine falcon should be well established in the western United States, with the Forest contributing nesting habitat for at least a pair of these birds.

OBJECTIVES

- Range** By 2039, management of most of the 1,351,275 acres of available suitable livestock range on the Forest will include full utilization of forage available for livestock during the growing season. All allotments will have exterior boundary fences in place and more subdivisions (pastures). Adequately designed water developments will have been installed and functioning to obtain relatively uniform cattle distribution, use of forage, and maintenance of plant vigor.
- Timber** By 2039, over 800,000 acres will be under some level of intensive timber management. Average stand growth rates will have increased from 21 cubic feet to roughly 39 cubic feet per acre per year (see Appendices D and F). By the year 2039, most acres of the total suitable land base will have received some type of silvicultural treatment at least once, and some twice. Uneven-aged management methods will have been applied to approximately 200,000 acres. Approximately 75,000 acres will have been reverted from predominately mixed conifer stands back to ponderosa pine stands. These management activities will cause more acres to be stocked by younger vigorous trees which should reduce and/or limit the impacts of most insect pests on the Forest.
- Lands** The current changes in the ownership and use of intermingled private lands will be far advanced and ongoing. There will be few parcels of non-Federal land intermingled with Federal lands; private lands within wilderness will be substantially reduced.
- Fire** Prescribed fire will have played a role in converting 75,000 acres of mixed conifer stands back to ponderosa pine stands. Most all of the subclimax ponderosa pine timber type will have been underburned. Ground fuels will be reduced significantly, resulting in increased range and wildlife forage. Total smoke production on an annual basis will be reduced substantially as a result of fewer and lower intensity wildfires.
- The use of prescribed fire as a management tool will be extensive. Underburning (the use of low intensity ground fire), will be common for managing mixed ponderosa pine and associated fir stands to reduce fir encroachment and perpetuate ponderosa pine. By the end of this period, 1,000 acres will be burned as rangeland improvement and another 2,000 to 4,000 acres as wildlife habitat improvement. Smoke from these projects will be visible during spring, early summer, and fall.
- Roads** The principal road systems will be complete with improved or paved surfaces. Other roads will be closed or available for use by forest travelers with high clearance type vehicles.
- Approximately 1,159 miles of road will have been constructed. Virtually all available and suitable commercial forest land will be accessed. New road construction will be limited to small amounts of local road construction for timber sales, recreation uses, and special projects. Road and bridge reconstruction will continue.

D. OBJECTIVES

Table IV-1 displays the outputs and activities which can be anticipated if this Forest Plan is fully implemented. Actual achievement of the levels of outputs and activities is dependent, to a large extent, on the level of funding received for implementation. If the funding is significantly different from that called for in this Plan, the output levels are likely to vary accordingly. Projected outputs could also change as new information is acquired.