



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Public Comments Invited for Prescribed Fire Project Proposal

PRINEVILLE-The Lookout Mountain Ranger District is currently accepting public comments regarding a proposed treatment for prescribed fire on Lookout Mountain. The treatment is proposed to begin in the fall of 2009, taking several years to complete. The objective of this project is to re-introduce fire disturbance, a historically natural occurrence, back into the forest ecosystem.

“Conducting prescribed, or controlled, burning improves forest health by opening up the forest and increasing its sustainability, resilience to natural disturbances and habitat diversity,” said District Ranger Bill Queen.

Forest vegetation and fuel conditions on the Lookout Mountain area have changed over the past several decades due to the exclusion of fire. As a result, tree stands have developed denser canopies and fuel loads have increased on the forest floor. The application of prescribed fire will reduce the forest vegetation and fuels.

The Lookout Mountain Prescribed Fire Project encompasses about 22,700 acres. Prescribed fire would be applied in a mosaic pattern with an estimated 40-60% of the project area actually burned. The elevation of the project area ranges from the top of Lookout Mountain at 6800 foot elevation to Ochoco Creek at 4000 foot elevation. The vegetation is variable dependent upon elevation and aspect with dense stands of mixed conifer, ponderosa pine, open meadows and rocky areas. A major part of the project area includes the Lookout Mountain Management Area, designated for roadless management in the Ochoco National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Lookout Mountain is a special area for many local residents and visitors to the Ochoco National Forest. It offers numerous opportunities for non-motorized recreational pursuits such as hiking, horseback riding, and big game hunting. This area provides quality habitat for several species, including elk, pileated woodpecker and goshawk.

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Public comments will be used to help determine if implementation of these proposed activities is appropriate or if alternate activities should be considered. Your comments would be most useful if received on or before May 1, 2009, and can be mailed to the following address: Ochoco National Forest, 3160 NE Third Street, Prineville, OR 97754; or sent via e-mail to: comments-pacificnorthwest-ochoco@fs.fed.us.

Potential issues that are being considered include the effects of prescribed fire on wildlife habitat, late and old forest structure, and recreation and water quality. For additional information, contact Dave Owens or Jeff Bell at (541) 416-6500.

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