

# Experience the Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River National Grassland

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## Reducing Fire Danger with... Sheep?

*Land managers find a creative solution to fuels problem*

October 2, 2015 - Patrick Lair

Reducing fire danger with... sheep? It's not something you hear every day. This was a creative solution to some hazardous fuels along major access routes on the Ochoco National Forest and Crooked River National Grassland this summer.

The woolly little livestock came to the rescue, removing hundreds of acres of knee-deep, dried-out grasses along busy forest roads.

The Forest Service had recently thinned smaller trees to reduce fire danger along Forest Service Roads 22, 4210, and other roads commonly used by the public. They left behind neatly stacked piles of branches awaiting wetter weather when fire fighters return to burn them. But by mid-summer, thick grasses had also grown up around those piles; creating a bed of hazardous fuels that could put those busy public roads in danger should they somehow ignite.

That's when Forest Service range managers saw an opportunity for a "win-win" solution. "Starting in August of 2015, we had Hay Creek Ranch, the sheep owner and permittee, graze the sheep around the stacked piles of branches along the roads in the area," said Rangeland Management Specialist Tory Kurtz. "A lot of the grasses around these piles were knee-high if not taller, and it would not have taken much to light this fuel."

The project helped provide a fire break and improve forest health, while reducing fuels around the stacked piles of branches in preparation for burning them this winter. "The project was a huge benefit to reduce the concern of wildfires along these often travelled corridors during the driest part of the summer," Kurtz said.



for the greatest good



She also thanks Hay Creek Ranch, the permittee, for their willingness to change the course of grazing with this band of sheep plus the use of an additional herder to assist with the logistics of grazing the sheep along these main roads.

## UPDATE!

# Ochoco prescribed burns cancelled; Pile burning instead

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Due to the precipitation received over the weekend, fire managers on the Ochoco National Forest have cancelled plans for prescribed burning near Spears Meadow and near Black Canyon Wilderness. They will resume burning hand piles along Forest Road 22 near Walton Lake instead.

Firefighters were able to accomplish about 600 acres of prescribed burning last week in the Willow Pine burn units, located in the southeast corner of the National Forest, about five miles south of Frazier campground near Porcupine and Sunflower creeks.

This week they will resume burning hand piles along Forest Road 22, between Ochoco Ranger Station and Walton Lake.

The piles are left over from a mechanical thinning project to reduce hazardous fuels and fire danger along the popular route. Piles created from this type of treatment are allowed to dry for one to two years to reduce smoke emissions and increase consumption of piled material.

Light smoke will be visible during ignition periods but will be short in duration. Prescribed fire signs will be placed along the road. Burning will continue as long as weather and fuel conditions allow.

All prescribed burning is proposed, analyzed, and planned ahead of time by the Forest Service as part of restoration and fuels management projects. Fuels specialists follow policies outlined in the Oregon Smoke Management Plan, which governs prescribed fires (including pile burning) and attempts to minimize impacts to visibility and public health.

