



blue mountains FOREST RESILIENCY PROJECT

BLUE MOUNTAINS RESTORATION STRATEGY

Guide to Commenting

The Forest Service is responsible for managing public lands in the public interest. The comment period is your opportunity to be involved in the planning process, to offer thoughts on alternative ways for the Forest Service to accomplish what is proposed, to comment on the activities proposed, and to work with the Forest Service in doing what is right for the land, while also enhancing social and economic vitality.

Comments that provide relevant and new information with sufficient detail and rationale are the most useful, and are referred to as specific written comments. The Forest Service reads and considers all comments and identifies the key issues for consideration to help shape the project alternatives.

The Proposed Action

We are encouraging the public to view the proposed action and maps through the following options:

Website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/bluemountainsforestresiliency>

CD or Hard Copy: Email request to: r6restorationprojects@fs.fed.us – or -
Call: 541-278-3762

Read in Person: Documents to read are available at Forest Service offices across the three Forests

How to Submit Comments

Electronically:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/forestresiliencyproject>

Email: r6restorationprojects@fs.fed.us

Fax: 541-278-3730

US Mail:

Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy Team
72510 Coyote Rd.
Pendleton, OR 97801

Please indicate which Forest your comments are applicable for if your comments are only regarding a specific Forest (Ochoco, Umatilla, or Wallowa-Whitman). To facilitate analysis of comments and information submitted, we strongly encourage you to submit comments via the electronic format (see page 3 for more information). Comments must be postmarked or received electronically no later than 60 days from when the Notice of Intent is published in the Federal Register, currently scheduled for February 5, 2016. If you need assistance in submitting a comment and/or working through the electronic system, please call 541-278-3762 or 541-278-3755.

Tips on Useful Commenting

Comments on the Proposed Action are encouraged and are essential to helping us make the right decisions for the good of the land and the public we serve. Comments that provide relevant and new information with sufficient detail and rationale are the most useful and are referred to as specific comments. Below you will find definitions and examples of what is a specific written comment and what is a non-specific written comment.

Useful Comments:

As defined in 36 CFR 218.2, specific written comments are those submitted to the responsible official or designee during a designated opportunity for public participation (§218.5(a)) provided for a proposed project. Written comments can include submission of transcriptions or other notes from oral statements or presentation. For the purposes of this rule, specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.

Examples:

- I would like to see more small diameter treatment in the moist and cold mixed conifer forest to address the transmission of severe wildfire to private lands from national forest lands.

Non-Specific Comments:

Non-specific comments are outside the scope of the analysis; appear as a “vote” (and the NEPA process is not about voting); do not provide supporting rationale; or lack sufficient specificity to support either a change in the document or to permit a meaningful response (i.e., emotional and without rationale). These comments are not considered in the project.

Examples:

- I do not support this project at all. It is not in the best interest of the general public.

Note: To have standing in the objection process, comments must be specific and include the names and addresses of commenters. Anonymous comments will be accepted and considered; however will not provide standing for objection. This project is subject to pre-decisional administrative review, also called the “objection process.” The predecisional administrative review process replaced the appeal process in March of 2013. The regulation provides an opportunity for individuals and organizations to file an objection to a project before the final decision is signed. This allows interested individuals and organizations to advise the Responsible Official about concerns regarding the final decision before the decision is made.

Only individuals or organizations that submitted specific written or oral comments during a designated opportunity for public participation (scoping or the Draft Environmental Impact Statement public comment period) may object (36 CFR 218.5). Notices of objection must meet the requirements outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations.

Electronic Commenting System

We are using a new system for submitting comments electronically, which is the preferred method of receiving comments versus postal mail because it is more efficient in the analysis process. All commenters, whether they submit their comments electronically or via the postal mail will be added to the Forest Resiliency Project mailing list.

A National website called PALS (Planning Appeals & Litigation System) provides information about projects across the Forest Service and linked to this system is a system called CARA (Comment Analysis and Response Application). This system provides an opportunity for the public to submit their comments electronically, and for the Forest Service to gather comments electronically, which aids in efficiency of analyzing all the comments received on a project. Following are instructions on how to submit a comment through this new system.

Go to the following web site: (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/forestresiliencyprojectcomments>), which will bring you to the screen below:

The screenshot shows a web form for submitting comments. The form is titled "Electronic Commenting System" and is set against a light yellow background. It contains the following fields and controls:

- Organization:** A dropdown menu.
- Title:** A text input field.
- Official Representative Type:** A dropdown menu.
- First Name:** A text input field.
- Last Name:** A text input field.
- Address 1:** A text input field.
- Address 2:** A text input field.
- City:** A text input field.
- State:** A dropdown menu.
- Province/Region:** A text input field.
- Zip/Postal Code:** A text input field.
- Country:** A dropdown menu with "United States" selected.
- Email:** A text input field.
- Phone Number:** A text input field.
- How would you like to be contacted about this or similar projects in the future?:** A dropdown menu with "Contact me via e-mail" selected.
- Letter Text:** A large text area for entering the comment.
- Attachments:** A text input field for a file name, a "Browse..." button, and a "+" icon.

At the bottom of the form, there is a note: "(Total file upload size cannot exceed 10 MBs.)"

Please be as detailed and specific as possible when completing this form. The "Name and Email" fields are the only two required fields; however all of the information is useful and we encourage you to include the information. By submitting a comment on this project, you will automatically be added to our mailing list. If an email is provided you will be on our email mailing list; however if you wish to be on the postal mailing list we need all of the information in the fields above. You may enter "Anonymous" into the name field if you do not wish for your name to be submitted; however realize you will not have 'standing' for this project if you choose to be anonymous (see information on page 2). All comment letters and contact information are included in the project record for this project.

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Input your comment in the “Letter Text” space. Attachments can be included, but are not necessary if they are a duplicate of the comment itself. If you decide to attach a document, Word is the preferable format. Some types of useful attachments include maps, pictures, or supportive documents that reinforce the comment you are making. The maximum files size for uploads is 10 MBs. Prior to submitting a comment, you will have to enter the information you see in the example of the encryption box below. Once you hit “Submit”, your comment will be entered into the system.

