

# Talking Points

Pacific Northwest Region – Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest

## Talking Points-Chetco Bar Fire Recovery Efforts

April 16, 2018

### Area Salvage

- **The Chetco Bar Fire was the largest fire on the Rogue River Siskiyou National Forest in 2017**, burning 191,197 acres of which 170,321 acres were on National Forest System lands. The Kalmiopsis Wilderness and other administratively withdrawn land management allocations comprise 94,447 acres or 55% of the acres burned.
- **The purpose of the Chetco Bar Fire Salvage project is to capture timber value by harvesting dead, dying and/or damaged trees resulting from the 2017 Chetco Bar Fire.** As time progresses, these fire-killed trees lose economic value due to insects, staining, and checking. By late spring or early summer of 2019, up to 30% of the economic value of the trees could be lost.
- In order to identify areas that are suitable for salvage logging, the Forest Service must abide by a complex set of requirements and regulations as identified in the Land Management Resource Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan. The Record of Decision for the Siskiyou National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan states that the Forest-wide goal is to **“Provide a balance of resource management that will maintain a healthy Forest ecosystem and help to supply local, regional and national social economic needs.”**
- Approximately 85% of the National Forest System lands that burned within the Chetco Bar Fire occurred within lands where management allocations either prohibit post-fire salvage or have requirements for additional analysis to show ecological beneficial effects of treatments to aid in post-fire ecosystem recovery. The remaining 15 percent (25,386 acres) of the fire on NFS lands occurred on lands designated as “Matrix” within the Northwest Forest Plan. Within these acres, approximately 13,000 acres incurred a 50-100% basal area loss associated with moderate to high severity burns.
- Within the 13,000 acres, further evaluation for feasibility of treatments was required, considering riparian reserves, Northern Spotted Owl habitat, Inventoried Roadless Areas, removing units lacking economically viable products and considering logging systems operability and accessibility, etc. These considerations further restrict the areas suitable to conduct salvage operations in a timely manner.
- **Based on these considerations, we further refined the Proposed Action (Alternative 2) to a 4,090-acre area, or 2.5% of the Chetco Bar Fire footprint, with a rough estimate of 70 MMBF of proposed timber salvage harvest.**



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## TALKING POINTS - (continued)

- **A Draft Environmental Assessment will be released for a 30-day public comment period on April 16, 2018.** The Forest has submitted a request for an Emergency Situation Determination to meet the desired outcomes within appropriate timelines. None of the alternatives include any actions within the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, Inventoried Roadless areas, the Chetco Wild and Scenic River Corridor, and have no effects to water quality, aquatic species or recreation opportunities along the Chetco Wild and Scenic River Corridor. The project area is located in Curry County approximately 11 miles NE of the city of Brookings, OR and approximately 12 miles SE of the city of Gold Beach.

### Danger Tree Removal

- **Work has been completed to remove imminent danger trees** using emergency authorizations to reopen public access along a high use corridor that accesses private property/residences and popular river access.
- **115 miles of Forest Service roads remain temporarily closed**, due to high severity fire effects and large amounts of danger trees, steep slopes, road conditions and other post-fire hazards identified.
- The first contract area, named “Packer Danger RS Fire Salvage Contract”, will be 264 acres and an estimated 9.1 MMBF of timber volume. **The primary purpose of this project is to ensure public safety.**

### Public Safety

- **Only those areas with a high level of public safety concern were closed to the public** until logging and road repair could be completed. This closure area includes roads 1917, 1909, and a portion of 1376 north of Steel Bridge.
- **Imminent Danger Tree clearing has begun and more log traffic and falling trees will be occurring as contracts are awarded.** There will continue to be a mixture of log trucks, residential, and recreational traffic on road 1376 (Chetco River road).
- As other danger tree work is started, other sections of road will be closed for public safety during active logging operations.

### Trails/Recreation

- **Public access has been provided to popular campgrounds along the Chetco River** after hazard trees were felled.
- Further recreation site hazard tree work will be occurring in the campgrounds, Packer’s Cabin, and high use trailhead areas.
- **We are working with trail partners** (Siskiyou Mountain Club) on Kalmiopsis Wilderness trails and will be working with local trail partners (Curry Citizens for Public Land Access) to maintain or reconstruct critical features along other forest trails impacted by the fire.

### Additional Funding

- The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest has been notified that it will be receiving **supplemental disaster funding** for Chetco Bar Fire for post-fire infrastructure needs. This funding, expected to be about **\$3.3 million**, will be **for addressing post-fire conditions and rebuilding of facilities, roads, and trails.**

## TALKING POINTS - (continued)

### Good Neighbor Authority

- Recognizing the amount of the work associated with Chetco Bar Fire is greater than the capacity of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, the Forest has been working with Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to implement an agreement under the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) that would provide for ODF to implement some of the salvage and recovery work. **The Good Neighbor Authority allows for States to perform restoration work on the National Forest.** Additionally, it would strengthen the relationships and partnership between the FS and ODF to continue to expand our forestry work together.

### Reforestation

- **Approximately 40% (76,000 acres) of the Chetco Bar fire burned in moderate to high severity (>50% basal area loss).**
- **Natural regeneration is expected in most areas**, some large areas have no conifer seed source available within dispersal distances. Sprouting hardwoods like tanoak, Pacific madrone, alder, and big leaf maple are already sprouting. Without planting, large areas could potentially convert from mixed hardwood/conifer stands to hardwood (tanoak) stands.
- In order to meet land management and ecological objectives in all land use designations, **we are planning to plant Douglas-fir, redwood, and disease resistant stock of western white pine, sugar pine, and Port-Orford-cedar.**
- There is **no shortage of seedlings for Forest Service reforestation projects** currently however, planning ahead is critical to maintaining the supply.
- Federal regulations prohibit sale of material grown in Forest Service nurseries to non-government entities unless the material has been deemed surplus to the government's needs. Annual surplus nursery material lists are distributed internally initially. A list of remaining materials is then distributed to externals that have expressed interest in receiving surplus material information.
- **Opportunities exist** to follow partnership example implemented by the Forest Service nursery in Placerville, CA. The nursery entered into an agreement with a state conservation district to grow seedlings; and the conservation district subsequently provided the seedlings to private land owners.

### Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation Efforts

- The objective of Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER), is to identify imminent post-wildfire threats to human life and safety, property, and critical natural or cultural resources on National Forest System lands and take immediate actions, as appropriate, to manage unacceptable risks.
- Authorized BAER Treatments include a variety of natural resource, forest road, recreation hazard tree, noxious weed and hazard mitigations associated with Chetco Bar Fire Recovery.

### Water Quality and Fisheries

- The Forest Service has conducted field visits to severely burned areas and conducted visual monitoring in 3 intermittent streams draining into the Chetco River.
- There has been no evidence of wide ranging soil erosion, such as hillslope failures or debris flows.
- Forest Service staff are working closely with the **National Weather Service** to monitor weather conditions and implement proactive measures to reduce sedimentation in streams and rivers.
- Staff are working closely with **private timber interests** to increase mitigation measures associated with logging operations if needed in advance of storm events.
- **Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife** conducted spawning surveys during the fall of 2017. ODFW plans to conduct post-fire juvenile steelhead surveys during low flows on the Chetco River this summer.