

File Code: 1570
Date: **NOV 13 2018**

Dear Objector and/or Interested Person:

This letter is being sent to you as both an invitation to our upcoming resolution meetings and a notification for those who requested Interested Person status that all requests have been accepted. I would also like to make it clear that it is not necessary for you to attend a meeting if you are unable to attend. We have your objections and intend to review and respond to everyone at the end of the process. I do hope, however, if you can make a meeting or a portion of one, you will do so.

In my capacity as Reviewing Officer for the Chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service, I received approximately 350 objection letters regarding the Revised Land Management Plans (Forest Plans) for the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman (Blue Mountains) National Forests. I accepted 343 objection letters for further review and resolution.

To help me and my team to further understand the objection issues, **we have scheduled resolution meetings from Tuesday, November 27 through Saturday, December 1, 2018. (Please see the enclosed schedule and review the registration instructions below.)** We chose meeting locations in Eastern Oregon based on the number of Objectors and Interested Persons in each geographic area. I hope these locations will allow most people to attend meetings closer to home. Also, due to the high number of objections, I have convened a Reviewing Officer team consisting of myself and my two Associate Deputy Chiefs to share the objection review decisions. All of us will have the same decision making authority, however I am responsible for the overall resolution process and will ensure consistency across the team. Our goal for the resolution meetings is to facilitate discussions between Objectors, Interested Persons, and one of the three Reviewing Officers. Although the meetings are open for public observation, only Objectors and Interested Persons will be invited to actively participate in discussion sessions. I believe that effective resolution meetings require open minds, listening, and compromise from everyone in attendance, including the Forest Service, and I look forward to meeting with you in this spirit.

Because of the large number of potential attendees and the need to facilitate productive dialogue, I have decided to hold a series of smaller, two-hour discussion sessions at each location. As you can see in the enclosed schedule, there will be two or three discussions held at the same time, lasting approximately two hours. Discussion sessions will focus on general topic areas and will include up to 20 Objectors or Interested Persons who have registered for that discussion. The three Reviewing Officers, including myself will manage these discussions. I will also make sure that there is time at the end of each two-hour discussion to allow for other Objectors and Interested persons who were not able to sign up for the session to contribute to the conversations. As an Objector and/or Interested Person, you are welcome to attend and listen to all of the meetings and sessions if you like, but at the very least, I hope you will make a reservation to discuss one or two of your most high-priority issues with myself and the other two Reviewing Officers.



Please note that I will likely not decide on final resolutions at these meetings, because my priority is to have a dialogue with you. Further, these meetings are not intended to be public hearings, so I ask that you do not use this time to re-state the contents of your objection letter or to raise new concerns that are not related to your filed objection. Instead, I would like to use our limited time together to bring clarity and mutual understanding of your objections submitted during the filing period, which I have already reviewed. From there, we can begin moving towards potential resolutions.

These meetings will focus primarily on discussions related to topic areas found in the agendas at the end of this letter. Within these topic areas there are many different objection issues represented. I realize that the topics, as written, do not cover all of your objection issues, but my hope is they will help get the conversation started. I know there are many issues to discuss, seek resolution on, and respond to in my final written decision. As a result of our discussions, some issues may need more focused discussion and I will determine whether additional meetings are needed in the near future. If no additional meetings are needed, the next step would be to prepare my written response to the objections. Instead of addressing each objection point-by-point, I will respond to similar objection issues as a group. The response will be posted online and sent to all Objectors and Interested Persons. Per 36 Code of Federal Regulations 219.57(b), paragraph 3, my written response will be the final decision of the USDA regarding objections to the Revised Blue Mountains Forest Plans. Based on this decision, I will provide instructions to Glenn Casamassa, the Responsible Official and Pacific Northwest Regional Forester, to make any necessary adjustments to the Final Records of Decision and Revised Forest Plans.

Issues within the agenda topic areas that I believe need additional clarification and may generate additional discussions, include but are not limited to:

Access
Travel management and the link to forest plans, road closures, maintenance, too many roads
Timber and Vegetation Management
Allowable Sale Quantity, Pace and Scale, East side Screens, stand density, logging in riparian areas
Fire and Fuels Management
Use of fire as a tool for fuels management, should not use fire as a tool – too many wildfires, forest health and lack of thinning causing fires, no roads to access fires, the fires of 2015/2016
Fish and Wildlife
Viability, Management Indicator Species, Focal Species, monitoring, using best science, surrogate species, trampling of Redds, Threatened and Endangered Species, wolves, wolverines
Bighorn Sheep
Pathogen transfer, best science, use of pack goats, grazing and bighorn sheep, need for protection or not
Elk Security
Standards vs Guidelines, no need for standards, loss or replacement of habitat corridors, impact to access and grazing allotments
Range Management
Allotments, AUMS, stubble height, vacant and/or historical allotments, grazing in Riparian Areas, impact from monitoring in riparian areas on permittees
Wilderness and other Special Designated Areas
Back Country, Roadless Areas, Research and Recreation Areas, loss of motorized access, impacts from motorized access

Public Participation
Need for more, looking for better ways to include people, questions about the number of public meetings and comment periods
Social and Economics
Lack of an economic analysis, disregard for local historical use of the lands of by local people, violations of environmental justice

Hopefully, this will give you an idea of how I expect our conversations to go. I know we will only be scratching the surface. I know we will have in-depth conversations about several substantial issues, but I see this as a way to start the dialogue and help identify what issues need more focused time.

Registration instructions: As an Objector and/or Interested person, we ask you to **pre-register for a maximum two topics at any location during the week to actively engage as one of 20 participants in a formal two-hour discussion session.** To be clear, you could pick your two topics in one location or one topic in two different locations. Objectors and Interested Persons can register on-site for additional discussions on any additional day, as long as seats are available. If you find that sessions are full on a certain day, you may go to similar sessions at other locations on different days. There will also be opportunities at the end of each two-hour topic for any objector or interested person visiting the session that did not pre-register or the session was full, to add to the conversation. **To reserve your two topic areas, I would encourage you to pre-register at <https://sugeni.us/3MEe>. Our pre-registration process will be open from November 19-21, between the hours of 9am and 5pm Pacific. We will accept reservations on a first come/first serve basis.**

If you cannot pre-register online, you may call (541) 241-6870 to leave a message with your registration request for your two sessions. If you do not pre-register, you may register for open seats at each meeting location on a first come/first serve basis. As you can see in the enclosed meeting schedule, each meeting day will provide for a 30-minute registration period prior to the meeting start-up.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact my staff at objections-chief@fs.fed.us.

I look forward to meeting with you at the end of this month.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER B. FRENCH
Reviewing Officer for the Chief