



News Release

Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region



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Forest Service Releases Forest Management Direction for Large Diameter Trees in Eastern Oregon, 30-Day Public Comment Period Begins

PORTLAND, Ore. (Aug. 11, 2020)– The USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region has released a proposal to amend forest plans on six national forests in eastern Oregon to revise a provision that limits harvesting trees larger than 21 inches in diameter. A 30-day public comment period begins with the publication of the analysis.

The alternatives assessed in the analysis are narrowly focused on just one component of the much broader Eastside Screens, the 21-inch standard. Forests affected by the project include: the Deschutes, Fremont-Winema, Malheur, Ochoco, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests.

The Eastside Screens were created in 1995 to protect riparian areas, encourage a healthy mix of young and old trees, and maintain wildlife habitat and connectivity. The Eastside Screens were meant to be an interim measure. Now 25 years later, the 21-inch standard is being reassessed in light of current forest conditions, the latest science, project-level amendments, and public feedback.

“Over the past 25 years, forest conditions have changed, new science has developed, and our land management priorities have shifted to emphasize forest restoration and landscape resilience to wildfire,” said Shane Jeffries, deciding official for this project and Ochoco National Forest Supervisor. “Adjusting the 21-inch limitation to reflect learning over the past 25 years would help streamline restoration of forests in eastern Oregon and make it easier to create landscapes that withstand and recover more quickly from wildfire, drought, and other disturbances.”

The alternatives assessed were developed through input and engagement with counties, tribes, state agencies, interest groups, and affected industries. Early engagement activities included a science forum, an intergovernmental session co-convened by the Eastern Oregon Counties Association, and a partner technical workshop convened by the Forest Service.

The Forest Service will conduct webinars to provide the public with a presentation of the proposal and a chance to ask questions. The webinars are scheduled to take place Aug. 19, 6-7:30 p.m. and Aug. 20, 1:30-3 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time. Information on how to register for the webinar will be posted to the [project homepage](https://go.usa.gov/xvV4X) (at <https://go.usa.gov/xvV4X>).

“Public input is a critical component of this project and we want to hear from you,” Jeffries said. “Please share your ideas, concerns, and suggestions during this public comment period.”

Individuals and entities are encouraged to submit comments via webform at <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?project=58050>. Comments may also be sent via e-mail to SM.FS.EScreens21@usda.gov. Hardcopy letters must be submitted to the following address: Shane Jeffries, Forest Supervisor, Ochoco National Forest, 3160 NE Third Street, Prineville, OR 97754. Hand-delivered public comments can be dropped off at the Ochoco National Forest Supervisor’s Office at 3160 NE Third Street in the secure drop box located outside the building (next to the newspaper delivery boxes).

Only individuals and entities who have submitted formal written comments during the 30-day public comment period may file an objection. For more information on the project and how to comment, visit the Eastside Screens Plan Amendment [project homepage](https://go.usa.gov/xvV4X) (<https://go.usa.gov/xvV4X>).

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