



IN BRIEF - AN INFORMATION UPDATE

July, 2010

Above photo: Stream survey crew - Emigrant Creek Ranger District

AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT (ARRA) PROJECTS AND UPDATE

People at Work

The Forest hired 52 temporary employees in addition to the regular temporary work force from the local areas of Grant and Harney Counties to work on Recovery projects. The jobs provided to some of our local residents is making a difference as voiced in a recent article in John Day's local newspaper, the Blue Mountain Eagle:

—Thad Hilman of Burns, who was laid off after 11 years with Monaco Coach, is collecting stream surveys for Forest projects said, "It is terrific to be working - things were not looking good." He added, "I love working in the outdoors, and I am gaining knowledge and skills for future employment opportunities. I really have a different perspective of the Forest Service since starting this job. The folks on the Malheur have welcomed me and I feel like part of the family."

—"Words can not explain what this job means to me, it is a true blessing," said Pat Brewster, another Harney County resident, who is working on a wildlife survey crew.

—"I am getting steady work due to this funding. Without it, I would probably only be doing a little private work here and there." said Seneca contractor Brad Browning. Fellow Seneca resident Dennis McCormick added "Yea, I might be working without this, but who knows where or doing what."

—Local contractor J. D. Majors had not had a contract since September of 2009. "Without this contract," he stated, "I would be bankrupt and have lost my equipment. I now have enough work for the season."

To read the full article: <http://www.bluemountaineagle.com/main.asp?sectionID=1&SubSectionID=12&ArticleID=24329>

FUELS

As a result of a very wet May and June on the Malheur, the Districts struggled to catch good under-burning opportunities. However, the fire/fuels crews were able to continue with some thinning and hand piling work between fire training.

Three task orders were awarded on the 18 Road Stewardship Contract to three contractors - Iron Triangle, Kriege Logging and R.L. Watterson Logging. The other Stewardship Contracts currently working are Sage and Gold in the Silvies Valley area and the Knox contract down by Antelope lookout.

There are currently 24 separate recovery funded fuels contracts working on the Forest. The District Contracting Officer Representatives (CORs) and Inspectors are very busy overseeing these contracts.

Fire crews from the Districts and the Rappel Base plan to continue thinning and piling throughout the summer during times of slow fire activity.

For more information, contact Roy Walker at (541)575-3105 or rwalker@fs.fed.us

COLLABORATION

- July 19-20 - John Day/Snake RAC meeting and field trip. Presentation on "Big Look" collaboration effort leading to the Malheur National Forest 10-year landscape strategy.
- July 21 - Kickoff meeting for Logan Valley/Upper Malheur River collaboration group to identify joint goals and funding opportunities.

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROJECTS PLANNED

Knox Stewardship Project

This project is one of the Forest's first stewardship contracts. The project will reduce: surface and crown fuels, conifer encroachment in aspen stands, stand densities to reduce the risk of bark beetles and other insects, road density to increase big game security and reduce road impacts to riparian areas, and capture the economic value of trees. Approximately 7,668 acres will be treated with commercial harvest activities, precommercial thinning, biomass removal, aspen restoration, and prescribed burning. Contractors started implementing commercial thinning, precommercial thinning, reduction of conifer encroachment in aspen stands, and road decommissioning, last fall.

Logan Valley Meadow/Grassland and Aspen Restoration Project - Prairie City Ranger District

- Meadow/grassland enhancement, aspen restoration and mountain pine beetle treatment approximately 30 miles south of Prairie City.
- Includes aspen restoration, encroaching conifer removal in meadow/grassland areas, underburning, and commercial thinning.
- Decision signed: June 11, 2010.
- Grant funding was received from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Blue Mountains Elk Initiative to complete part of the project.
- Approximately 21 volunteers from Capital Chapter Oregon Hunters Association and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation completed about four acres of aspen restoration and two acres of meadow/grassland enhancement in June.

Plantation Thinning Upper Middle Fork and John Day River - Prairie City Ranger District

- Approximately 5,206 acres of plantation precommercial thinning to improve tree growth and vigor, wildlife habitat diversity, and large tree development.
- Decision signed: May 13, 2010.
- Several acres of thinning will be awarded in 2010 contracts.

Lodgepole Salvage and Sanitation Projects - Prairie City Ranger District

- Three separate projects with epidemic bark beetle activity:
 - * Black Canyon Lodgepole Salvage and Sanitation. Project area is approximately 247 acres within the Cliff Creek subwatershed.
 - * North Fork Lodgepole Salvage and Sanitation. Project area is approximately 100 acres within the Swamp Creek subwatershed.
 - * Summit Prairie Lodgepole Salvage and Sanitation located in the Summit Creek subwatershed. Project area is approximately 250 acres.
- All projects propose salvage of dead and dying lodgepole trees for biomass, posts and poles, and/or firewood; and removal of hazard trees along forest roads.
- Projects are located within 20-30 air miles of Prairie City.
- Scoping completed October, 2009.
- Decision expected: September 2010.

For more information on Prairie City Ranger District projects contact Ryan Falk at (541)820-3800 or rfalk@fs.fed.us.

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROJECTS PLANNED (CON'T)

Soda Bear - Prairie City Ranger District

- Third collaboration project with Blue Mountains Forest Partners.
- Healthy Forest Restoration Act project, involves approximately 20,774 acres north and southeast of the town of Seneca, Oregon.
- Collaboration is ongoing and a decision is expected April, 2011.

County Road 18 Fuels Break Project (HFRA) - Blue Mountain Ranger District

- Reduction of hazardous fuels adjacent to approximately 21 miles of County Road 18.
- Decision signed: September, 2009.
- May include commercial/noncommercial thinning, natural and project generated fuel treatment, and prescribed burning on up to 4,000 acres.
- 3 task orders (stewardship) awarded to three contractors - Iron Triangle, Kriege Logging and R.L. Watterson Logging, one logdepole timber sale awarded to Iron Triangle
- Estimated volume - 2 mmbf.

For more information, contact Lori Stokes at 541-575-3331 or lstokes@fs.fed.us.

Galena - Blue Mountain Ranger District

- Reduction of hazardous fuels and improving forest health on forest lands west of Austin Junction in the Vinegar Creek and Little Boulder/Deerhorn Creek subwatersheds.
- Includes commercial harvest - 6,800 acres, noncommercial thinning - 2,800 acres, mechanical fuel treatment and underburning - 24,000 acres.
- Decision expected: Winter, 2011.
- Estimated volume - approximately 20-30 mmbf plus potential for biomass utilization.

For more information, contact Eric Wunz at 541-575-0340 or ewunz@fs.fed.us.

Damon Fuels Reduction Project (HFRA) - Blue Mountain Ranger District

- Reduction of hazardous fuels and improving forest health in Van Aspen and Shirrtail subwatersheds.
- Includes commercial - 8,173 acres, noncommercial thinning - 6,718 acres, underburning - 13,696 acres, aspen restoration - 619 acres.
- Decision Signed: June 7, 2010.
- Expected volume: 14-19 mmbf.
- Second collaborative project with Blue Mountains Forest Partners.
- The project will be implemented in a combination of timber sales, stewardship contracts, and service contracts. The first timber is expected to be advertised in August.

For more information, contact Ryan Falk at (541)820-3800 or rfalk@fs.fed.us.

Starr (HFRA) - Blue Mountain Ranger District

- Reduction of hazardous fuels and improving forest health on forest lands on the north and west sides of Bear Valley in the Starr Creek subwatershed.
- Includes commercial/noncommercial thinning, mechanical fuel treatment and underburning, road closures and decommissioning.
- Decision expected: Spring, 2011.
- Estimated volume - approximately 5-10 mmbf plus potential for biomass utilization.

For more information, contact Lorie Stokes @ (541)575-3331 or lstokes@fs.fed.us.

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VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROJECTS PLANNED (CON'T)

Green Ant - Emigrant Creek Ranger District

- Formerly the Ant Project, revised due to 2007 Egley Fire Complex.
- Environmental Assessment (EA) released for public comment June 10, 2009.
- Decision Notice signed December 1, 2009.
- 45-day Appeal Period ended on January 25, 2010.
- Includes commercial/noncommercial thinning and aspen restoration.
- Commercial harvest - about 1,459 acres.
- Precommercial thinning - about 2,513 acres.
- Juniper reduction - approximately 179 acres.
- Mountain mahogany restoration - about 107 acres.
- Expected offer - Summer 2010.
- Estimated volume - 3-4 mmbf.

For more information, contact Lori Bailey at 541-573-4366 or labailey@fs.fed.us.

Jane Hazardous Fuels Reduction (HFRA) - Emigrant Creek Ranger District

- Scoping completed August 7, 2009.
- Environmental Assessment (EA) released for 30-day objection period on June 23, 2010.
- Decision expected: August 2010.
- Includes commercial and precommercial thinning and biomass removal.
- Biomass removal activities will occur on about 11,260 acres.
- Prescribed fire will be on approximately 15,960 acres.
- Expected offer - September 2010.
- Estimated volume: 25-35 mmbf under multiple offerings.

For more information, contact Lori Bailey at (541)473-4366 or labailey@fs.fed.us.

Dairy - Emigrant Creek Ranger District

- Scoping completed in September 2003.
- Environmental Assessment (EA) planned to be released for public comment December 2010.
- Decision expected: February 2011.
- Includes commercial and precommercial thinning and biomass removal.
- Commercial harvest - about 1,400 acres.
- Expected offer - Winter 2011.
- Estimated volume: 1-2 mmbf.

For more information, contact Lori Bailey at (541)573-4366 or labailey@fs.fed.us.

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LEARNING ABOUT NATURAL RESOURCES

2010 Natural Resources Camp - Prairie City Ranger District

51 students between 6th and 12th grades attended the second annual Natural Resources Camp at the Lake Creek Youth Camp Facilities on the Prairie City Ranger District, June 15, 16, 17, and 18. Attendees gained knowledge about the outdoors and available careers in Natural Resources including wildlife biology, hydrology, range ecology, weather and climate, fisheries, wild, edible and native plants, water quality, outdoor skills and safety, archeology, fire science, alternative energy, and outdoor cooking. From the Malheur National Forest, Cindy Kranich taught sessions on wildlife biology, bats, and other keystone species. Pete Cadena and Shahaylie Smarr introduced students to archeology, and Roy Walker presented fire science. Key sponsors of the camp included Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, OSU Extension 4H, Malheur National Forest, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Paleo Adventures, Rare Earth Adventures, Bureau of Reclamation, Training and Employment Consortium, Lake Creek Youth Camp, and Oregon Hunters Association.

For more information contact the Prairie City Ranger District at (541)575-3800.

Outdoor School at Lake Creek Camp, Humbolt Elementary School Third Grade Classes

On May 27, Lake Creek Youth Camp welcomed 32 Humbolt Elementary third graders to an outdoor school presentation on water, soils, wildlife, and more. Accompanied by about 14 adults (teachers, parents, and aids) the students hopped off a yellow school bus into the cool wet weather of Lake Creek Camp and Logan Valley on the last Thursday in May. After an orientation for the entire assembly, students were divided into groups and rotated among several presentations. Cindy Kranich and Colleen Malaney (Prairie City Ranger District, Wildlife) had the students take a close look at beaver skulls and teeth, beaver logs and chips, and participate in a hands-on game using animal cards and a "make believe" beaver dam, to discuss the diversity of wildlife that might be found in and around a beaver pond. Students also learned some tree identification skills. Other stations included Stream Measurements, Soils, Energy in the Forest, and Life Cycle of Salmon. Lunch at Lake Creek, snacks, a rain shower or two, and a closing ceremony in the main lodge/dining area closed out a full day at camp.

For more information, contact Cindy Kranich at (541)575-3857 or ckranich@fs.fed.us.

WILD HORSE GATHER

A wild horse gather in the Murderers Creek Wild Horse Territory is scheduled for July 18 - July 23. A public meeting to discuss the methods used for gathering the horses was held on July 7, 2010 at the Malheur National Forest Supervisor's Office in John Day. The intent of the gather is to remove up to 100 wild horses from the Territory in an effort to reach the Appropriate Management Level (AML) of 50 to 140 horses. The gather will be conducted by a private contractor under the supervision of BLM personnel. The Forest Service will provide support and assistance to the gather operations.

For more information, contact Kelly Ware at (541)575-3432 or kware@fs.fed.us.





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OTHER PROJECTS

Murderer's Creek Juniper Removal and Forage Improvement Project

Goals: Remove juniper to promote native grasses and encourage bitterbrush and sagebrush steppe habitat. The removal of juniper will improve big game winter range, increase late season stream flow, and reduce competition between wild horses, cattle, and wildlife.

- 779 acres of juniper removed on FS land. Remaining 448 acres will be completed by December 2010.
- 1023 acres of juniper removed within the Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Management Area by ODFW personnel and contractors.
- Funding: Recovery, U.S. Forest Service, Region 6 Challenge Cost Share, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Oregon Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, Blue Mountain Elk Initiative, Mule Deer Foundation, and Upland Game Bird Stamp and Access and Habitat fees.
- Implementation: USFS Fire Crew, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wildlife Sheep volunteers, and various contract crews.

BLUE MOUNTAIN WILDLIFE PROJECTS

- The Blue Mountain Ranger District (BMRD) Wildlife Unit Recovery
- Currently seven seasonal Biological Technician hires, including several local residents, three student hires, and an Oregon Youth Conservation Corp (OYCC) crew of five.
- Over fourteen active northern goshawk territories have been verified, including one new territory. In addition, the District is testing a white-headed woodpecker 'pilot' survey protocol from the Regional Office and have documented seven white-headed woodpecker nests so far.
- BMRD crews are performing comprehensive wildlife surveys, including newly created neotropical migrant transects, in three project areas: Starr, Soda Bear, and Antelope.
- OYCC crew has been busy removing aspen stand fencing, upgrading water troughs to include wildlife ramps, and assisting in riparian restoration activities.
- Additional wildlife projects include continuing juniper removal at Murderer's Creek and resource unit technical assistance.

