



VOL. 1 ISSUE 3 • MAY 2024

REVISION REPORT

Newsletter of the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests Forest Plan Revision

Overview of April Public Meetings

Over the month of April, the Blue Mountains National Forests offered eight public meetings, which were designed to offer the public an opportunity to discuss the draft assessment and corresponding documents, provide a Q&A session between participants and Forest Service staff, and venues for the public to submit feedback.

Throughout the course of the public meetings, a variety of perspectives and input were shared with Forest Service staff. The following were common themes and topics discussed with communities across the Blue Mountains: rangeland, forest management and timber, recreation settings, access, wildland fire, existing designated areas, social, cultural, and economic conditions.

Public engagement during the assessment phase is valued and will help the Forest Service gain local knowledge about existing forest conditions and understand concerns about community or resource impacts. Feedback regarding the draft assessment and corresponding documents are still being accepted **until May 26, 2024**, and will be used as a guide for the finalization of the assessment.

Looking forward to the next steps of the planning process, the public will have further opportunities throughout the plan development and NEPA scoping to provide comments and new information as it relates to the proposed action and other possible alternatives. This will ensure that the public is involved in the development of plans, and not just the review.

The Forest Service aims to develop durable Forest Plans that considers current science, local economic, social, and environmental conditions, and recognizes the need for active management across the landscape.

We look forward to continuing public engagement in each step of the Forest Plan Revision process.

This Issue

Public Meetings Overview

PAGE 01

Forest Plan Revision Updates

PAGE 02

Engagement Opportunities

PAGE 03





Forest Plan Revision Updates

Over the last few months, the Forest Plan Revision Team have:

Completed a Summary Draft Assessment. The draft assessment presents existing data and information about the Blue Mountains National Forests with the aim of seeking feedback from the public about the current conditions of the Forests. The draft assessment is an early step in the planning process and is not the Forest Plan itself.

Developed a Draft List of Potential Species of Conservation Concern (SCC). A SCC is a plant or animal that the agency identifies based on concerns about that species' ability to remain on the landscape over the long term. Each Forest Plan has its own SCC list, which is approved by the Regional Forester. The 2012 Planning Rule requires the Forest Service to identify potential SCC at the start of the planning process, as part of the assessment of current conditions.

Created Draft Inventory maps for Lands That May Have Wilderness Character and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Lands That May Have Wilderness Character Draft Inventory: Under the 2012 Planning Rule, the Forest Service is required to: "identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation." **There is no obligation to make a recommendation and only Congress can designate wilderness areas.**

The Blue Mountains National Forests are currently on the first step, the Inventory, and have designed a **draft inventory map** to show all lands that **may** have wilderness character. It is intended to be reasonably broad and inclusive based on inventory criteria set out in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 Chapter 70. **This is only a draft. It is not a recommendation and does not provide a designation of any kind, nor direction for management of lands identified in the inventory.** Each step of the process requires opportunities for public participation. In the inventory step, public feedback will help refine the inventories. For more information about the lands that may have wilderness character inventory and how to provide feedback, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/2juy295d>.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Draft Inventory: Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the 2012 Planning Rule, the Forest Service is required to identify the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS) during Forest Plan Revision. The NWSRS preserves certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Forest Service follows a three-step process that evaluates eligibility, identifies a preliminary classification, and determines suitability of various rivers and streams for inclusion in the NWSRS.

"We are committed to providing a transparent process that fosters a working relationship with our communities, neighbors, and the American people. Your input is valuable and essential to create a Forest Plan that reflects socioeconomic and ecological needs and that can sustain future generations."

~ **Shaun McKinney, Ann Niesen, and Eric Watrud**
Blue Mountains National Forests Supervisors



The summary draft assessment and corresponding documents are available on the Forest Plan Revision website, under the Assessment Phase tab.

To visit, please follow this tab or use the QR code below:
<https://tinyurl.com/yubnjj5n>



Contact us at:
sm.fs.bluesforests@usda.gov

Engagement Opportunities

The Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision is currently in the assessment phase, and seeking feedback regarding the draft assessment, Potential Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) list, Lands that May Have Wilderness Character draft inventory, and Wild and Scenic Rivers draft inventory. **Please submit feedback by May 26, 2024.** Feedback received during the assessment phase will be used to develop the final assessment report.

The purpose of the assessment phase is to gather existing relevant information on Forest conditions and trends and use this information to rapidly evaluate the sustainability of existing ecological, economic, and social conditions and trends within the context of the broader landscape. Once complete, the assessment is used to help identify the need to change the existing plan, and to inform the development of plan components and other content.

The assessment phase is prior to the formal comment period. Formal comment periods will be offered in the future as required at key milestones in the process and will be advertised in advance. Formal comments submitted during these future periods give parties standing to participate in the objection process.

What does helpful feedback look like?

The current feedback period invites you to share your perspective and knowledge to help the responsible officials make an informed decision. Public input will help the Forest Service gain local knowledge about existing forest conditions and understand concerns about community or resource impacts.

If you have a specific concern or additional data regarding any of the draft documents, please state the page or paragraph where your concern is. For example, "I have additional information about the current conditions in the X section of the draft assessment. My data which is x, y, and z should be included in this paragraph or sentence."

If your concern is about a specific area being missed or included on one of the draft inventory maps, giving coordinates or the name of the area would be helpful. We welcome images or PDFs of maps that have markings on them to help demonstrate areas of concern.

If you submit scientific literature, it helps if you let us know how it relates to the review material. However, we do appreciate any input on the draft assessment or any of the corresponding documents.

How does the Forest Service use my feedback in the assessment phase?

The content of each letter, message, or file is coded by theme and topic. This allows the Revision team to efficiently review submitted input. The Revision team will work to reflect public input throughout the final assessment. If any feedback collected includes site-specific or project level planning, the feedback will also be forwarded to the appropriate staff, such as district rangers or project managers, at the forest level.

How can I Provide Feedback?

- **To directly enter your input into CARA, please use this link: <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?project=64157>, or by following this QR code:**



- **If CARA does not work for you, please mail your feedback to:**

Umatilla National Forest Supervisor's Office
Attn: Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision
72510 Coyote Road
Pendleton, OR 97801

- **You may also email your input to us at: sm.fs.bluesforests@usda.gov**