

## **C4 WILDLIFE HABITAT**

### **GOAL**

MANAGE FOREST LANDS TO PROVIDE HIGH LEVELS OF POTENTIAL HABITAT EFFECTIVENESS FOR BIG GAME AND OTHER WILDLIFE SPECIES WITH EMPHASIS ON SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION OF HABITAT COMPONENTS (FORAGE AND COVER AREAS FOR ELK, AND SNAGS AND DEAD AND DOWN MATERIALS FOR ALL CAVITY USERS) UNIQUE WILDLIFE HABITATS AND KEY USE AREAS WILL BE RETAINED OR PROTECTED.

### **DESCRIPTION**

Applicable to all or parts of the forest acres classified as tentatively suitable for timber management and other included acres classified as suitable and transitory range (see Wildlife and Timber sections below for exceptions).

The management area applies to about 32 percent of the suitable lands across the Forest on all districts. Locations are shown on the management area maps.

### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION**

The Forest will be a mosaic of even-aged and uneven-aged stands dispersed in a manner to create a pattern of forage, and marginal and satisfactory cover for big game. Management activities including timber harvest, prescribed fire, tree planting, and thinning will be readily apparent. Created openings will range from 1-2 acres up to 40 acres (generally 20 to 30 acres) in size. At least 15 percent of the area will be maintained as satisfactory cover, which will appear as stands of trees larger than 10 acres in size, with crown closures of 70 percent or more. An additional 15 to 25 percent of the area will be maintained as marginal cover with crown closures of 40 to 69 percent, and generally capable of obscuring 90 percent of a standing elk at a distance of 200 feet or less. Stands managed using uneven-aged practices will also be apparent. Through the use of both even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural treatments, horizontal and vertical diversity of timber stands will be maintained, providing habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species.

A variety of native and seeded grasses, sedges, forbs, and shrubs will be available for big game, other wildlife, and domestic livestock. Range and timber management practices will result in improved range condition and increased amounts of available forage.

Emphasis will be apparent on managing roads, providing security for big game, protecting important calving and fawning areas, and providing for a quality hunting experience. Road closures and other management techniques will result in a noticeable amount of travel restrictions across the area. Dispersed recreation opportunities of all types will be available, but motorized access may be limited. As a result of management, quality big game and other wildlife habitat will assist in meeting state wildlife agency population and productivity goals and Forest recreation objectives.

### **MANAGEMENT AREAS STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

#### **RECREATION**

A Roaded Modified social and physical setting (ROS) may result from meeting the goal. Dispersed recreation activities that meet the goal are permitted.

Recreation site modifications and facility development levels 1 and 2 (see Glossary) are permitted.

Access should mostly be for walk-in or horseback opportunities on roads, trails, and areas will generally be closed to motorized use, with some motorized use opportunities on open roads and trails.

Trail and associated facility construction, reconstruction, and/or maintenance are permitted as long as consistent with overall objectives of wildlife management.

Off-highway vehicle use is permitted on designated roads and trails where compatible with big game and other wildlife species' habitat effectiveness, recreation, and other resource objectives.

#### VISUAL

Management activities will result in a range of visual settings from natural appearing to modified. Visual quality will be subordinate to the wildlife habitat goals.

#### CULTURAL

Meet Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines.

#### WILDLIFE

Elk habitat will be managed to achieve a habitat effectiveness index of no less than 60, including discounts for roads open to motorized vehicular traffic, as described in Wildlife Habitats in Managed Forests (Thomas and others 1979). Marginal cover, satisfactory cover, and forage areas will be managed to meet size and spacing criteria as described in Habitat Effectiveness Index for Elk on Blue Mountain Winter Ranges (Thomas and others 1988). The habitat effectiveness standard will be measured on a subwatershed (allocation zone) basis.

**EXCEPTION:** The Rhea Creek watershed area (Allocation Zone HO2), lying to the north and west of the ridgeline running east-west between Madison Butte and Coalmine Hill on the Heppner District, will be managed to achieve a habitat effectiveness index of no less than 90.

#### Cover

A minimum of 15 percent of the area will be managed as satisfactory cover (20 percent is desirable). If this is not attainable because of low natural potential, the highest percentage of satisfactory cover potentially attainable will be created or maintained. A minimum of 30 percent of an area will be managed as total cover.

Stands managed for satisfactory cover will meet the following criteria:

- Be at least 40 feet in height, with a canopy closure of at least 70 percent in all forest types;
- should be 1,200 to 1,850 feet in width (larger cover areas are preferable) though exceptions may be made by wildlife biologists on an on-the-ground assessment of the stand(s) value for elk; and
- satisfactory cover should generally appear as a multi-layered timber stand.

Marginal cover will be no less than 10 feet in height with a canopy closure of at least 40 percent, and 600 to 1,200 feet wide. Exceptions may be made by wildlife biologists on an on-the-ground assessment of the stand(s) value for elk.

All cover areas will be managed to provide sufficient vegetation to obscure 90 percent of a standing elk at a distance of 200 feet or less.

**EXCEPTIONS:** Exceptions to the achievement of HEI and cover standards may be made on an individual project basis. Such cases would include situations where past harvesting, large scale insect and disease damage, and/or catastrophic fires have made the possibility of accomplishing the desired future condition (DFC) (long-term potential) marginal within a reasonable period (without applying additional silvicultural treatments such as regeneration harvest, tree planting, release, and other cultural operations).

Where these situations exist, activities may occur that reduce HEI and cover further in the near term only if they are consistent with the ultimate goal of the management area, and if the

activities will clearly result in achieving a higher HEI cover condition and desired future condition (DFC) in a shorter period of time than if the area was left untreated.

All such activities will be supported by a documented NEPA analysis and will include a cumulative effects analysis of big game habitat in the project area over time. The analysis will also describe the anticipated improved condition on a subwatershed or management area basis. All exceptions must be recommended by the District Ranger and approved by the Forest Supervisor for implementation.

#### Forage

Available forage will be allocated to meet big game management objectives. Available excess forage may be allocated to domestic livestock.

Big game forage improvement projects such as seeding, browse planting, and fertilization may be used. Structural improvements may be used to protect these investments. Prescribed burning may be practiced in order to maintain a static or upward trend in fair or better range condition.

#### Other

Emphasis should be placed on retaining and/or protecting big game key use areas and habitats such as migrational corridors, calving/fawning areas, wallows, springs, seeps, and bogs.

Management activities will not create barriers to impede movement of big game animals.

Dead and down tree habitat will be managed to provide OT maintain EO percent of the potential population level for all primary cavity excavators and maintained for other cavity users.

An average of one unburned slash pile for every 2 acres should be retained on even-aged regeneration harvest units for wildlife cover.

Manage to maintain or establish a high level of vegetative diversity at a minimum level of 15 percent in each of the following five seral stages:

Grass/Forb	Young Sawtimber
Shrub/Seedling	Mature/Overmature
Pole/Sapling	

#### FISH

Fish habitat improvement projects and their maintenance will be permitted.

#### RANGE

Domestic livestock grazing is permitted at Range Management Strategy C. All available range and livestock management practices may be used as long as consistent with the primary management goal of maintaining or enhancing the big game and all other wildlife species' habitat.

Structural range improvements are permitted to the extent they are compatible with the management goal. This may entail the use of let-down fences, etc.

#### TIMBER

Timber will be managed on a scheduled basis. All timber management practices and intensities consistent with achieving the primary wildlife habitat management goals will be permitted. The selected silvicultural systems applied to timber stands within suitable forest lands will be based on a site-specific examination and analysis, and will be designed to achieve management goals.

Harvest practices may include clearcutting, shelterwood, salvage, removal, and commercial thinnings, as well as group or individual tree selection. Other cultural practices may be used including natural and artificial regeneration, planting genetic stock when available, release,

precommercial thinning, and insect, disease, and animal damage protection. Logging and road building should be done with conventional practices, including helicopter.

Fuelwood cutting is permitted consistent with established goals to enhance big game habitat and to maintain or manage dead and down tree habitat at 80 percent of the potential population level.

**EXCEPTION:** The concept of a time limited or "sunset" strategy may be used on designated areas within C4 under conditions listed in the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines. This concept applies to the Jaussaud Corral Roadless Area (about 4,000 acres). Timber harvest volumes will be scheduled for such areas. Areas will revert from C4 to an A2 or other agreed upon designation by the year 2000. Areas may remain in C4 status pending NEPA review and decision.

The area of application in Jaussaud Corral is west of Little Lookingglass Creek running north/south along east boundary of section 2 to Timothy Guard Station on the Walla Walla Ranger District. The designated area will remain in the scheduled cut until the year 2000, at which time, it will follow a 'sunset strategy' and revert to an A2 designation, without scheduled harvest. To remain in the C4 Management Area, the decision would be evaluated through the NEPA process in either a new Forest Plan, amendment, or separate review. In the interim, harvest will proceed via uneven-aged management, using small group selection. One identified stand of old growth, near Timothy Guard Station, will be removed from entry entirely.

#### WATER AND SOIL

Meet Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines.

#### MINERALS AND ENERGY

Meet Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines.

#### LANDS

Land Classification II (acquisition) will generally apply to meet public needs. Lands may be exchanged in cases of demonstrated positive net public benefit.

Meet Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for lands and land uses.

#### TRANSPORTATION

Road construction, reconstruction, and maintenance are permitted, consistent with the primary overall objective of wildlife habitat management.

Roads will be limited to minimum standards necessary for timber harvesting.

Roads will be closed to meet big game habitat and/or recreation objectives. Roads will be closed upon completion of harvest activities or when open timber sales are inactive. Exceptions may be made by the District Ranger based on a documented analysis and supporting rationale of the need to keep individual roads open.

#### FIRE

For all wildfires in the management area, all suppression strategies (appropriate responses) may be used. Suppression practices will be designed to protect investments in managed forests and to prevent large acreage losses to wildfire.

Wildfire prevention activities should be emphasized.

#### FUELS

Fuels should not exceed an average of 12 tons per acre in the 0 to 3-inch size class and an average residue depth of 6 inches, as depicted in the Photo Series for Quantifying Forest Residues (Technical Report PNW 52) (USDA Forest Service 1976b):

Even-aged Management	3-PP-4-PC	4-PP-1 -TH	1 -PP&ASSOC-4-PC	2-LP-3-PC
Uneven-aged Management	2-PP4-PC	2-LP-3-PC	4-PP-1 -TH	5-PP&ASSOC4-PC

All types of prescribed fire may be used to accomplish management objectives.

#### PESTS

Use integrated pest management (IPM) principles and strategies in managing insects and disease to meet management objectives. Detection and monitoring of pest conditions and populations will be done so that corrective treatments, consistent with resource objectives can be prescribed at the earliest opportunity.

Within the wildlife habitat objectives, protect forest stands (habitats) by practicing prevention activities. Emphasis will be on the prevention of stand and fuels conditions that favor pests increases above epidemic levels. Aggressively suppress insects and disease using cost efficient strategies when outbreaks threaten resource objectives.