



**File Code:** 1950  
**Date:** June 17, 2019

Re: Youngs Rock Rigdon Project

To: Friends and Neighbors of the Middle Fork Ranger District,

The Middle Fork Ranger District on the Willamette National Forest will be preparing an Environmental Impact Statement for the Youngs Rock Rigdon (YRR) project. I would like to invite you to become engaged in the public scoping process for this project. Planning and implementation of the YRR project is vital to the restoration of this landscape. Proposed project elements were identified during the Rigdon Landscape Analysis and Design process. The Middle Fork RD and numerous stakeholders and partners have been studying and working on smaller restoration projects in the YRR area since 2000 and want to move to restoration actions at a much broader, landscape scale based on this past experience.

The project area is located approximately 15 miles south of the community of Oakridge, Oregon. The YRR Project is located on the western slope of the Cascades, within the Buck Creek and Echo Creek subwatersheds (6<sup>th</sup> field) of the Upper Middle Fork Willamette River. The legal description of the area is T 23 S, R 3 E, sections 1-4, 9-16, 21-28, 34-36, T 23 S, R 4 E, sections 7, 16-35, T 24 S, R 3 E, sections 1-3, 10-13, T 24 S, R 4 E, sections 2-1, 14-20.

The project area is approximately 33,000 acres in size. Forest management/restoration treatments are proposed on approximately 6,700 acres within the project area. Commercial harvest treatments include skips, thinning with gaps, and early seral creation. Road work included in the proposed action would include road maintenance/reconstruction on approximately 160 miles of forest roads.

### **The purpose and need for this project is to:**

- 1) Improve stand and landscape diversity, structure, and resiliency
  - a. Increase diversity and structure in mixed conifer forest
  - b. Increase diversity and structure in moister forest
  - c. Meadow and oak savannah restoration
  - d. Floodplain and aquatic restoration
  - e. Control stocking and improve structural complexity and diversity of riparian vegetation and complexity restoration as needed to attain Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives
- 2) Strategically reduce hazardous fuels
- 3) Sustainably manage existing trail system and dispersed recreation while minimizing impacts to natural resources
- 4) Identify a sustainable road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System Lands
- 5) Provide a sustainable supply of forest products

We are currently in the initial planning stages and have formulated one alternative so far, the 'proposed action'. Public input is a vital part of the planning process. As part of scoping, we



invite your comments on the project. It would be helpful if comments were site-specific to the proposed activities and project area.

### **The following proposed action was developed to meet the purpose and need:**

- Variable density thinning and regeneration harvest in about 4,500 acres of stands ranging from 40 to 200 years old. The emphasis is on 1) creating more late seral open forest by thinning in 3,000 acres of older natural stands, 2) accelerating the development of late seral patch connectivity by thinning in 500 acres of younger managed stands and 3) creating more complex early seral habitat by regeneration harvesting in 500 acres of younger managed stands. Treatments would be primarily through timber harvesting but also includes using non-commercial methods such as underburning, fall and leave, and fall and remove for aquatic habitat restoration activities. Variable density thinning would include skips and gaps (max gap size 1 acre) . Regeneration harvest includes retaining at least 15% unthinned in clumps and scattered trees.
- Commercial harvesting is expected to generate about 46 to 65 million board feet of timber. Harvest systems for this project include roughly 30% helicopter logging, 50% skyline logging and 20% ground based yarding. Construction of about eight miles of new temporary spur roads, and improvement of approximately four miles of existing non-system roads would be required to access timber harvest units. Temporary roads would be rehabilitated by removing culverts, subsoiling (decompacting), seeding, and mulching with scattered slash to minimize soil erosion and maintain water quality.
- Road maintenance and reconstruction activities on about 160 miles of existing forest system roads within the planning area. This project would decommission up to about 12 miles of roads and store (close) up to about 60 miles in a hydrologically stable condition. Potentially two rock pits would be developed for this project and would include activities such as blasting, crushing, materials wasting, and rock haul.
- Hazardous understory fuel reduction treatments primarily around adjacent private industrial forest and along roadsides that connect treated stands in areas that offer an advantage to fire management in about 1200 acres. Activities would include underburning, understory thinning (removal of brush and trees less than 7 inch DBH), pruning, chipping, piling, and burning. Logging slash as a result of harvest will be addressed within all treated stands with underburning, piling, and pile burning within the stands as well as on landings.
- Aquatic restoration activities in about 700 acres of floodplain and Riparian Reserves and include streamside tree tipping, Riparian Reserve fall and leave, floodplain augmentation, and instream restoration. Thinning and fuel treatments would occur in some Riparian Reserves outside of riparian no harvest areas and would include allowing backing prescribed fire.
- Meadow restoration activities in about 300 acres would include tree cutting, piling, pile burning, pruning, noxious weed treatment, underburning, and planting native plants. Milkweed

and other pollination sources for monarch butterflies would be planted. Noxious weed treatment would incorporate mechanical, manual, and chemical methods.

- Recreation related activities include rerouting about two miles of the Middle Fork National Recreation trail. The new trail would be located out of the floodplain to prevent further resource damage and would require the construction of at least three bridges. Interpretive enhancements are also proposed for key historic sites within the project area. Dispersed recreation opportunities within close proximity to the main stem of the Upper Middle Fork Willamette River would be evaluated based on use, condition, and resource risk. Actions would include site closure with road decommissioning, conversion to walk-in camps, and in some cases no action would be taken.

## **We are interested in your comments on the following questions:**

- Are there alternative ways to meet the purpose of the project other than the proposed action we offer, which you would like the Forest Service to consider and analyze?
- Is there any information about the project area, which you believe is important in the context of the proposed activities that you would like the Forest Service to consider?
- What specifically are the potential effects of this proposal that you are particularly concerned about? For example, rather than simply stating that you would like a change in a proposed activity or that you would not like an activity to take place, it is most helpful to understand why you desire this. What are your underlying concerns with an activity or action; what are the effects from the activity that concern you?

Attached for your convenience is the proposed project map. The Youngs Rock Rigdon Project draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is scheduled to be released for public comments in August of 2020.

Please include the following information with your comments: name, address, telephone number, title of the document of project on which the comment is being submitted.

Thank you for taking the time to review and comment on this project. Your feedback will help as we work towards creating projects that are scientifically sound and socially responsible. Comments would be most helpful if received by July 17, 2019, so they can be considered in the planning process.

Scoping comments can be submitted electronically through <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=55868>.

Written comments should be sent to:  
Jonathan Tucker  
Middle Fork Ranger District Planner  
46375 Hwy 58  
Westfir, OR 97492

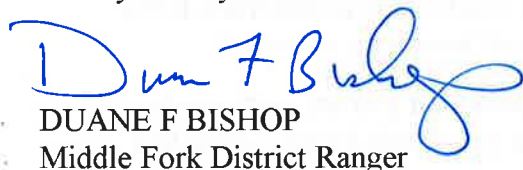
Comments may also be dropped off at the Middle Fork Ranger District Office located on 46375

Hwy 58 in Westfir, OR 97492. The office is open from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. Comments can be faxed to 541-782-5319

Comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this project. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents. You will have an additional opportunity to comment when the Draft EIS is made available. Per 36 CFR 218(a)(2), this project is not authorized under HFRA and is thus subject to subparts A and B of the 218 Objection Regulations. The 36 CFR 218 Objection Regulations are part of the Project-level Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process and allow the public to provide additional input before a decision is made.

Please address your questions or comments to Jonathan Tucker (Project Team Leader). He may be reached at the Middle Fork Ranger District, (541) 782-5346, [jonathan.tucker@usda.gov](mailto:jonathan.tucker@usda.gov).

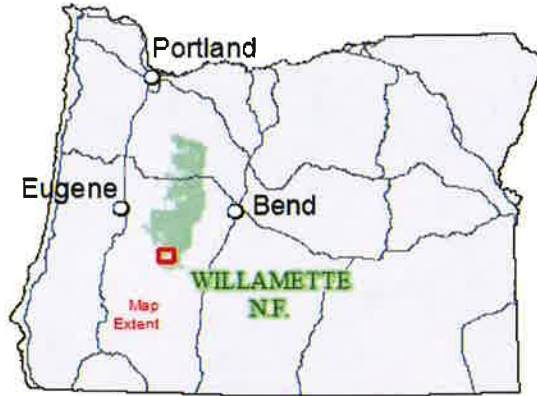
Thank you for your time and interest.

  
DUANE F BISHOP  
Middle Fork District Ranger

Enclosures (1) Youngs Rock Rigdon Project Map

# Youngs Rock Rigdon

## Proposed Units and Project Area



- Project Boundary
- Proposed Units**
- Managed Stand
- Meadow
- Natural Stand
- Pine Release
- Roadside Understory Fuel Treatment
- Understory Fuel Treatment
- Floodplain Areas
- Campground
- Lookout/Cabin
- Trailhead
- Suitable for Passenger Vehicles
- High Clearance Vehicles
- Trail
- National Forest Boundary
- Willamette National Forest

