

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resources Committee

December 17, 2025

Committee Members Present: Bill McCormack, Frank Porfily, Lynne Breese, Calista Songstad, Tim Debootd, Melinda Kestler, Steve McGuire, Andy Gallagher, Cliff Kiser, Kim Vogel, Mike Lunn

Members Absent: Casey Kaiser

Guests Present: Susie Hermreck (County Commissioner) Jeff Marszel (FS), Slater Turner (FS), Robbie Piehl (FS), Isabella Isaksen (FS), Jon Kochersberger (FS), Lisa Clark (BLM), Wesley Noone (BLM), Chris Gerdes (OPRD), Jodie Schiffman (Oregon Living with Fire), Reece Mercer (Western Beavers), Sarah Lillie (TNC)

Public Present: Gracie Holmes, Anna Lisa Marcy, Douglas Muck, Gayle Hunt, I. Smith, John Breese, Carla Oyala, Joe Hudspeth, Earl McKinney, Wayne Elmore, Kim Bush

Meeting was called to order @ 1:00 p.m. by Chair Steve McGuire

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes: Bill moved to approve the September meeting minutes as presented. Frank seconded. Votes Aye: Bill, Lynne, Calista, Frank, Mike, Melinda, Steve, Andy, Cliff, Kim. No: None. Motion Passed.

Prior to updates, everyone in the room (Committee members, guests and the public) was asked to introduce themselves.

Agency Updates:

Jeff Marzsel, Ochoco Forest Supervisor, shared the Forest Service update (See attachment for details). Jeff reported that during the federal government shutdown (October – November), that most employees continued to work. Examples of work conducted included prescribed burning in the Maury Mtns., HEJ RX unit #9 and pile burning. 4 NEPA decisions were signed (3 fire restorations from the 2024 fire season, Salmon fly reconnect project on the grasslands, CEC powerline and Marks Creek CE). Jeff also announced that the Ochoco Forest has received additional dollars to complete the fence repairs from fire damage during the 2024 wildfires. Finally, Jeff announced that the FY2025 timber harvest targets (15 mmbf) had been met and that the FY2026 timber harvest target will be met as well.

Robbie Piehl, Acting District Ranger (Paulina District) gave a presentation for the Paulina North Slope Vegetation Management Project (see attachment and PowerPoint). The project is being designed to increase landscape resilience to insects, disease, wildfire and drought. The project will include approximately 8000 acres of commercial timber harvest, and 4000 acres of noncommercial vegetation treatments, improve firefighting safety through improvement and connection of shaded fuel breaks (2024). The project will have limited treatments for Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) and will maintain public transparency while moving through the NEPA process. The project planning will

take one year and includes the treatment of 800 acres of Engelmann spruce; a tree species not commonly found in eastern Oregon forests.

Kim asked if the project proposal will be able to work outside of Habitat limits and if RHCAs are to be avoided this time, will you be able to reenter a later time and do commercial harvests. Robbie responded that they will not be able to work outside of the limitations of habitat limits and that at a later date, they could plan to reenter RHCAs and propose/evaluate/plan and conduct harvests as appropriate. Robbie also mentioned that Categorical Exclusions can be an effective tool for treating RHCAs.

Lynne asked about the markets (timber) that these commercial harvests may go to. Robbie acknowledged that it is difficult to sell logs these days with the limited mills in Gilcrest and John Day and wood market conditions worldwide.

Frank expressed appreciation for the aggressive approach the FS is using now. Frank asked about the horse trapping on the Forest and the trap that is set up on Spears Meadow. Slater Turner responded that the horses were moving outside of their territory and were on Highway 26 earlier in the year. The FS did set up a trap, but it is not operational at this time. He shared that the FS may start trapping in early 2026. Gayle Hunt shared that a group of folks were present at today's meeting to discuss this issue and hoped that there would be time given for them to speak. Steve shared that they could speak on this topic during the public input portion of the meeting.

Jeff Marzsel shared that, in regard to the North Slope project and other FS projects/activities, that public engagement is still very important. He shared that the FS is committed to public engagement, but that scoping is now limited. Mike Lunn asked about scoping and Jeff shared that scoping is not required anymore (minimally required). Mike said that just listening is effective without the formal scoping process. Kim said that the County's NRAC meetings was a forum for exactly that.

Cliff asked if the commercial and precommercial thinning being proposed would address the current tree stocking rate (in places over 400 trees/ac). Slater said, yes, that is part of the intent of these projects. Slater shared that the non-commercial work being proposed is limited to thin/pile/burn and not removal from the site.

Melinda asked Robbie about the Engelmann spruce and what is so unique about it. Robbie shared that it is not a tree species commonly found on the Forest or in Oregon. In Oregon, mills are not used to it and markets for it may be very limited. This project will be addressed in an Environmental Assessment, not a CE.

Kim asked if amending the Forest Plan was a priority. Jeff said not at this time.

Jon Kochensberger presented information on the Trout and Bridge Creeks Vegetation Management Plan (see handout and PowerPoint attachment).

Lisa Clark, Deschutes Resource Area Manager, Prineville BLM District provided the BLM update. Some BLM personnel were able to work during the shutdown. The primary focus was maintenance of recreational facilities (campgrounds). Fuels work is focused on the Paulina/Brothers area. Work is being

conducted on lands that were originally treated appropriately 20 years ago. In the 4 Corners area, new firewood cutting areas are being opened up. Also, juniper firewood cutting areas in the Juniper Canyon area, Millican/Williamson area, Grant County and La Pine have been set up. Permit costs have been reduced from \$5/cord to \$1/cord with up to ten cords per individual.

BLM is conducting scoping on the update to their Invasive Species Management Plan, an update to look at adding new herbicides. Public scoping and the opportunity for the public to comment closes on January 8, 2026.

Lisa shared that the Sanford/Eagle Creek thinning project has started and 75 acres has been treated so far. Using the Good Neighbor Authority, BLM is working with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife along with the Oregon Department of Forestry to do the work. BLM is starting to see the opportunity to hire now but it is limited.

Lisa announced that the Foundation for America's Public Lands (a nonprofit organization linked to BLM) has announced a grant program for implementing the technology of virtual fence. Lisa shared the announcement and application (see attachment).

Frank thanked Lisa and BLM for their work on the Flat Rock Road project.

Lisa introduced Wes Noone, BLM Hydrologist and the Bear Creek Improvement Project (see PowerPoint attachment). Wes shared the history of BLM's work on Bear Creek and acknowledged Wayne Elmore (retired BLM riparian specialist) and his work on Bear Creek. Earl McKinney (retired BLM Range Conservationist) was also acknowledged. Wes shared that BLM is partnering with The Nature Conservancy to coordinate the work that is being proposed. Wes introduced Sarah Lillie from TNC. TNC will be in charge of contracting individuals/businesses to do the work. The project will utilize low-tech restoration practices to minimize costs. They plan to hold public workshops during the implementation of the project and to create stories to illustrate the outcomes of the project.

Frank asked about the amount of water in Bear Creek and the impact of junipers on reducing flow levels. Wes shared that for BLM in the Bear Creek Watershed, over 10000 acres of juniper have been cut over the last 50 years. This doesn't account for the number of acres of juniper removed from private lands also within the watershed.

Earl McKinney pointed out that beavers have come and gone over time in this drainage and trapping (creek is easily accessible from the road that parallels the creek) has had its impact on their establishment. BLM and TNC shared that they would be supportive of a trapping moratorium in this drainage.

Tim asked that with the proposed work, was BLM changing the direction/purpose of all the previous work done in Bear Creek, that being the comparison of "good" grazing systems compared to grazing exclusion. When in-creek work is done, then whatever happens to the creek and its surrounding riparian areas is no longer a reflection of the original intent of BLM working with permittees to change grazing prescriptions and compare to natural rates of recovery of the streams though exclusion of livestock grazing. Wes shared that the BLM is trying to honor the history of the work and successes in

Bear Creek. Reese Mercer (Western Beavers) shared that her organization is looking for more opportunities to reintroduce beavers into the system (throughout the Crooked River Basin).

Review of Applications for Committee Appointment

Tim shared that the County has received 2 applications for the Committee to consider recommending to the County Commission for membership to the Committee. Starting Jan. 1, 2026, there will be 2 vacancies on the Committee, one currently held by Andy Gallagher and the other by Casey Kaiser. Andy has applied for reappointment and Laura York has applied for appointment to the Committee.

Tim explained that the Committee had 3 options for reviewing applicants and making recommendations to the Commission. 1) appoint subcommittee, hold a public meeting for review and have subcommittee submit report to the whole Committee for discussion and then the whole Committee would vote on making recommendations. 2) appoint subcommittee that would meet individually with applicants and provide a review of those conversations to the whole Committee. Subcommittee members would be required to independently meet with applicants and would not meet as a group. Tim explained that this process was used by the Fair Board, and the process would require approval by the Commissioners. 3) the entire Committee would invite applicants to a regularly scheduled meeting, interview and then discuss and then vote to make recommendations to the County Commissioners on appointments.

After some discussion, Frank moved to have the entire Committee meet with the applicants at the next regular meeting of the NRAC, talk to the applicants, discuss their application and then vote to make a recommendation to the County Commission for appointments. Mike Seconded. Votes Yes: Mike, Lynne, Frank, Kim, Calista, Melinda, Cliff, Steve, Bill. Votes No: None. Motion carried. Note: Andy had to leave the meeting prior to this vote.

Good of the Order:

None

Public Comment:

Steve opened public comment by sharing photos sent to him by Phil Hartzel, representing Twin Buttes Ranch, a permittee in the Camp Creek Community Allotments. Pictures show wild horses and landscapes found within the Ligget Table Wild Horse Management Area. Mr. Hartzel expressed his concern through Steve that they would not be able to livestock onto the allotment due to wild horse use of the forage and impacts of their presence in numbers exceeding the allowable HMA. Lisa Clark said this area was in the Central Oregon Resource Area of the BLM and that she would share the concern with Kyle Hensley, Resource Area Manager.

Gracie Holmes, citizen shared comments regarding the wild horse management issues on Big Summit within the Ochoco National Forest. She spoke about the current management plan and was concerned that the proposed management population objective (a significant reduction in herd size) that would result in herd that was not genetically sustainable. She pointed out that adoptions offer limited successes and was concerned that the Forest would be killing horses that weren't adopted. Slater

Turner, District Ranger shared that there are no plans to euthanize any horses. He said that the funds made available for management prohibits the killing of the horses.

Anna Lisa Marcy shared with the Committee that she understands the horses need to be managed. She too shared that adoption is difficult, she expressed concern that unadopted horses would be shipped to Canada for slaughter. She also said that sending them to the Modoc holding facility in California was not the answer. Slater shared that he is still working on the construction of a holding facility on the Grasslands. Currently, construction is being held up until funds become available. He shared that he had the trap set up during November because staff/personnel were available. He emphasized that the trapping facility was not currently operational and trapping horses. He said that in order to get to the management level (approved population) there needs to be a plan and he is open to working with anyone in helping to create that plan. Slater also said that the FS will not be taking out 100 horses at one time.

Isabella Isaksen (FS) shared that the FS is trying to be very transparent with this process and has been working with Kate Beardsley (wild horse advocate). She also shared that the FS is working within its legal requirements.

Joe Hudspeth asked about the trap at Spears Meadow and why there is hay in it. Slater shared that the current plan is to begin trapping operations in Feb/March 2026. He shared that the hay is there so that the horses get used to the trap prior to starting to use it.

Isabella shared that having horses on Hwy 26 creates a safety issue to drivers on the highway as well as a risk to the horses themselves. Susie Hermreck shared that the horses that are a part of the Ligget Table HMA were on the Paulina Hwy (Hwy 380) and that 4 horses were killed when struck by a vehicle. She opened a gate onto her property, so the horses were finally able to get off the road. Susie also shared that due to current population numbers of the Ligget Table herd, permittees were being limited to 2 weeks on their allotments.

Doug Muck shared his observations of the meeting today. He spoke about the contradictions and challenges within the Agencies to do their jobs. Sometimes one goal contradicts the needs for another goal to be accomplished. He mentioned that his observations of juniper removal in Harney County required the removal of the tree's root system in order to prevent sprouting. Bill McCormack shared that if you cut the lowest limbs from the tree, it won't sprout.

Kim Bush also asked why there is currently hay in the traps since they are not trapping now. Slater again shared that they are trying to get the horses acclimated to the trap being there.

Gracie Holmes again asked about the management plan and that she had been getting information from Jacob Young, FS. Jacob had told her that the FS would be introducing horses to the herd in order to introduce new genetics and reduce inbreeding.

Frank asked if the NRAC could help create a management plan. Slater responded that the FS already has a management plan that was adopted a couple of years ago.

No other public comments

Lynne moved to adjourn the meeting. Calista seconded the motion. Votes yes: Frank, Bill, Mike, Lynne, Calista, Kim, Melinda, Cliff, Steve. Votes No: None Motion Passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

DRAFT



**Crook County Natural Resources Advisory
Committee**

Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River National
Grassland
December 17, 2025

I. Overview

The Ochoco National Forest maintained strong momentum throughout the lapse in appropriations and in the weeks that followed, with a substantial volume of work accomplished across timber, critical post-fire restoration, and hazardous fuels reduction. Staff continued advancing priority efforts by completing time-sensitive fieldwork, moving analyses forward, and addressing urgent on-the-ground needs to protect resources and maintain public safety.

This sustained productivity during a challenging period reflects the professionalism and dedication of Forest Service employees and the continued commitment to serving the communities of Crook County.

II. 2025 Fire

Prescribed fire planning completed this fall created valuable opportunities to collaborate with private forest landowners near the Maury Mountains area. The Maury 2 Prescribed Fire Project, which had been planned for several years, was implemented under appropriate weather conditions and successfully treated approximately 3,330 acres of mixed private and public lands. Drone-assisted ignition was used to enhance operational efficiency and firefighter safety.

The HEJ RX Unit 9, located southeast of Walton Lake, successfully treated 419 acres through understory burning. The use of drones for ignition proved to be both safe and effective in introducing fire to the landscape.

Pile and grapple burning operations are now complete, addressing fuels generated from wildfires and vegetation management activities. These treatments are a critical component of post-fire recovery and hazardous fuels reduction. Approximately 5,000 acres were treated in 2025.

III. Projects and Forest Management

- 3 Fires Reforestation Initiative: This initiative will replant native, fire-adapted species over several years within high-mortality areas of the 2024 Crazy Creek, Wiley Flat, and Rail Ridge Fire footprints. Priority areas include locations with greater than 75 percent tree mortality. A decision was signed on November 11, 2025.



- Lower Derr Restoration Project: This project aims to improve watershed health while supporting long-term grazing benefits in the Jackson and Derr Creek areas. Planned treatments include beaver dam analogs, native riparian plantings, large woody debris placement, meadow restoration, and fencing improvements. A decision was signed on September 9, 2025.
- North Fork Cooked River Stream Restoration: This project focuses on restoring 1.95 miles of degraded stream within the North Fork Crooked River. Work includes in-stream placement of wood and rock, gully filling, construction of beaver dam analogs, and planting of diverse upland and riparian species. The in-stream portion of the project has been completed.
- Longer Stewardship Agreement: This partnership project with the Oregon Wildlife Foundation includes commercial and non-commercial thinning and hand piling of slash. Work is being completed adjacent to the Williams Prairie and Upper North Fork Crooked River restoration areas.
- Mill Creek and North Fork Crooked River Projects: Implementation will occur over the next several years.
- Jackson Fuel Break Project: A decision was signed in April 2025. Treatments are scheduled to begin during the upcoming season.
- Sunflower Restoration Project: Two thinning contracts covering approximately 1,600 acres began in 2024. Operations are nearing completion.

IV. Timber Sales

- Barney Deck Sale – Complete (decks hauled)
- Branch – 50% complete (timber cut and hauled to date)
- Core – 75% complete (timber cut and hauled to date)
- Coyote – 80% complete (timber cut and hauled to date)
- Detour Firewood – Anticipated to be offered for bid soon
- Dome – Complete (timber cut and hauled)
- Grassland Deck Sales – Anticipated to be offered soon
- Loco Deck Sale – Complete (decks hauled)
- Longer – 25% complete (timber cut and hauled to date)
- Longest – 50% complete (timber cut and hauled to date)
- Marks Creek Fire Hazard Tree Removal Salvage – Sold; operations expected to begin within two weeks
- Piper – 40% complete (timber cut and hauled to date)
- Pond Deck Sale – Near completion (decks hauled)
- Remaze – In sale preparation; anticipated offering in early 2026
- Rail Decks – 75% complete (decks hauled to date)
- Roba Salvage – Complete (timber cut and hauled)
- Slab – Anticipated to be offered in January
- Shake – Sold; operations have not yet started



- Speaker – Sold; operations have not yet started

To sign-up for project notifications, please visit our website,

<https://nfs.fs2c.usda.gov/r06/ochoco/projects/signup>. For more information for all current planning projects please visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r06/ochoco/projects>





Ochoco National Forest | December 2025

Paulina North Slope

The proposed Paulina North Slope Vegetation Management Project is needed to help restore characteristic (historic) vegetative conditions across the project area. These actions are intended to increase landscape resilience to insects, disease, wildfire, and drought; reduce the risk of uncharacteristic high-severity fire; and improve firefighter ingress and egress for wildfire response.

The project would also contribute to increased timber production on the Ochoco National Forest, consistent with current direction under Executive Order 14225: **Immediate Expansion of American Timber**

Production. This Executive Order emphasizes the importance of active forest management to support domestic timber supply while reducing wildfire risk and improving public and firefighter safety.

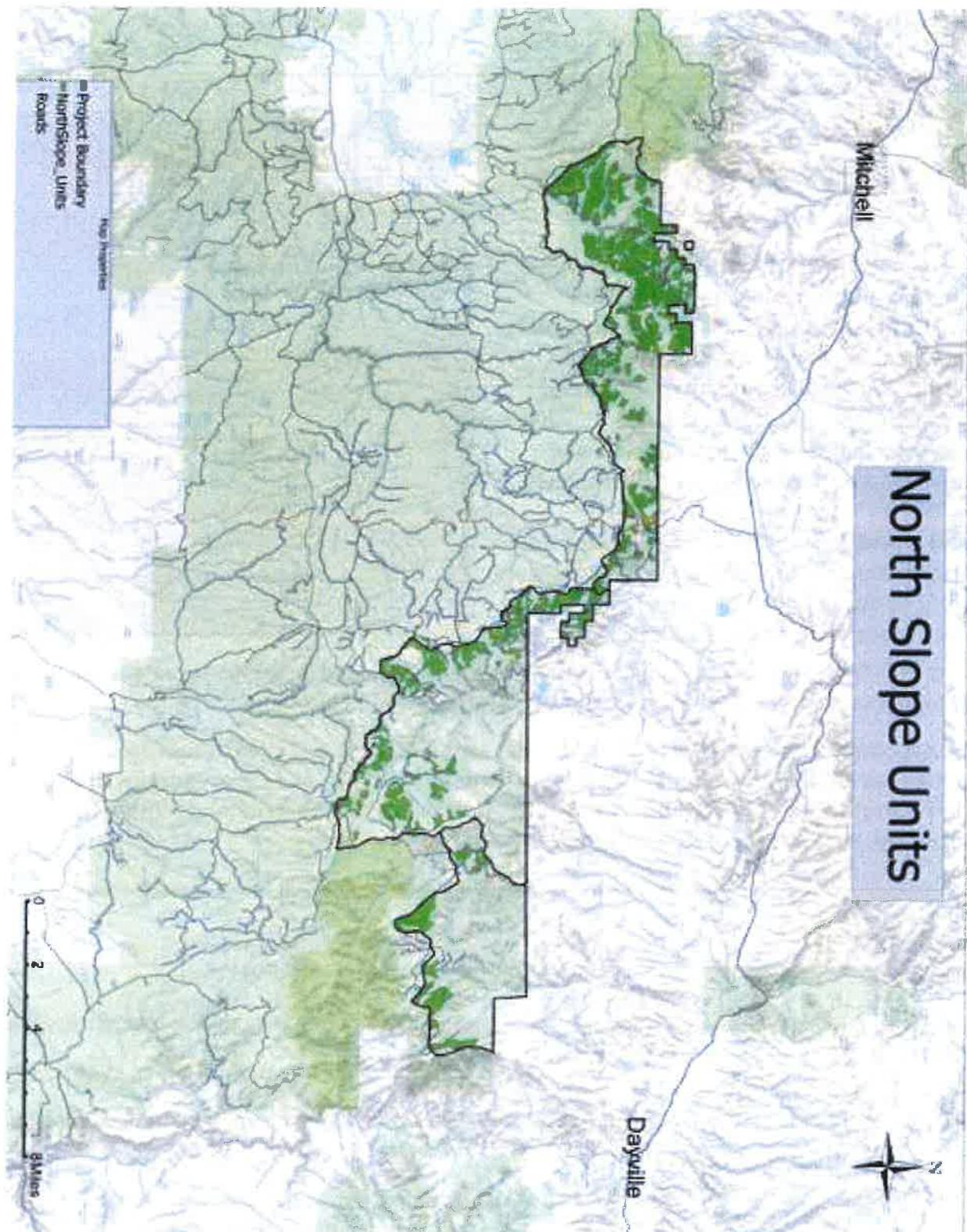
The approximately 52,700-acre North Slope project area is located about 48 miles east of Prineville, Oregon. The area is generally bounded by private lands to the north and Forest Service Roads 2630, 12, and 38 to the south. The project boundary includes National Forest System lands within the Franks Creek-John Day, Rock Creek, and Mountain Subwatersheds.

Proposed Project Components

- Include approximately 8,000 acres of commercial timber harvest.
- Include approximately 4,000 acres of noncommercial vegetation treatments.
- Enhance firefighter ingress and egress by improving and connecting shaded fuel breaks previously implemented during the 2024 Crazy Creek and Rail Fires, as well as fuel breaks approved through the Jackson Fuel Break Project.
- Maintain public transparency while moving efficiently through the environmental analysis process.
- Limit treatments within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) due to the presence of steelhead critical habitat.



- Analyze one action alternative, consistent with current administrative direction.
- Utilize a streamlined impacts analysis approach.
- Be implemented within one year, as directed.
- Treat a variety of forest habitats, including but not limited to dry pine stands.
- Include approximately 800 acres of treatment units containing Engelmann spruce.
- Address forest stands exhibiting significant insect and disease impacts.



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Paulina North Slope

Ochoco National Forest Proposed Vegetation Management Project

12/30/2025

USDA Forest Service
US Department of Agriculture

Project Purpose & Need

- Restore historic characteristic vegetative conditions
- Increase resilience to insects, disease, fire, and drought
- Reduce the catastrophic wildfire risk
- Improve firefighter ingress and egress

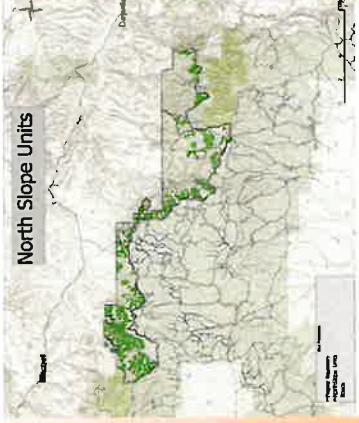
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Policy Direction

- Supports Executive Order 14225: Immediate expansion of American Timber Production
- Emphasizes active forest management
- Aligns timber production with public and firefighter safety

3

Project Area



- ~52,000 acres
- ~48 miles east of Prineville, OR
- Includes Frank Creek-John Day, Rock Creek, and Mountain sub-watersheds
- Bounded by private lands and Forest Service Road (FSR) 2630, FSR 12, and FSR 38

4

Proposed Treatments

- ~8,000 acres of commercial timber harvest
- ~4,000 acres of noncommercial vegetation treatments
- Treatments across multiple habitat types

5

Environmental Considerations

- Minimal treatments in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs)
- Protection of critical steelhead habitat
- ~800 acres of Engelmann spruce treatments
- Addresses widespread insect and disease impacts

7

Wildfire Risk Reduction

- Enhances shaded fuels breaks
- Builds on treatments completed after the 2024 Crazy Creek and Rail Fires
- Integrates previously approved Jackson Fuel Break treatments
- Improves firefighter access and safety

6

Implementation Approach

- One action alternative analyzed
- Streamlined environmental analysis
- Emphasis on transparency
- Project implementation within one year

8



Expected Outcomes

- Improved forest health and resilience
- Reduced risk to communities and firefighters by addressing hazardous fuels
- Increased timber production
- Meaningful outcomes delivered efficiently,





Ochoco National Forest | December 2025

Upper Trout & Bridge Creeks Veg Mgmt Project

The proposed Upper Trout and Bridge Creeks Vegetation Management Project is needed to help restore characteristic (historic) vegetative conditions across the project area. These actions are intended to increase landscape resilience to insects, disease, wildfire, and drought; reduce the risk of uncharacteristic high-severity fire; and improve firefighter ingress and egress for wildfire response.

The project would also contribute to increased timber production on the Ochoco National Forest, consistent with current direction under Executive Order 14225: Immediate Expansion of American Timber

Production. This Executive Order emphasizes the importance of active forest management to support domestic timber supply while reducing wildfire risk and improving public and firefighter safety.



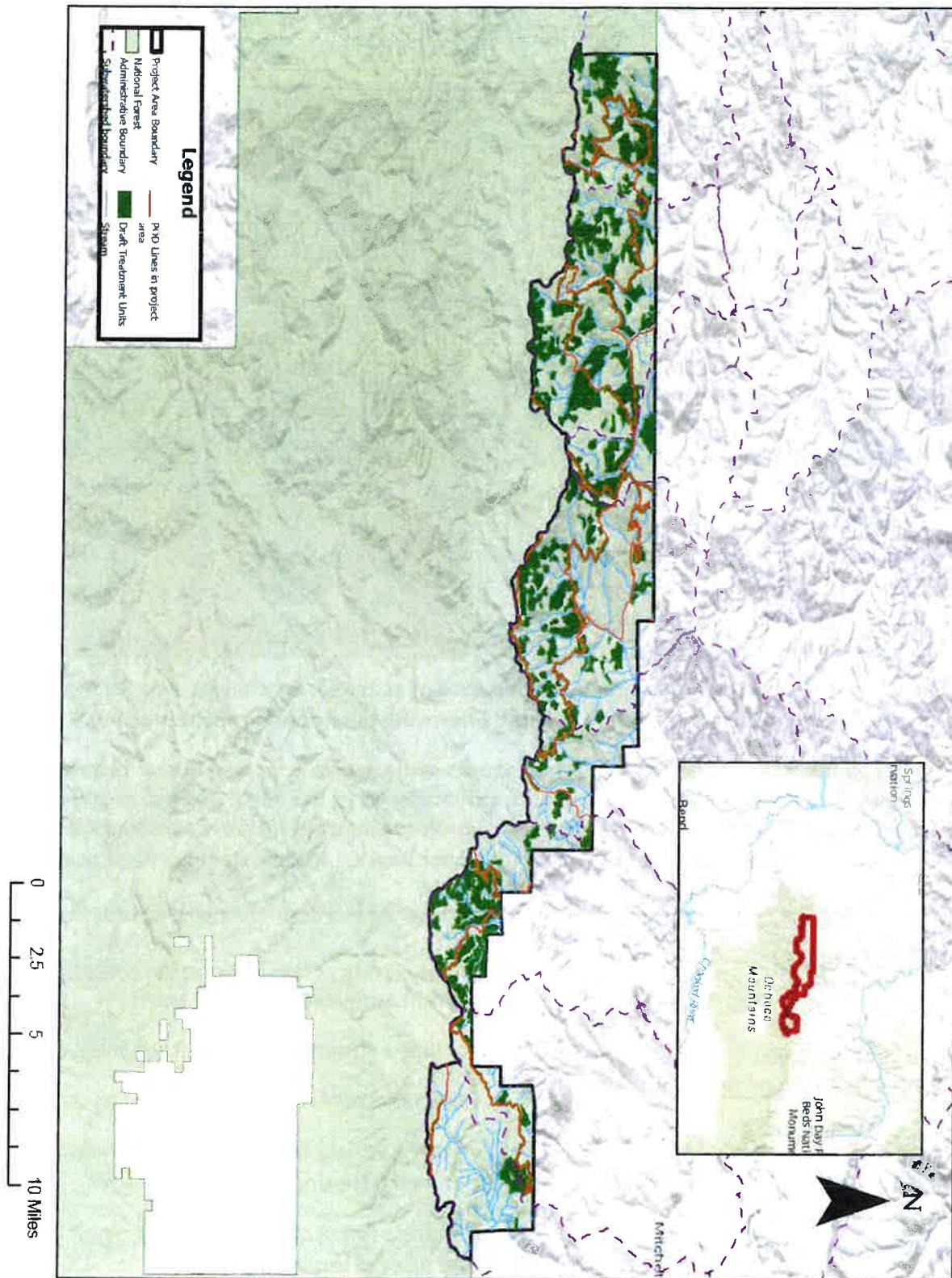
The approximately 55,500-acre Upper Trout & Bridge Creeks project area is located about 22 miles northeast of Prineville, Oregon. The area is generally bounded by private lands to the north and the southern boundaries of the listed subwatersheds to the south. The project boundary includes National Forest System lands within the Foley Cr, Headwaters Trout Cr, Opal Cr, Upper Bear Cr, Middle Bear Cr, West Branch Bridge Cr, Upper Bridge Cr, and Headwaters Bridge Cr Subwatersheds.

Proposed Project Components

- Include approximately 13,000-15,000 acres of commercial timber harvest and non-commercial thinning
- Enhance firefighter ingress and egress by creating new shaded fuel breaks in key locations within the project area
- Maintain public transparency while moving efficiently through the environmental analysis process.
- Limit treatments within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) due to the presence of mid-Columbia River steelhead critical habitat.

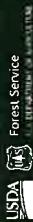
- Analyze one action alternative, consistent with current administrative direction.
- Utilize a streamlined impacts analysis approach.
- Be implemented within one year, as directed.
- Treat a variety of forest habitats, including but not limited to dry pine stands.
- Address forest stands exhibiting significant insect and disease impacts.

Upper Trout and Bridge Creeks Project Units



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 USDA Forest Service

Upper Trout and Bridge Creeks Vegetation Management Project (UTB)

Lookout Mountain Ranger District, Ochoco National Forest

Jon Kochersberger, Interdisciplinary Team Leader

1

Purpose & Need

- Restore historic vegetative conditions
- Increase resilience and durability to insects, disease, fire and drought
- Reduce catastrophic wildfire risk
- Improve firefighter ingress and egress

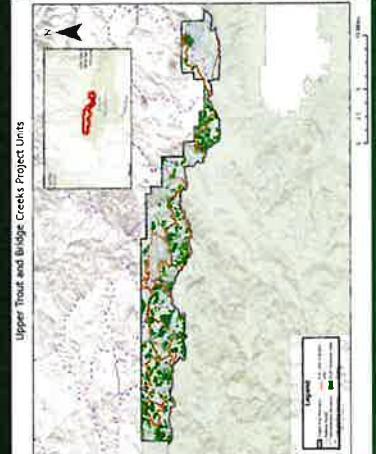
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Policy & Forest Direction

- EO 14225 Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production
- Secretarial Memo 1078-006 Emergency Action Determination
 - Reduce threats to public health & safety through improving durability, resilience, and resistance to fire, insects, and disease within National Forests and Grasslands
 - Aligns timber production with public and firefighter safety
- Environmental Analysis (EA) (Final deadline ~Feb 2027)
 - Final proposed action NLT March 1, 2026
 - Sale out for bids ~Oct 2027

3

Project Area



Upper Trout and Bridge Creeks Project Units

Project Area

- ~55,000 acres
- Treated area will likely be 13,000-15,000 acres
- Includes Foley Cr. Headwaters Trout Cr. Opal Cr. Upper Bear Cr. Middle Bear Cr. West Branch Bridge Cr. Upper Bridge Cr. and Headwaters Bridge Cr. sub-watersheds
- Bounded by private lands and southern subwatershed boundaries

4

Proposed Treatments

- Commercial timber harvest
- Non-commercial thinning
- Prescribed burning of activity fuels
- Treatments will occur in Category 4 Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) with resource protection measures
- Some thinning to occur along Potential Operational Delineations (POD) to create shaded fuel breaks to increase safety and effectiveness of wildfire response

5

Environmental Considerations

- Minimal treatments in Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (RHCAs)
- Protection of critical mid-Columbia River steelhead habitat
- Address widespread insect and disease impacts

6

Additional Considerations

- No road closures will be proposed as part of this project
- No stream restoration or aspen treatments will be proposed as part of this project
- 2019 Bear Cluster Allotment Management Plan EIS approved stream restoration activities along ~17 miles of streams in the Bear Cr and Bridge Cr sub-watersheds and 13 Aspen stand treatments
- 12.5 miles of stream restoration was completed in the Trout Cr sub-watersheds from 2019-2023

7

Implementation Approach

- One action alternative analyzed
- Streamlined environmental analysis
- Emphasis on transparency
- EA/FONSI signed within one year once the proposed action has been formalized

8



Expected Outcomes

- Improved forest health and resilience
- Reduced risk to communities and firefighters by addressing hazardous fuels
- Increased timber production
- Meaningful outcomes delivered efficiently



Crook County Project/Activity Briefing

Bureau of Land Management – Prineville District – December 2025

Fuels Accomplishments

The BLM fuels program has been busy with their winter burning and juniper thinning program. For the Paulina area, about 6700 acres will be thinned with the cut material piled for later burning. In addition, the next unit (1,281 acres of material left from the firewood cutting area) in the Williamson Creek area (near 4-corners) will be piled and burned. Crews have also completed about 2,640 acres of pile burning in the Brothers area. Additional planning is starting now to cover several thousand more acres of thinning in the Paulina area between 2026-2028.

Firewood/Christmas Trees

The district reduced the cost of personal-use permit fees for Christmas trees from \$5 to just \$1, and from \$10 or \$5/cord to \$1/cord for firewood permits with a maximum of 10 cords – for personal use only. The office opened up an area in Juniper Canyon for cutting standing live or downed juniper, using existing designated routes, additional acreage in the Williamson Creek firewood cutting area, as well as areas in La Pine area and Grant County.

Integrated Invasive Plant Management

The district is inviting public input on a revised environmental assessment (EA) for the Integrated Invasive Plant Management Project in the Prineville District. The scoping period begins December 15, 2025, and runs through January 8, 2026.

More than 75 invasive plant species threaten the health of Central Oregon's landscapes, impacting everything from native vegetation and wildlife habitat to water quality and recreation. The BLM is proposing updates to its existing management plan to better address these challenges using a broader set of tools and technologies.

The proposed updates include:

- Adding 10 new herbicide active ingredients to improve treatment options for a wider variety of invasive plants, including annual and perennial grasses.
- Incorporating new technologies such as drones for aerial herbicide application and monitoring.
- Expanding treatment areas to include lands where new herbicides would be used alongside existing methods.

The EA will analyze potential environmental effects of these updates, including impacts to:

- Soil health and water quality
- Riparian habitats and aquatic species
- Wildlife and migratory birds, including Greater Sage-Grouse
- Livestock forage and grazing
- Recreation values and fire risk

Written comments may also be mailed or hand-delivered to:

BLM Prineville District Office
Attn: Integrated Invasive Plant Management EA
3050 NE 3rd Street



Princville, OR 97754

Please include "Invasive Plant EA" in the subject line or on the envelope.

Sanford/Eagle Rock Vegetation Treatments

The Deschutes Field Office signed the Sanford Creek and Eagle Rock Mule Deer Winter Range Restoration project January 2025. It was in collaboration with ODFW and input was provided by NRCS, Crook SWCD, and the Mule Deer Foundation. In the project, 4,500 acres of juniper will be treated (initial and retreatment) across 19,000 acres north and south of Prineville Reservoir. The project area is designated as seasonally closed to motorized routes for the protection of wintering mule deer. Units associated with this project all benefit mule deer winter range but also 410 acres of forestry and about 2,000 acres of WUI.

The BLM transferred \$115,000 to ODFW through the GNA process for the first wave of treatments (450 acres). ODFW was able to transfer the money to ODF to keep engine modules on in the fall of 2025. These crews were able to complete 75 acres in October. Work is expected to pick back up in March 2026. In addition to internal forestry funding, the BLM was able to secure \$165,000 through OWEB on behalf of ODFW for cultural surveys, which ODFW will complete via a contract. Implementation will likely continue through FY 28 or 29. This is a great example of working with partners to get a project completed.



The **Field Staff Law Enforcement announcement** to fill a vacancy on the Prineville District (and other locations) is now open for applications on usajobs.gov. The first announcement is open to all US citizens and the second is a Merit announcement. If qualified, applicants should consider applying to both announcements.



Bear Creek

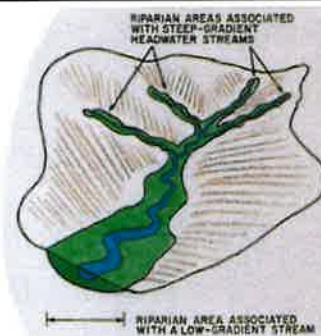
History, Management, Partnership, and Conservation

Wesley Noone, M.S.
BLM Deschutes Field Office Hydrologist

1

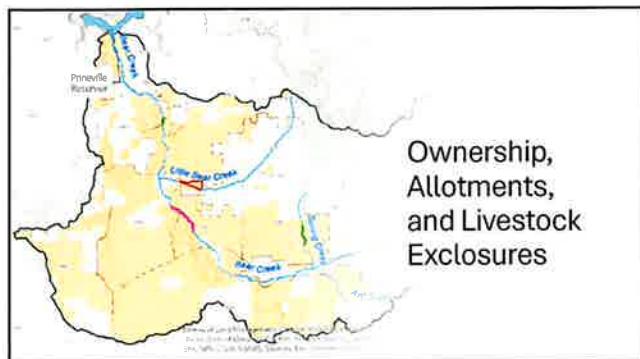
Presentation Outline

- Watershed problems
- Willow Protection Fence (aka Bear Creek Exclosure)
- Project partnerships
- Riparian zone values
- Project proposal

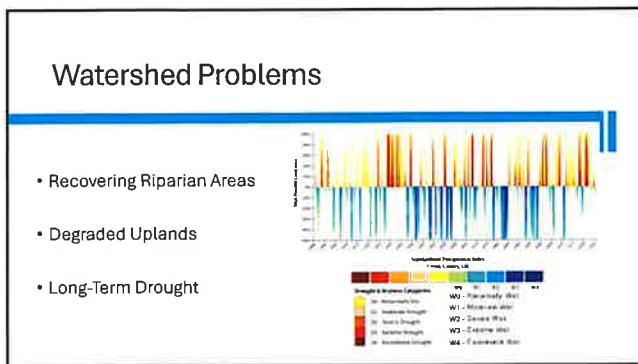


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Ownership,
Allotments,
and Livestock
Exclosures



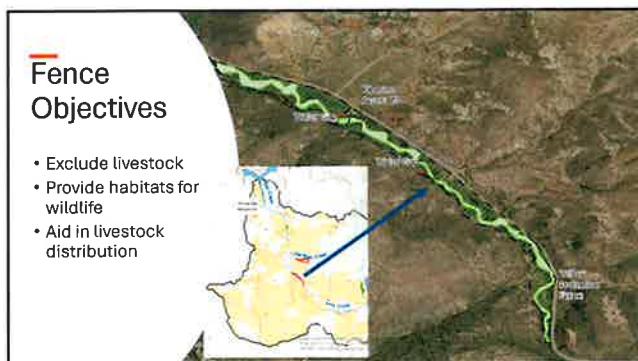
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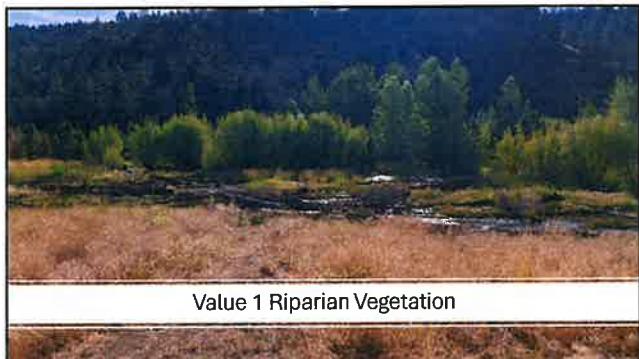


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Partnerships



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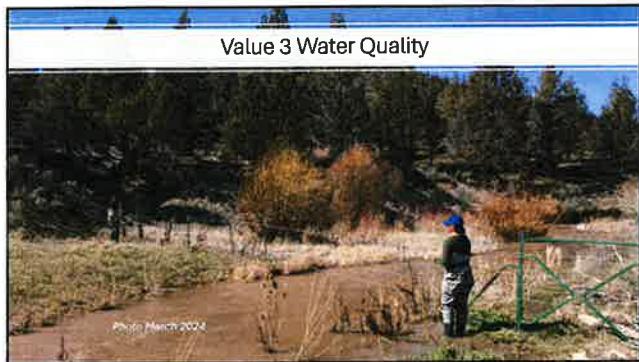
Value 1 Riparian Vegetation

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Value 2
Wildlife habitat

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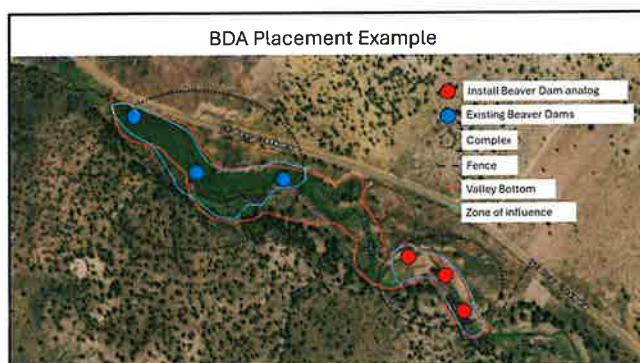
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15

Features cont.



• Juniper felling

Due to previous drought and winter warming, this photo was taken after the removal of western juniper in Crook County, Oregon.

16

Time for Questions

Thanks to BLM Headquarters, Oregon/Washington State office, Prineville District Leadership, and Crook Co. NRAC

17

Sources

Conceptual diagrams adapted from: [A Way Forward: BeaverHOODs – Western Beavers Cooperative](#)

Video courtesy of Reese Mercer

Bureau of Land Management. 2022. Conserving and Restoring Riparian, Fisheries, and Water Resources in a Changing Climate: A 5-Year Strategy for the BLM's Aquatic Resources Program. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Lakewood, CO.

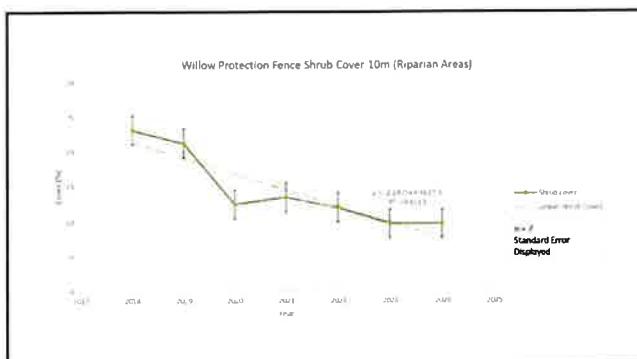
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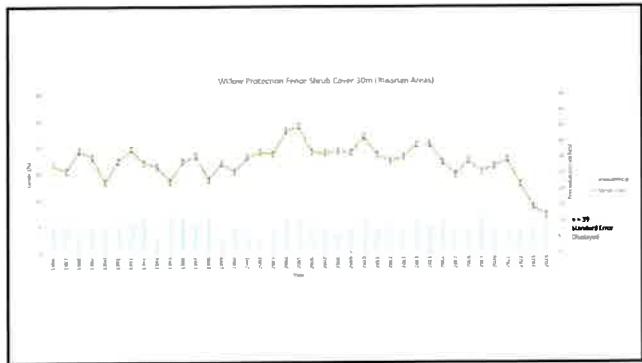
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22



Virtual Fence on BLM-Managed Public Lands

Request for Pre-Proposals

FOUNDATION FOR AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS | BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Summary:

The Foundation for America's Public Lands (Foundation) is soliciting pre-proposals from BLM offices for projects that deploy virtual fencing on BLM-managed lands. Virtual fencing offers land managers and livestock producers a promising tool to support rotational grazing and implement adaptive practices in response to changing environmental conditions. The technology is already being used in partnership with producers across several BLM field offices, including projects supported by the Foundation.

Through a cooperative agreement with the Foundation, the BLM seeks to expand these early applications and advance shared learning about the benefits and challenges of deploying virtual fencing on public lands—settings that are often in rugged or remote landscapes that involve unique considerations to grazing management.

While virtual fencing is used to promote rotational grazing, the Foundation and BLM are especially interested in proposals that apply the technology to address broader land management challenges.

All projects must include a monitoring component to assess the technology's impacts and must involve at least one partner organization (e.g., NGO, conservation district, university) that will support the producer in project implementation.

The Foundation anticipates awarding approximately \$750,000 during this grant cycle, supporting an estimated 4–7 projects. Project timelines can run 2–3 years. Pre-proposals must be completed by BLM staff and submitted to the Foundation. Selected applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal—submitted by a non-BLM project partner—through the Foundation's online grantmaking portal. Invitations will be issued on [DATE], and full proposals will be due [DATE].

Key Dates

Pre-Proposals Due: 11:59 pm MT January 20th, 2026

Email completed pre-proposal template (below) to
tomer.hasson@americaslands.org

Invitations to Full Proposal: February 4th, 2026

Full Proposals Due: 11:59 pm MT on February 25th, 2026
Submitted via the Foundation's online grant portal

Awards Announced: Late April 2026



Eligibility:

Eligible applicants for full proposals and federal funding include:

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations
- State, local, and municipal government agencies
- Tribal governments and organizations
- Universities and academic institutions

Individuals, federal agencies, and for-profit entities are not eligible.

Applicants must demonstrate capacity commensurate with the proposed project's scale and funding request.

Applications must demonstrate support from a BLM field, district, or state office via a letter of support and a commitment to successful and timely project implementation. Letters of support can come from any level of BLM for the pre-proposal submission but must come from the State Director for the full proposal submission.

Program Priorities:

Virtual fencing is increasingly being used on private lands to manage livestock, and early feedback from ranchers has been largely positive. Its application on public lands, however, is still in the early stages, with pilot projects just beginning and broad adoption yet to occur. The Foundation and BLM aim to identify how this technology can be applied more broadly to address complex public land management challenges and enhance BLM-producer partnerships. Additionally, the Foundation and BLM are interested in projects that capture the producer's perspectives of the technology when implemented, and measure or assess how its use influences grazing operations and costs.

Projects should include BLM-approved monitoring commitments that assess changes in vegetation condition or other indicators resulting from grazing adjustments enabled by the technology.

Potential project concepts include, but are not limited to:

- Reducing conflicts with other uses (e.g., recreation, travel management, etc.)
- Creating fuel breaks or reducing fuel loads
- Limiting livestock access to aquatic or sensitive areas
- Improving grazing precision in recently burned allotments
- Include cross-agency allotments.

Geographic Focus:

The primary focus of the cooperative agreement is reducing costs and increasing efficiencies of BLM permittee(s) and their grazing management of BLM allotments. However, inclusion of other federal, state or private lands operated by the BLM permittee can be included and working across BLM-USFS allotment boundaries is encouraged.



Award Information:

The Foundation anticipates awarding approximately \$750,000 with this grant cycle. Award sizes will range, commensurate with the outcomes proposed, but should not exceed \$200,000. The Foundation expects to grant between 4-7 awards this cycle. Project timelines can run 2-3 years. Projects are encouraged to provide a 25% non-federal cost-share (\$0.25 of matching contributions for every \$1 requested). Larger match ratios and matching funds being contributed by multiple partners will be more competitive.

Evaluation Criteria:

Proposals will be evaluated based on: (1) alignment with the program priorities, (2) shovel-readiness including permitting and compliance status, (3) quality and durability of project design and anticipated outcomes, (4) commitment by BLM and partners to its successful completion, (5) willingness and opportunities for communicating about the project, and (6) match contribution.

How to Apply:

To be considered for this funding opportunity, BLM project managers must complete the pre-proposal template below with core project information and email this to Tomer Hasson through State Range Leads by 11:59 pm MT on January 20th, 2026. A subset of pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal through the Foundation's online grant making portal on February 4th with full proposals due February 25th, 2026.

Applicants are encouraged to reach out to Justin Shirley, BLM Rangeland Management Specialist, (jshirley@blm.gov) and Tomer Hasson, Foundation Senior Program Officer (tomer.hasson@americaslands.org) to discuss project ideas before submitting.



Pre-Proposal Template

Contact Information:

Applicant Organization Name (*BLM Partner*):

Applicant Point of Contact (*Name, Email, Job Title*):

BLM Point of Contact (*Name, Email, Job Title, Office*):

Primary Project Information:

Project Title:

Project Description (*300 words max*):

Project Location (*State, County, BLM Field and District Office, and general location description.*) (*Attached shapefile or Google Earth file appreciated*):

Period of Performance (*2-3 years*):

Do you have a letter of support from a BLM office? Yes / No

Please note that a letter of support can come from any level of the BLM for the pre-proposal submission but must come from the BLM State Director for the full proposal submission.

Narrative Questions:

- 1) Can you describe the producer and partner dynamics of this project and how it aligns with the Program Priorities? (500 words max)
- 2) What are the intended outcomes for this project and what activities are being proposed to achieve these outcomes? (500 words max)
- 3) How will project outcomes be assessed? Can the proposed outcomes be sustained beyond the period of performance of this grant? (500 words max)
- 4) Describe the current readiness of your project for implementation (partner commitment, required permitting, planning and design completion status, etc.). (500 words max)

Anticipated Project Budget	
Funding Request from FAPL:	\$
Anticipated Matching Contributions*:	\$
Total Project:	\$ <i>(sum of above)</i>

**Matching contributions can be cash and in-kind and do not need to be secured at the time of application.*