

DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION OF THE FOREST

The condition of the Fremont National Forest will change if this Forest Plan is implemented. However, it is likely to be several decades before the total effects of management, directed by this Forest Plan, are evident over the entire Forest. This section summarizes the changes that can be expected to occur in the short term, 10 years, and over the long term, 50 years and beyond.

THE FOREST IN TEN YEARS

Overall, the Forest will show some effects of management by the end of the first decade. However the general character and condition should be retained. Subtle changes in the ownership pattern will result from efforts to consolidate National Forest System lands. The Forest will still possess an abundance of large diameter, old-growth stands of trees. Changes in diversity will be relatively subtle and, for the most part, relatively unnoticeable. All or major portions of five existing roadless acres will continue to be roadless. The remaining roadless areas will have been entered with roads for timber sales.

The principal access roads (arterials and collectors) will be readily identifiable. Generally, they will have paved or gravel surfaces and look suitable for passenger car use. Signs will assist the traveler in finding his/her destination. Other roads will appear less inviting for use. Looking rough or primitive, most will be available for use by the more experienced traveler. Signing or gates will close some roads.

Permitted livestock grazing on the Forest will remain at current levels. Range improvements will increase in an attempt to manage cattle grazing more effectively, especially in riparian areas. Change on the range will result in using livestock as management tools to manipulate vegetation and enhance other resources such as, increased palatability of forage for wildlife, plantation release, and noxious weed control.

There will be a decrease in old-growth habitats after ten years. This decrease will be the result of timber harvesting activities. The number of deer should increase as the Forest manages habitat to meet the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife herd objectives.

Recreational opportunities will be relatively unchanged although some increase in trail and campground development will be evident. The range of recreation opportunities currently available will still be available after the first decade.

Four areas of the Forest will receive special management considerations. These include the existing 4,700-acre Dog Lake Special Management Area, the Slide Mountain Area (geologic), the South Fork of the Sprague River, and the Quamasia Quamash Botanical Area.

The Sycan River corridor from the headwaters downstream to the Forest boundary at Coyote Bucket would be managed as a Scenic river in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Four Research Natural Areas could be in existence on the Forest. This is based on the assumption that the recommendation for classification is accepted and acted upon. The areas include the Goodlow Area (presently established), Deadhorse Rim-Whitebark Pine area, Silver Lake Exclosure area, and Vee Pasture area.

A fifth area, in the vicinity of Augur Creek, may also be recommended for RNA classification. The actual decision will be made three years after Plan implementation.

Several major changes will likely occur during this period that will change the condition of the Forest significantly in the impacted areas. The first change will take place lodgepole pine stands, particularly on the Silver Lake and Paisley Ranger Districts. In these areas, the harvest of the dead and dying trees will have created marked changes in the local landscapes. Clearcuts and additional roads will replace much of what are now large areas of unbroken live or dead tree canopy.

The initial effects of uneven-aged managed stands and delayed final harvest stands will be evident. Generally, sale areas will be large. Impacted stands will begin to show a variety of age classes, including some old growth. These effects will be seen on approximately 140,000 acres of pine and pine-associated lands.

A second noticeable change will be in the appearance and condition of the existing roadless areas. Roads will be constructed and timber will be harvested in portions of the Antler, Coleman Rim, Deadhorse Rim, Crane Mountain, and Hanan Trail Roadless Areas.

Another change which could be significant is in the Quartz Mountain area. It is very possible that an open pit gold mine could materialize in the area, causing significant changes to the existing landscape. However, it is anticipated that this change will likely occur independent of the implementation of this Plan.

Noticeable improvement in some degraded riparian zones will be evident at the end of the first decade. Willows, alder, and other deciduous species will give those areas a more brushy look. Consequently, fish habitat will be improved.

THE FOREST IN FIFTY YEARS

This Forest Plan will be reviewed every five years and normally revised every 10-15 years. The following section describes the Forest as it is expected to appear in 50 years and beyond.

In 50 years, the Forest would undergo major changes if the direction provided by the Plan continued for that period of time. The landownership pattern should be noticeably improved. Roadless areas that were entered in the first decade would show the effects of being fully roaded, a result of subsequent timber harvest activities.

Most of the principal road system (arterials and collectors) would be completed and have paved or improved surfaces. A few may have State Highway or County Road designations. Most other roads would either be closed or visually inviting only to seasoned forest travelers in high clearance vehicles

Permitted livestock grazing use on the Forest would continue at near current levels. Additional improvements to facilitate the management of cattle grazing, especially in riparian areas, would be evident. Change in the Range will result in using livestock as management tools to manipulate vegetation and enhance other resources such as, increased palatability of forage for wildlife, plantation release, and noxious weed control.

Perhaps the most notable change would be to the timber resources. Much of the Forest would present a "managed" look. The total effect of uneven-aged management would be evident. Impacted stands would show a variety of age classes ranging from immature, small trees to mature, large diameter (20") trees. Road systems to facilitate managing approximately 200,000 acres of uneven-aged stands would be in place. Even with increased road use (entry every 20 years), negative effects should be minimal. Most of the stands scheduled for delayed final harvest would have been clearcut and regenerated. On lands scheduled for clearcutting, the regeneration harvesting would start after 95 percent of culmination of mean annual increment (CMAI) was reached. Genetic stock would be used for any planting. There

would be less old-growth timber, but because of uneven-aged management, it would remain interspersed. Old-growth habitat containing relatively large-diameter trees would exist in additional MR areas in the Klamath Basin, areas allocated as SMU/RIP zones, or dispersed recreation areas. Over the entire Forest, much of the old-growth habitat areas would occur in a grid pattern, with managed timber stands separating the areas.

Most of the insect-infested lodgepole pine stands that were regenerated in the first two decades would be between 30 and 50 years old.

Attractive, natural-appearing Forest settings would be maintained along 300 miles of designated travel routes. In timbered areas along these routes, uneven-aged management emphasizing large trees would be evident. On some of the less traveled routes, evidence of timber harvesting and other management activities would be visible. In nontimbered areas, the Forest would appear much as it does today.

Six roadless areas, totaling 43,789 acres, would remain undeveloped, affording recreationists some opportunities for backcountry recreation in relatively isolated and natural settings. These areas are Antler, Brattain Butte, Buck Creek, Crane Mountain, Drake-McDowell and Mount Bidwell. They would be managed to provide semiprimitive recreational opportunities. Another 14,337 acres would continue to be managed to provide semiprimitive recreation opportunities. This allocation would include the Winter Rim, north Brattain Butte, and south Brattain Butte areas.

All existing developed recreation sites would be retained, as would the Gearhart Mountain Wilderness. Wilderness management would vary in intensity.

Five areas of the Forest would receive special management considerations. These include the existing 4,700-acre Dog Lake Special Management Area, the Slide Mountain Area (geologic), the South Fork of the Sprague River, the Quamasia Quamash Botanical Area, and the Augur Creek Reserve (while being evaluated for RNA classification).

The Sycan River corridor from the headwaters downstream to the Forest boundary at Coyote Bucket would be managed as a Scenic river in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Management efforts to improve wildlife habitat conditions would be in full implementation phase through cooperative efforts with the ODF&W. As a result, winter and summer ranges would carry the mule deer populations to meet the ODF&W herd management objectives for the Forest. Forest management practices would provide a high level of habitat effectiveness on winter ranges. Restricting thinning in some timber stands and maintaining thermal cover in older stands would be used to achieve habitat effectiveness. Annual improvement on about 1,000 acres of big game summer range would be implemented as directed by this Plan. This would mostly involve creation of forage through timber harvesting. Winter ranges would also be improved at a rate of 500 acres per year.

The addition of high-clearance roads into formerly unroaded areas would increase access for hunters, woodcutters, and others with high-clearance vehicles. However, total and overall road density on the Forest's roaded lands would be reduced to less than 2.5 miles of road per square mile of land. To accomplish this, some less-traveled roads would be closed. As a result, there would be less harassment of big game animals and reduced watershed impacts in areas of closed roads. Additionally, a majority of the roads on about 20 percent of the Forest would be temporarily closed during big game hunting seasons.

There would be more old-growth habitat than that called for by management requirements (MR's). Old growth would be found in wilderness, roadless areas, and special wildlife areas. Additional

old-growth plots totaling about 2,940 acres would be allocated to provide habitat for old-growth-dependent species. Some of the plots originally identified to fulfill MR's would be enlarged by a combined total of 5,710 acres. However, the total acreage allocated to old-growth management would be less than what is presently existing on the Forest. Old growth would not be present in general forest programmed for timber harvest. Consequently, animal species composition would change from a predominance of oldgrowth-dependent species to those species preferring earlier successional stages.

On those lands scheduled for intense timber harvest, dead trees would be retained to provide habitat for 40 percent of the potential populations of cavity-nesting species. Replacement trees would also be identified to provide this type of habitat through a full rotation. On most lands not scheduled for timber management, dead tree habitat would be managed to support 100 percent of the potential populations of dependent species. In addition to meeting the Forest's MR's for threatened and endangered species, this Plan would allocate three additional sites to management for bald eagle habitat and reintroduce the peregrine falcon to the Forest. Bighorn sheep and river otters would also be present as a result of reintroduction efforts.

Fisheries habitat would be improved considerably over present conditions. Through a multi-agency cooperative effort, the objectives of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife would either be fully met or in the process of being achieved. If met, an increase of up to 75 percent in catchable trout could be realized. Management would emphasize the restoration, maintenance, and/or improvement of habitat quality on major fish-bearing streams, as well as the creation of several small reservoirs.

Riparian habitat conditions would be significantly improved with noted improvement in overall water quality. Evidence of eroded streambanks would be notably reduced from present levels. Minimum streamflows would be maintained on selected streams. Livestock use of these areas would be reduced. Additional improvements would be apparent in presently active eroding gullies. These areas would be restored to dry or wet meadow conditions. Many would provide water flow as a result of improvement measures.

Four established Research Natural Areas would exist on the Forest. They include the Goodlow Area (presently established), Deadhorse Rim-Whitebark Pine Area, Silver Lake Exclosure Area, and Vee Pasture Area.