COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)
for the
UPPER DESCHUTES RIVER NATURAL RESOURCE COALITION (UDRNRC)
of
South Deschutes County, Oregon – Phase I of South County Plan

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is prepared pursuant to Public Law 108-148, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA). In accordance with the Act, this plan describes the measures necessary to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire and restore healthy forest ecological conditions on National Forest lands next to the following communities:

PHASE I COMMUNITIES (UDRNRC):
Haner Park
Wild River
Deschutes River Recreation Homesites 6
Fall River Estates
River Forest Acres Road District
Beaver Special Road District
Oregon Water Wonderland 1
River Meadows
Oregon Water Wonderland 2
Deschutes River Recreation Homesites 1-5 & 7-13
Vandevert Ranch
Crosswater
Spring River Acres

As required by public law 108-148, this plan includes the following:

- A map of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) applicable to the communities covered by this Community Wildfire Protection Plan;
- prioritization of areas requiring thinning and treatment;
- A description of the desired forest conditions sought by the residents of these communities and by the collaborators to this plan; and
- A description of the measures taken within each community to protect structures from wildfire events within the planning area.

This plan does not include any "project level" decisions to implement specific projects within the analysis area. It is the future responsibility of the agencies (US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management) to plan and implement projects to accomplish the goals of this plan. Project level plans and analyses include compliance with existing laws as well as existing management plans. The communities understand this plan will not affect, nor delay, any existing agency

project or any project that is at a planning stage such that revisions would hinder implementation. The communities do, however, expect the agencies to incorporate these recommendations into projects that are early in the planning process and wherever else possible.

COORDINATION WITH A SOUTH COUNTY PLAN

This plan covers approximately 50,000 acres of National Forest and BLM lands next to the communities situated northwest of LaPine Oregon and displayed on the attached Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) map. The Steering Committee worked with LaPine Rural Fire Protection District Chief Jim Court to avoid any confusion with Phase II and the entire South County Planning process that will begin soon. Organization and efforts to initiate collaboration and preparation of a Phase II Plan covering the rest of the South County have already begun.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

This plan was developed under the guidance of a collaborative steering committee consisting of the following persons:

Bob Dryden, Beaver Special Road District
Sue Manly Hinton, Sunriver Nature Center and Observatory
Jim King, Oregon Water Wonderland 1
Ken Lane, Vandevert Ranch
Don Mercer, Fall River Estates
Regan Olson, Deschutes River Recreation Homesites Unit 6
Dean Richardson, Fall River Area
Mike Swope, Deschutes River Recreation Homesites Unit 6
Dick Patterson, Haner Park
Wes Perrin, River Forest Acres
David Blair, project coordinator

In addition, the following individuals participated in the development of this plan:

Walt Schloer, Jim Schlaich, USDA Forest Service
Lorri Health, Mark Rapp, Central Oregon Fire Management Services
Stu Otto, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)
Chief Jim Court, Scott Baldwin, LaPine Rural Fire Protection District
Steve Castillo, Bureau of Land Management
Tim Lillebo, Oregon Natural Resource Council
Dr. Stuart Garrett, Oregon Native Plant Society and
Bill Hopkins, Retired USFS Forest Ecologist representing environmental issues/concerns.

On March 16, 2004 a field trip of the analysis area was attended by Wes Perrin, Don Mercer, Ken Lane, Bob Dryden, Stu Otto, Scott Baldwin, and Project Coordinator David Blair. The group made 11 stops throughout the analysis area. At each location the group (1) held

discussions about forest conditions and what reasonable forestry goals should be, (2) discussed the priorities for treatment, and (3) took photographs.

On April 18, 2004 the Steering Committee held its first meeting at Fire Station #102 attended by Walt Schloer - USFS District Ranger; Stu Otto – ODF; Bob Otteni - forestry contractor; Lorri Heath and Mark Rapp – Central Oregon Fire Management Services; Marcus Kaufman and his assistant from the Watershed Research and Training Center; Bob Dryden, Beaver Special Road District; Sue Manly Hinton, Sunriver Nature Center; Jim King, Oregon Water Wonderland 1; Ken Lane, Vandevert Ranch; Don Mercer, Fall River Estates; Regan Olson and Mike Swope, Deschutes River Recreation Homesites Unit 6; Dick Patterson, Haner Park; and Wes Perrin, River Forest Acres.

Discussions centered around how to establish priorities within the analysis area; the need for clarity regarding restrictions in the Wild and Scenic River management plans; WUI boundary issues; the possibility of including testimony by Professor Wally Covington; the need to reference fire behavior; the importance of managing bitterbrush in the WUI; and guidelines for managing the partnership relationship between the Coalition and the USFS.

On May 11, 2004 Wes Perrin and David Blair met with environmental community leaders Tim Lillebo of Oregon Natural Resource Council, and Dr. Stuart Garrett of the Oregon Native Plant Society. They were accompanied by Bill Hopkins, retired USFS Forest Ecologist. As a result of this meeting, several plan changes were made, including adoption of an upper diameter limit of 18" on the harvest of any ponderosa pine; an increase in the proposed targets for basal area per acre; and improvements concerning the Wild and Scenic River corridor recommendations.

On May 12, 2004 Jim King, Don Mercer, Ken Lane, and Wes Perrin briefed the Deschutes County Board of Commissioners on the history of the Coalition, the federal lands effort (CWPP), and efforts to implement Oregon's new fire protection law. Concerns were raised about the omission of a fuel break requirement for vacant lot owners in Extreme Risk neighborhoods. The commissioners expressed strong support for the CWPP and the coalition concept of having neighborhoods join together to take advantage of the new Federal authority.

Also on May 12, 2004 the Steering Committee met to (1) make revisions on the second draft of the CWPP, (2) adopt the recommendations from the environmental leaders (3) distribute tasks for completing maps and follow-up contact with the Sunriver Home Owners Association, (4) discuss the rationale and specific language of the "Guidelines for Effective Partnerships" and (5) discuss the distribution of the document to the public officials who have approval responsibility (under PL 108-148).

On May 17th, 2004 Jim King – current coordinator of the UDRNRC - flew over the analysis area to visually verify the observations on the ground. His report indicated that the worst forest fuel buildup conditions exist right along the river apparently the result of years of "hands off' policies related to Wild and Scenic River issues. His report indicated that many homes are embedded in this overly protected area along the river creating an obvious potential for disaster.

On June 2nd, 2004 Joe Stutler, Deschutes County Forester, and Jim King toured the analysis area to observe the specific areas concerns raised by the individual neighborhoods (Appendix B), neighborhoods proximity to Wild and Scenic sections of the river, and the overall scope of the Plan.

On June 2, 2004 the Steering Committee met at Vandevert Ranch. The committee reviewed recommendations from Walt Schloer, District Ranger; Joe Stutler, County Forester; Stephen Fitzgerald, OSU Extension Forester; and George Ponte, Prineville Office of the State Forester. The committee adopted many of these recommendations, including clarifications to the priority setting and measures related to thinning activities in the Wild and Scenic River corridor. Some recommendations were not accepted on the basis of consensus decisions that had already occurred and remained supported by the Steering Committee. Uniformly, however, the Steering Committee members are extremely appreciative of the time and effort made to provide suggestions about our plan. Jim King agreed to make the final edits and send it to the appropriate people. The Committee will officially submit the CWPP to the USFS/BLM on or before June 15th and hopefully have it include the signatures of collaboration from ODF, Deschutes County and Lapine Rural Fire Protection District.

I. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this plan, the following definitions are provided:

1. BASAL AREA: In general terms is a measurement of the stocking of trees, expressed as the total square inches of tree diameter growing on one acre. Basal area per acre is derived by taking the area of each tree cross section at dbh (4.5' feet above the ground), and adding them together to generate a per acre figure that quantifies the density of trees on that acre.

2. LADDER FUELS: These fuels commonly are tree branches, thick stands of small diameter trees, and brushy areas which serve as fuel to a wildfire carrying the fire into the forest canopy. In the context of this plan, our goal is to reduce ladder fuels and increase the likelihood that a fire will stay low to the ground and not become a crown fire.

3. CROWN FIRE: A fire that is carried through the crowns of dense stands, posing an extreme threat to adjacent communities and fire suppression personnel. For example, the USFS Fall Environmental Assessment (EA) states:

> "The common property line between private and public land (urban interface) in the vicinity of the Fall River Estates subdivision is composed of a mix of lodgepole pine and ponderosa pine. The shrub layer within these stands is capable of producing flame lengths greater than 15 feet with a high to moderate potential for a **crown fire** that could quickly threaten adjacent private property."

4. WILD AND SCENIC RIVER PLANS: Plans for rivers (such as this section of the upper Deschutes River) based on the federal and state legislation that provided additional levels of protection. These designations are intended to protect the "wild, scenic and/or recreational values" of particular sections of a river.

5. WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE (WUI): The interface between residential or other community areas and the forested wildlands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and/or the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA), the WUI is defined as the area of public lands within 1.5 miles of communities, **or** the area identified by communities within a Community Wildfire Protection Plan as the WUI that best applies to local conditions. Because of the varied and extremely hazardous conditions of our particular WUI, the Steering Committee chose to designate interface boundaries beyond 1.5 miles.

II. MAP

The following map accompanies this plan:

- The Wildland Urban Interface boundary for the upper Deschutes Corridor, Phase I, as determined by the Steering Committee.

III. FOREST CONDITIONS IN THE ANALYSIS AREA

The analysis area consists of public lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) adjacent to the communities listed above; generally, the area from the northern boundary of the Sunriver development, upstream along the Deschutes River to Wickiup Reservoir (see map, Wildland Urban Interface, South Deschutes County Phase I).

The original forests in this area were dominated by ponderosa pine with an open understory, and occasional lodgepole pine stands in the colder zones. Stand replacement fires were relatively few. The area was subject to intensive timber harvest and fire suppression for the past 100 years, resulting in current forest conditions that bear little resemblance to those existing pre-settlement. Current forest conditions are similar to those of the area consumed by the Davis Lake fire of the summer of 2003. An apt description is provided by the Forest Service in its Fall EA:

> "Historically, low intensity fires maintained and thinned ponderosa pine within the project area by killing much of the understory trees and shrubs on a 7 to 15 year cycle. In the absence of fire over the last 80 years, well-developed shrub layers and high stand densities have placed the ponderosa pine stands at high risk for high intensity, stand-replacing wildfires that can have detrimental effects on wildlife, soils and water quality. An estimated 74 percent of the project area is classified as extreme or high for fire behavior. The common property line between private and public land (urban interface) in the vicinity of the Fall River Estates subdivision is composed of a mix of lodgepole pine and ponderosa pine. The shrub layer within these stands is capable of producing flame lengths greater than 15 feet with a high to moderate potential for a crown fire that could quickly threaten adjacent private property."

The forests in the analysis area are predominantly ponderosa pine and thickets of lodgepole pine with occasional large trees interspersed. Mixed pine (ponderosa and lodgepole) forests are

present in thickets. Some stands are lodgepole pine with large ponderosa pine scattered throughout on an individual basis. For the most part stand structure is dense seedling/sapling and pole size trees with rare mature ponderosa pine up to 40 inches diameter. The majority of the forest area contains excessive ladder fuels with a high incidence of dead and downed trees, bitterbrush, and piled slash; together, these conditions pose an extreme fire hazard to the Upper River communities.

Most forests adjacent to the communities are dense stands of lodgepole pines having very high basal areas and posing an extreme risk of catastrophic fire. Forests exhibiting healthy conditions, with appropriate stem and basal area densities, are rare in the analysis area.

IV. PRIORITY AREAS FOR TREATMENT

On the field tour and in subsequent meetings, the Steering Committee considered various ways to set priorities for treatment. According to the US Forest Service's Fall Unit EA, 74% of the project area has fuel conditions that would generate extreme fire behavior. Based on our field tour and follow-up flights over the area, the Steering Committee believes that figure likely applies to the entire WUI under this plan.

From the discussions, an approach emerged in which this Committee would describe generic forest conditions, and rank them in the order of their relative urgency for treatment. On the field tour, Committee members attempted to rank the forests according to this standard and decided to establish three categories of forest conditions in terms of their relative risk of catastrophic fire:

A. Managed forests in which stem and crown density are such that these forests pose little or no need for action in the short term. These relatively healthy forests contained a basal area per acre of less than 120 square feet/acre, and are relatively rare in the WUI.
B. Medium dense forests in need of thinning and underbrush treatment to achieve an optimum stem density and basal area. Many of these forests are mixed pine.
C. Dense forests presenting **emergency** conditions and unacceptable threat of catastrophic fire intensity. Most of the forests inspected during the field tour, and within the WUI, fit into this category. These forests exhibit a basal area per acre of well over 120 square feet/acre, contain down and dead woody debris, well developed shrub layers, and would, in case of a fire, exhibit extreme fire behavior.

Because of the overwhelming presence – approximately 74% of the Upper River WUI - of forest conditions characterized by category C above, the Steering Committee considers most of the WUI an extremely high priority for action by the agencies. Areas within ¼ mile of residences that fit this forest description should be considered in need of an emergency response by the agencies.

In other words, following is a list of the Steering Committee's priorities for agency action to reduce catastrophic fire risk to communities and restore forest health in the Upper River WUI:

1. Lands described by category C, within ¼ mile of residential areas;
2. All other lands within the WUI, meeting the description in category C;
3. Lands within the WUI exhibiting the conditions described by category B.

Appendix B of this plan contains the site specific observations and priorities described by each of the member neighborhoods.

V. DESIRED FOREST CONDITIONS

Residents of the Upper River Communities chose to live in this area for the aesthetic values of living 'in' the forest. People want diverse, multi-structured forests, with an emphasis on restoring the large tree ponderosa pine forests that were lost over the past century. Upper River residents understand that a healthy, fire resistant forest is also an aesthetic forest. They value quality deer and elk habitat, and understand that these habitats must be carefully managed to reduce the fire hazard associated with browse, and that there is a tradeoff between encouraging extensive stands of bitterbrush for deer, and managing a forest that is resistant to catastrophic fire. Upper River residents recognize and embrace the need for environmental sensitivity. They understand that healthy, fire-resistant forests project an image that appeals to and attracts visitors, resulting in a positive economic impact for Central Oregon. This image – of open forests of large, "yellow belly" ponderosa pines – could in many areas be restored by removing the obscuring thickets of lodgepole and small diameter ponderosa.

The Steering Committee and most of the community residents represented by this plan understand that they live in a crisis zone. Regardless of how and why these conditions were allowed to develop, they believe most strongly that without immediate action to thin forest thickets within the wildland urban interface, they face an extreme risk of losing their homes, neighborhoods, and possibly their lives to a catastrophic fire. Again, from the Fall EA:

> "During the last 20 years, there have been more than 25 large wildfires greater than 100 acres on the District. Due to extreme fire behavior, these fires have been difficult to control, resulting in the loss of dozens of homes and important riparian and old growth habitat. While reducing fuels immediately adjacent to the urban interface can help control low to moderate intensity wildfire, the reduction of fuels at a larger landscape level is essential to reduce the risk of high intensity crown fires moving through or over urban interface fuel reduction areas, administrative sites, and recreation areas. From a forest health perspective, a larger landscape approach is needed to protect important forest values such as water quality, scenic views, old growth, and wildlife habitat."

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FEDERAL LANDS:

The communities seek forest thinning and brush treatment projects in the WUI covered by this plan, as follows:

A. The Forest Service should immediately use the authorities provided through the President's Healthy Forest Initiative and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act to undertake

at least one project in 2004, which we would consider a demonstration project displaying to Upper River residents and the public the healthy forests vision outlined by this plan. This demonstration project could be designed within an existing project, or designed using the new categorical exclusion authority for projects covering less than 1000 acres. We would review the project upon completion, seek reactions and comments from area residents and the public, and reconvene the steering committee to adopt further guidance to this plan, in an effort to ensure that forest projects are in tune with the wishes of the Upper River Communities residents.

B. In general, the dominant strategy in all areas should be thinning from below, in an effort to restore large tree, open park-like ponderosa pine dominated forests.

C. In exclusively lodgepole pine stands, where site conditions are favorable to ponderosa pine, intensive thinning should occur with a replanting strategy to restore a proper ratio of lodgepole to ponderosa. As a general matter, the communities agree with the agency goal of restoring pure ponderosa pine stands throughout the analysis area.

D. Within ¼ mile of any residential area, and within 300 feet of roads, trees should be widely spaced, thinned to protect and enhance the large trees on any given site. Ladder fuels and shrubs can be aggressively managed by mowing or prescribed burning. Lower branches can be trimmed. In this zone, the overriding priority should be the development of an aesthetic, large tree ponderosa pine forest, spaced to provide the maximum protection against a crown wildfire, and a severe limitation on ladder fuels. We would expect regular mowing and thinning entries to maintain this area as a shaded fuel break, and management to assure less than four foot flame lengths in the event of fire.

E. In the interior areas farther than ¼ mile from residences, we would expect thinning from below and vegetation treatments to accomplish greater diversity of forest structure, a greater variety of size and age classes, efforts to promote remaining large diameter ponderosa pine, and a selected mosaic of shrub and other vegetation to support wildlife. Throughout the WUI designated by this plan, forests should be thinned to an extent that leaves insufficient ladder fuels and brush and prevents a fast moving crown fire.

F. In mixed pine stands where the agency goal is to maintain a mixed stand, and where ecological conditions will support a dominance of ponderosa pine over lodgepole pine, ponderosa pine should be restored. In general, the Steering Committee intends that ponderosa pine be retained over lodgepole pine because it attains a greater age and diameter and is more resistant to fire, insects, and disease than thin barked lodgepole and white fir.

G. Current Forest Service standards and guidelines within 300 feet of the Deschutes River provide for retaining volumes of dead and down vegetation for streambank structure, future fishery habitat and wildlife habitat. Many residential areas face a fire threat from forests within this 300 foot buffer. In general, the same thinning standards described above should apply within ¼ mile of residential areas, even if that area is within 300 feet of the Deschutes River. Appropriate thinning should occur closer to river, accompanied

by extreme sensitivity to environmental concerns. Where appropriate, the committee seeks efforts toward regeneration of aspen stands.

H. As a general guideline, the Steering Committee intends that the agency leave a per acre basal area of between 40 and 120 square feet per acre. Agency decisions to leave greater basal areas should be specifically explained. While thinning may be designed to promote multi-age class, multi-diameter forests, the vast majority of the basal area on a site should be with the largest diameter trees on the site. The Steering Committee would also seek specific explanation from the agency if the removal of any ponderosa pine trees greater than 18" diameter is proposed, unless necessary to address a specific hazardous situation.

I. The committee is extremely concerned about projects that leave us with a 'half measure' of protection from catastrophic fire. For example, the Fall project* proposes to reduce the acreage classified as 'extreme' for fire behavior from 74% to 58%; in general, the committee seeks a greater rate of risk reduction closer to residential areas. Any projects planned within the WUI must be effective, they must get the job done in protecting our communities.

*(CONTEXT: FULL QUOTE: Overall some 4,620 acres would be treated and the percentage of the project area classified as high or extreme for fire behavior would be lowered from **74 percent to 58 percent.** The juxtaposition of treatment areas is designed to reduce the risk of a large stand replacing wildfire occurring within the project area for the next 10 to 20 years while also providing for the return of fire to the project area as an agent of fuels reduction. Within the areas treated to reduce fuel loading; 1,637 acres of ponderosa pine would be thinned to maintain and restore ponderosa pine late and old-structured forest that is more resilient and resistant to insects, disease and wildfire. To further improve forest health and scenic views, some of the over story lodgepole pine trees that are competing with the under story and or infected with mistletoe would be removed from 1,495 acres, followed by thinning of the young under story to accelerate the development of later structural stage lodgepole pine while breaking up fuel continuity that is conducive to fire spread. An additional, 348 acres of lodgepole pine that has experienced high beetle mortality would be regenerated by using shelterwood trees. An estimated 2,132 of the 4,620 acres are located within scenic views and treatments would be designed to ensure maintenance or improvement of scenic views")

J. Within our analysis area (WUI) there are many side roads that were slated for closing as a part of the 1996 Upper Deschutes Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. Given that many of these are major ignition sites because of smoking, remote camping, and ATV use; the Steering Committee supports current efforts to close these roads; especially where supported by the nearest neighborhoods. Priority should be given to those areas that have a neighborhood commitment to become partners with the federal agencies and stewards of the nearby roadless area.

K. With regard to the Upper Deschutes River Wild and Scenic River corridor, the Steering Committee is extremely concerned that this area presents some of the most dangerous forest fuel conditions in the analysis area, and should be considered a high priority for treatment, as clearly permitted under the river management plan. The Committee recommends thinning and other forest treatments using careful planning and low impact techniques. Forest management should occur in accordance with the other recommendations in this plan, as long as thinning and risk reduction activities reflect the following considerations:

a. Forest management actions must be protective of riparian areas, elk and deer habitat, and vegetation and wildlife diversity.
b. Compliance with agency guidelines for retaining volumes of dead and down vegetation for streambank structure, future fishery habitat, and wildlife habitat;
c. The Forest Service and BLM should consider lowest impact harvest systems for thinning forests in this area.

VII. MEASURES TO REDUCE STRUCTURAL IGNITABILITY ON PRIVATE LANDS WITHIN COMMUNITIES

All the member neighborhoods of the Upper River Coalition have "signed on" to comply and aggressively implement the fuel break standards of Oregon's recently implemented Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act. There are eight of our member neighborhoods that have yet to complete fuels reduction efforts on their private lands. These neighborhoods are Haner Park (156 lots), Deschutes River Recreational Homesites Unit #6 (501 lots), River Forest Acres (137 lots), Beaver Special District (90 lots), Oregon Water Wonderlands I (350 lots), River Meadows (238 lots), Oregon Water Wonderlands II (1055 lots), Deschutes River Recreational Homesites Units 1-5 & 7-13 (2023 lots). According to current (January 2004) Oregon Department of Forestry estimates, over 90% of these 4550 lots will need fuel reduction treatments to be in compliance with Oregon's new fire safe standards. The UDRNRC has applied for National Fire Plan (NFP) fuels reduction funds and will continue to seek outside funding to help the private land owners create fire safe communities.

Additionally, the UDRNRC plans to work with all the neighborhood and road district associations to enable them to include the new State fire protection standards within their governance documents (e.g. CC&Rs, Bylaws, etc.). The UDRNRC has also requested National Fire Plan (NFP) planning grant funds specifically to cover the cost of extra meetings, mailings and legal services, etc., related to changing local neighborhood governance to include fire protection standards. Since this approach may not be acceptable to all neighborhoods, the Coalition, at its regular meetings, is also providing the neighborhood leaders many other ideas. The neighborhood leaders have requested ideas for motivating and mobilizing private property owners to develop appropriate fuel breaks on their properties. UDRNRC has developed a template – with input from the Oregon Department of Forestry and LaPine Rural Fire Protection District - for conducting neighborhood level Fire Risk Assessments and Action Plans. This template addresses many specific criteria related to structural ignitability (eg. the number and ownership of all buildings within the neighborhood that still have shake roofs).

All the neighborhoods in this area consider themselves to be very fortunate to have Sunriver as a local resource, member, and supporter of Coalition efforts. Much of the exemplary work already completed within Sunriver, including their Ladder Fuels Reduction Plan, is being used as a model for our other neighborhoods. Several neighborhoods (e.g. Crosswater and Vandevert Ranch) have already completed their fuels reduction efforts patterned after Sunriver's model program.

VIII. RELATIONSHIP OF THIS PLAN TO THE FEDERAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT AND OREGON'S STATE SCENIC WATERWAYS PROGRAM

Part of the land area within this Plan falls under provisions of the federal and state requirements of these two programs. Policies and guidelines for the two programs are outlined in the following documents: Upper Deschutes Wild and Scenic River/Upper Deschutes River Management Plan and the State Scenic Waterways Comprehensive Management Plan.

Federal Guidelines – The entire affected area is designated *Recreational* under the plan. Emphasis is on protecting and restoring healthy riparian vegetation and upland vegetation that mimics pre-disturbance forest conditions. Amendment #12 states that if these W & S River management plans do not address an issue – like the fire danger to our communities – then existing federal (like HFRA), state, and local laws and regulations apply as long as the river values are protected. This provision provides the opportunity to reduce fuel hazards within the corridor. Several other provisions in the plan allow treatment (both mechanical and prescribed burning) of fuels hazards with an approved written site specific plan and where they would not negatively impact riparian values or Outstanding Remarkable Values.

State Requirements – Under the state plan, affected areas are designated *Scenic, River community, and Recreation*. All segments are governed by a rule that tree cutting or timber harvest require written notice to the state, except for owner firewood or cutting of dangerous trees. The concern is that the timber harvest not detract from river visual values and that reforestation occur, if warranted. The coordinator of the State Upper Deschutes River Scenic Waterways Program – Jan Houck - has assured us that Oregon Scenic Waterway administrators will work cooperatively with our Steering Committee to develop a fires fuels reduction plan that complies with state requirements.

IX – SIGNATURES:

_____Jim King, Coalition Coordinator

Representing the Upper Deschutes River Natural Resource Coalition

_____Walt Schloer, District Ranger

Representing the U.S. Forest Service

_____Robert Towne, Area Manager

Representing the Bureau of Land Management

_____Tom DeWolf, Chair

Representing the Deschutes County Board of Commissioners

Phase I_____George Ponte, Prevention Unit Forester

Representing the Oregon Department of Forestry

Phase I_____Jim Court, Chief

Representing the Lapine Rural Fire Protection District

APPENDIX A:
Testimony of Dr. William Wallace Covington, Regents' Professor

And Director of the Ecological Restoration Institute
Northern Arizona University

http://www.eri.nau.edu

Before the House Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

Hearing to Discuss the President's Healthy Forests: An Initiative for Wildfire Prevention and Stronger Communities

September 5, 2002

Chairman Hansen, and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on a subject of personal importance to me and of critical importance to the health of our nation's forests and the people and communities that live within them.

My name is Wally Covington. I am Regents' Professor of Forest Ecology at Northern Arizona University and Director of the Ecological Restoration Institute. I have been a professor teaching and researching fire ecology and restoration of forest health at NAU since 1975. Throughout my career I have applied my academic skills to real world problems. I chair Arizona Governor Jane Dee Hull's Forest Health/Fire Plan Advisory Committee and am a member of the National Commission on Science for Sustainable Forestry.

I have a Ph.D. in forest ecosystem analysis from Yale University and an M.S. in ecology from the University of New Mexico. Over the past 27 years I have taught graduate and undergraduate courses in research methods, ecological restoration, ecosystem management, fire ecology and management, forest management, range management, wildlife management, watershed management, recreation management, park and wildland management, and forest operations research. I have been working in long-term research on fire ecology and management in ponderosa pine and related ecosystems since I moved to Northern Arizona University in 1975. In addition to my publications on forest restoration, I have co-authored scientific papers on a broad variety of topics in forest ecology and resource management including research on fire effects, prescribed burning, thinning, operations research, silviculture, range management, wildlife effects, multiresource management, forest health, and natural resource conservation.

I am founder and director of the Ecological Restoration Institute located in the Office of the President, Northern Arizona University. The ERI is recognized as the national leader in forest restoration-based fuel reduction technology transfer, outreach, in-service education, public information, and mission oriented research for forest restoration. The Institute and its partners in federal, state, private, and NGO sectors have the talent and expertise in place and are applying it to get operational scale forest health restoration treatments on the ground. Working with partners, the Institute has built strong local, state, regional, and national support for restoration-based fuel treatments.

A. WE MUST ACT INTELLIGENTLY NOW WHILE CONSIDERING THE IMPACT OF OUR ACTIONS ON THE FUTURE

What is needed today is clear thinking. Fuzzy thinking can be a major threat to marshalling the nation's resources to address the critical problem in time to prevent catastrophic losses that will affect generations to come.

There is plenty of blame to share over the current state of our forests. This hearing is intended to go beyond the blame to solve the crisis. It is my role and obligation as a scientist and as a professional forester to bring honest, objective, facts and informed recommendations to this committee. I will attempt to do so in this statement.

II. MY TESTIMONY WILL FOCUS ON THE SCIENCE OF FOREST RESTORATION AND HOW TO REVERSE THE TREND OF INCREASING CATASTROPHIC WILDFIRES IN THE DRY FORESTS OF THE WEST BY IMPLEMENTING SCIENCE-BASED FOREST RESTORATION TREATMENTS.

III.

IV. WHAT MUST BE DONE

1. **We need to act swiftly and with great care so that future generations do not inherit yet another forest management crisis. The best way to do this is by following a scientifically rigorous, environmentally responsible, and socially and politically sound approach. Such an approach must begin with careful definition of the problem.**

    a. Large, catatrophic stand replacing fires are natural in chaparral, lodgepole pine, spruce/fir and other forest types. We can do little to change that.
    b. Such fires are not natural in the ponderosa pine and dry mixed conifer forests and are a major threat to ecosystem integrity and sustainability
    c. According to a 1999 GAO report over 90% of the fire suppression expenditures were spent in the frequent fire forests of the West.
    d. There is abundant relevant scientific research in the ponderosa pine type that began in the 1890's and continues today that provides a sound scientific framework for implementing the science and practice of restoration. We have solid information about presettlement forest conditions, changes in fire regimes over the last century, deterioration of overall ecosystem health, and ecological responses to thinning and prescribed burning—the key elements of any attempt to restore ecosystem health in ponderosa pine and related ecosystems. We know that current overcrowded stands of trees do not sustain the diversity of wildlife and plants that existed a century ago. We know this by examining the data of early naturalists and scientists.

2. **The problem is complex**

    a. It's not just about drought—we have always had periodic droughts and always will, but the forest has never had the fuel loads that exist today
    b. It's not just about houses burning—although the loss of a home is tragic, houses can be rebuilt in months. However, ecosystems take centuries, and watersheds millenia
    c. It's not just about crownfires—crownfires in ponderosa forests are just the latest in a long series of symptoms of failing ecosystem health, other symptoms include disease and insect infestations and before that the loss of native biodiversity, the decline of watershed function, and increased erosion and sedimentation
    d. It's not just about too many trees—it's about too few old-growth trees and far too many younger trees

e. It's is not about cutting trees—it's about thinning forests (as opposed to logging) and implementing a range of techniques to restore ecological integrity and create a long term solution
f. It's not about 40-acre stands or a quarter mile strip around a town—it's about greater ecosystems that have become so degraded and fragile that they are no longer sustainable, and a liability rather than an asset to present and future generations

3. There are solutions, and we can do it

a. To restore these degraded ecosystems, it is essential that we restore entire greater landscapes, and do so quickly—time is clearly not our ally
b. We must do so in a systematic, scientifically rigorous fashion
c. For protection of structures such as houses, the science seems pretty clear: use fire resistant materials, fire resistant landscaping and don't build too close to heavily fueled landscapes
d. For protection of watersheds, critical habitat for humans and other animals and plants we have to think much bigger. Here we need to think and act at the scale of greater ecosystems—large chunks of the landscape that include not only wildlands but also embedded human communities. These greater ecosystems typically occur on a scale of 100,000 to 1,000,000 acres
e. The treatments are straightforward, they include:
    i. Retain trees which predate settlement
    ii. Retain postsettlement trees needed to re-establish presettlement structure
    iii. Thin and remove excess trees
    iv. Rake heavy fuels from base of trees
    v. Burn to emulate natural disturbance regime
    vi. Seed with natives/control exotics

4. There are many benefits from ecological restoration in these dry forest types beyond the reduction of crownfire

a. It eliminates unnatural forest insect and disease outbreaks
b. It enhances native plant and animal biodiversity
c. It protects critical habitats for threatened or endangered species
d. It improves watershed function and sustainability
e. It enhances natural beauty of the land
f. It improves resource values for humans, not just for current, but also for future generations
g. In cases where a road system is in place and small wood processing facilities are available, the trees removed can often help defray the cost of restoration treatments and provide jobs and income for local communities

5. There are challenges to implementing restoration

a. It could be expensive in the short term, but it will save money and resource values over time
b. It is important that we assure that trees that are removed are being removed for the purpose of restoring natural forest patterns and processes
c. Political maneuvering over setting one-size-fits-all diameter caps can interfere with cost effective, ecologically sound restoration

6. **There are consequences if we fail to implement restoration based hazardous fuel reduction at the greater ecosystem scale**

    a. Piecemeal solutions will treat symptoms and not the underlying disease
    b. Scientific evidence supports the prediction that if we do not act quickly the number, size, severity, and costs of wildfires in the dry forests of the West will increase

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Design treatments starting with solid science, set standards for effectiveness, and measure progress**

Research to date indicates that alternative fuel reduction treatments have strikingly different consequences not just for fire behavior but also for biodiversity, wildlife habitat, tree vigor and forest health. Treatment design should be based on what the forest requires to maintain health and reduce catastrophic fire. Science-based guidelines should be developed and become the foundation for treatments. In addition, they should be the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of treatments. Guidelines will help guide managers and provide a base of certainty to those that are distrustful of land management agencies. The standard should be clear—if a treatment does not permit the safe reintroduction of fire and simultaneously facilitate the restoration of the forest it is not a solution.

2. **Reduce conflict by using an adaptive management framework to design, implement and improve treatments**

We can wait no longer. Solutions to catastrophic wildfire must be tested and refined in a "learning while doing" mode. Two of the barriers preventing the implementation of landscape scale treatments are the unrealistic desire for scientific certainty and a fear that once an action is selected it becomes a permanent precedent for future management. Scientific certainty will never exist and the past century of forest management demonstrates the need for applied research and active adaptation of management approaches using current knowledge. We should expand our environmental review process to provide approval of a series of iterative treatments, provided they are science based, actively monitored and committed to building from lessons learned and new information.

3. **Rebuild public trust in land management agencies by continuing to support a broad variety of partnership approaches for planning and implementing restoration-based fuel treatments**

The lack of trust that exists between some members of the public and land management agencies is the genesis for obstructionist actions. The only way to rebuild trust is to develop meaningful collaborations between the agencies, communities and the public. There are emerging models of various forms of collaborative partnerships working to reduce the threat of fire while restoring the forest for its full suite of values. Their success depends on meaningful community collaboration, human and financial resources and adequate scientific support to make well informed management decisions. Congress, federal agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations must support these communities to help them achieve success.

We are at a fork in the road. Down one fork lies burned out, depauperate landscapes—landscapes that are a liability for future generations. Down the other fork lies health, diverse, sustaining

landscapes—landscapes that will bring multiple benefits for generations to come. Inaction is taking, and will continue to take, us down the path to unhealthy landscapes, costly to manage. Scientifically-based forest restoration treatments, including thinning and prescribed burning, will set us on the path to healthy landscapes, landscapes like the early settlers and explorer saw in the late 1800s.

Knowing what we now know, it would be grossly negligent for us not to move forward with large-scale restoration based fuel treatments in the dry forests of the West. Inaction is now the greatest threat to the long-term sustainability of these western ecosystems.

Thank you very much for asking me to appear before the Committee.

APPENDIX B:

PRIORITIES FOR TREATMENT IDENTIFIED BY MEMBER NEIGHBORHOODS

HANER PARK (Frank Potje, Dick Patterson):

- West side of the river, intense fuel loading from dead/downed timber and heavy brush; The Pringle Falls Experimental Forest, between FS roads 100 and 4370 are dense thickets posing high danger. The untouched Natural Areas of that Experimental Forest are especially dangerous.

WILD RIVER (Jim Ulrey):

- The area South of Wyeth Campground poses an extreme risk from campfires and other activities next to very dense, heavily fueled forests. The Experimental Forest has sections that appear to have never been treated.

DESCHUTES RIVER RECREATION HOMESITES #6 (Mike Swope and Regan Olson):

- South and West of the subdivision should be considered a low priority for treatment;
- North and East of the subdivision should be considered a high priority for treatment;
- Some thinning and risk reduction occurred during the relocation of Foster Road; Highest priority is the high fuel conditions on the county-owned lots.

FALL RIVER ESTATES (Don Mercer):

- Thinning of USFS lands between the northern boundary and Forest Road 42 with stewardship out ¼ mile and along both sides of Fall River Drive.
- Thinning of BLM lands along the southern boundary with stewardship out ¼ mile and appropriate treatment for another mile south and east
- Plan to partner with Meier Estate for thinning of large private parcel to the west
- Partnership with ODF&W to thin perimeter of Fish Hatchery lands

RIVER FOREST ACRES ROAD DISTRICT (Jim Pease):

- Adjacent Oregon State Parks lands pose a major fire risk.
- Illegal vehicular access creates a fire danger and needs to be addressed.
- Adjacent USFS lands are of high fire risk; the Klak project was supposed to have addressed fuel loading, but so far it hasn't.
- USFS has made important recent efforts to thin lodgepole thickets along the only access road.
- We have started educational efforts to clean up private lots, but more work needs to be done.

BEAVER SPECIAL ROAD DISTRICT (Bob Dryden):

- Seeking intensive thinning within 60 feet of Foster Road to serve as a fuel break; BLM has done some work in this area, FS needs to follow suit.
- Foster Road is classified as a collector road in the context of emergency evacuation. Intensive thinning would assure a safe route.
- The east side of Foster Road needs thinning by the FS and BLM. Thickets and unburned slash piles from prior logging present dangerous conditions that need to be addressed. Public use of the National Forest lands, close to residences, poses a higher risk of fire and necessitates immediate action.

WATER WONDERLAND I: (Jim King):

- The highest priority is treatment of federal lands around the Big River Campground and Boat Ramp.
- Second priority is treatment of undeveloped lots and lands along the old stream bed
- Suggest extending the WUI broadly enough to protect private properties not otherwise represented by a HOA or RD.

RIVER MEADOWS (Achille Castioni and Ray Cecchi):

- The highest priority is for fire risk reduction is the Big River Campground area; the WUI should include the area to Pistol, Sitkum, and Anns Buttes.
- The USFS land around the Overflow Camping Area (from Big River Campground) needs to be treated or the area closed until it is safe.

OREGON WATER WONDERLAND II (Larry Snell):

- Most critical need is for thinning and road closures on the 40 acre section owned by the USFS that is situated in the center of our subdivision.

VANDEVERT RANCH (Ken Lane):

- Need for intensive thinning efforts between Vandevert and Highway 97.

SPRING RIVER ROAD DISTRICT (Carl Jansen):

- Most important area for thinning is the area along FS road 41 to Besson Park/Besson Road ending at Cardinal Bridge.
- Neighborhood support for a firewood cutting plan in this area; FS should allow residents to recover firewood, reducing risk in the ¼ mile zone bordering their community and Sunriver.

SUNRIVER (Kelly Walker):

- Strongly supportive of thinning efforts within the WUI identified by this plan; important that ongoing projects be kept on schedule.
- The Cardinal Bridge and Besson areas are high priorities for thinning.

V. *APPENDIX C*

VI.

VII. *GUIDELINES* FOR EFFECTIVE (CITIZEN<->USFS) PARTNERSHIPS*

Context: These guidelines were developed in response to early misunderstandings, frustration, and tension that existed between the Agency and Coalition leadership. However, both sides realize that the long-term success of the joint fire risk reduction efforts by the USFS and the Coalition will be greatly enhanced by good communication, high trust, and a focus on mutual benefits. Initially "offered" by the Forest Service, "tweaked" by Coalition members; these 9 guidelines have been forwarded to the leadership of both the Coalition and the Forest Service as guidance to developing and maintaining positive and productive relationships.

Guidelines:

1. *All parties share in the decision-making process and responsibility for results.*
2. *Focus on mutual benefits and seek win/win outcomes.*
3. *Agree on course of action and measurable outcomes to achieve above.*
4. *Develop mutual understanding of roles, responsibilities and goals.*
5. *Maintain good communication including continual check-in on progress and timely response to reasonable requests.*
6. *Combine resources whenever possible (time, money, skills, etc.).*
7. *Strive to continually improve both the communication and partnership.*
8. *Work conscientiously to adhere to these guidelines.*
9. *Hold each other accountable and respectfully address the inevitable lapses that occur.*

**from Kyrie Murphy, Partnerships Coordinator, Deschutes & Ochocco National Forests(Original source: resource materials from National Forest Foundation)*