



**File Code:** 1950

**Date:** November 13, 2017

Dear Reader,

This letter is to inform you that the *Lex Vegetation Management* Draft Environmental (EA) is available for 30-day comment. This letter provides a brief summary of the project and information on the official 30-day public comment period. A copy of this EA is available by request at the address on this letterhead, or by contacting the project leader listed at the end of this letter. This document may also be accessed at the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forest website at: [www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=47203](http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=47203).

### **Location Description**

The 11,900 acre Lex project area is located approximately 10 miles south of Bend, Oregon (Figure 1) on the Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District of the Deschutes National Forest. The area lies entirely within the North Unit Diversion Dam- Deschutes River 10th field watershed and the Fall River-Deschutes River 10th field watershed. The Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway (Forest Service road 46) is generally the northern boundary of the project area and the Edison Ice Cave Road, connecting Sunriver to the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway and Mt. Bachelor is generally the western boundary. The Kew Vegetation Management Project borders Lex to the east, and to the north and west of Lex are inventoried roadless areas (Bend Watershed and Mt. Bachelor IRAs). The Three Sisters Wilderness area is 9 miles northwest of the Lex project area.

The legal description is: Township 18 South, Range 9 East Sections 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 36; Township 18 South, Range 10 East Sections 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34; Township 19 South, Range 9 East, Sections 1, 2, 11, 12, 13; and Township 19 South, Range 10 East, Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 18, and 19, Willamette Meridian.

### **Purpose and Need**

The Forest has identified the following purpose for taking action:

- In lodgepole stands, create age class diversity across the project area and increase stands resilience to insect and disease.
- In mixed conifer stands, restore historic species composition/structure and increase stand resilience to fire and insect and disease.
- Provide forest products to local economies.

### **Alternatives Considered**

Alternatives considered are the no action alternative (Alternative 1), the modified proposed action (Alternative 2) and two additional action alternatives (Alternative 3 and 4). During public scoping, concern was raised over the size range of openings in uneven-aged management units. During alternative development, it was decided to modify the proposed action from 2 to 6 acre openings to 1 to 6 acres, generally not exceeding 2 acres, except where circumstances warrant such an area that already exceeds 2 acres in size. Alternative 3 would treat the most acres and includes 176 acres of selection cut (HSC) treatments, which would occur where existing stocking of ponderosa pine is less than half the minimum stocking. Alternative 3 also adds overstory treatments to roadside fuels treatments to address dwarf mistletoe issues in lodgepole pine stands. Alternative 4 would treat the least number of acres and includes girdling 295 acres of overstory lodgepole pine seed trees.



The following table summarizes the activities that would occur under each alternative. A detail description of the alternatives can be found in Chapter 2 of the EA.

Alternative Elements		Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
<b>Overstory Tree Treatments (acres)</b>	Commercial Thinning (HTH)	0	177	177	177
	Uneven-aged Management (HSL)	0	852	852	760
	Selection Cut (HSC)	0		176	
	Overstory Removal (HOR)	0	1,369	1,369	1,328
	Final Removal (HFR)	0	2,071	2,071	1,776
	Improvement Cut (HIM)	0	19	19	19
	Special Harvest (HSP)		232	232	232
	Seed Tree Cuts with Reserves (HCR)	0	587	939	356
	Salvage (HSV)	0	158	158	158
	Girdle Overstory (GFR) (non-commercial)	0			295
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,465</b>	<b>5,993</b>	<b>5,101</b>
	Volume Recovered (MMBF)	0	10.39	11.75	9.09
<b>Understory Tree Treatments (acres)</b>	Precommercial Thinning (PCT)	0	4,492	4,668	4,132
	Ladder Fuel Reductions (LFR)	0	677	638	684
	Whip Felling	0	293	293	293
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,462</b>	<b>5,599</b>	<b>5,109</b>
<b>Fuel Treatments (acres)</b>	Prescribed Fire (Underburn)	0	510	510	510
	Prescribed Fir (Jackpot Burn)		297	297	297
	Mow / Mechanical Shrub Treatment	0	2,044	2,213	1,952
	Piling	0	5,474	5,714	5,131
	Strategic Roadside Fuel Treatment)	0	1,040	1,040	1,040
<b>Reforestation Activities (acres)</b>	Tree Planting	0	390	415	359
	Natural Regeneration	0	486	838	287
<b>Road Work</b>	Temporary Roads (miles)	0	20.4	20.5	18.8
	Roads to be Closed (miles)	0	6.7	6.7	6.7

The need for this project specific Forest Plan Amendments closely ties to the purpose and need for this project, which includes restoring historic composition and structure, creating age class diversity to provide habitat into the future, and reducing fuels. Forest Plan Amendments, for all action alternatives, include Scenic Views Standard and Guide M-9-90 in regards to fire management and Wildlife Standard and Guide WL-54 for vegetation management for deer.

Based on the direction provided in the revised 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219), a review of the provisions 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 is required for project level Forest Plan amendments. After a review of these substantive requirements, the following apply to the following amendments.

## **Amendment 1 – Underburning in Scenic Views (Action Alternatives)**

The following substantive requirements apply to the Scenic Views Amendment:

- *219.8(a)(1)(v) Wildland fire and opportunities to restore fire adapted ecosystems.*
- *219.10(a)(1) Aesthetic values, air quality, cultural and heritage resources, ecosystem services, fish and wildlife species, forage, geologic features, grazing and rangelands, habitat and habitat connectivity, recreation settings and opportunities, riparian areas, scenery, soil, surface and subsurface water quality, timber, trails, vegetation, viewsheds, wilderness, and other relevant resources and uses.*
- *219.10(a)(7) Reasonably foreseeable risks to ecological, social, and economic sustainability.*

## **Amendment 2 – Hiding Cover**

The following substantive requirements apply to the Hiding Cover Amendment:

- *219.10 (a) (1) Aesthetic values, air quality, cultural and heritage resources, ecosystem services, fish and wildlife species, forage, geologic features, grazing and rangelands, habitat and habitat connectivity, recreation settings and opportunities, riparian areas, scenery, soil, surface and subsurface water quality, timber, trails, vegetation, viewsheds, wilderness, and other relevant resources and uses.*
- *219.10(a)(5) Habitat conditions, subject to the requirements of § 219.9, for wildlife, fish, and plants commonly enjoyed and used by the public; for hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, observing, subsistence, and other activities (in collaboration with federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments).*

## **Opportunity to Comment**

Notice for the opportunity to comment on this EA will be published in The Bulletin, the newspaper of record. The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of the legal notice in the newspaper of record. Do not rely on any other source for the beginning date of the comment period. The legal notice will be posted to the projects web page. Comments received after the close of the 30-day comment period will be considered but will not have standing for objection. Those wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 218.

NOTICE: Documents associated with this project, including public comments, are part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process 40 CFR parts 1500 – 1508 and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 5 U.S.C. 552. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents or the eligibility to object.

## **How to Provide Comments**

Comments may be submitted electronically to [comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-bend-ftrock@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-bend-ftrock@fs.fed.us). Please put “Lex” in the subject line of your email. Comments must be submitted as part of the actual e-mail message, or as an attachment in Microsoft Word, rich text format (rtf), or portable document format (pdf) only. If using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed above, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected.

Comments may also be submitted in writing by mail or in person. Written comments should be sent or delivered to Kevin Larkin, District Ranger, Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District, 63095 Deschutes Market

Road, Bend, OR 97701. Hand-delivered and oral comments may be delivered to the same address during normal business hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Anyone wishing to obtain additional information on the project or to provide comments over the phone should contact Alicia Underhill by email, [aunderhill@fs.fed.us](mailto:aunderhill@fs.fed.us) or by phone at (541) 383- 4012.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'KWL', is written over a horizontal line.

KEVIN W. LARKIN

District Ranger



# Lex Vicinity Map

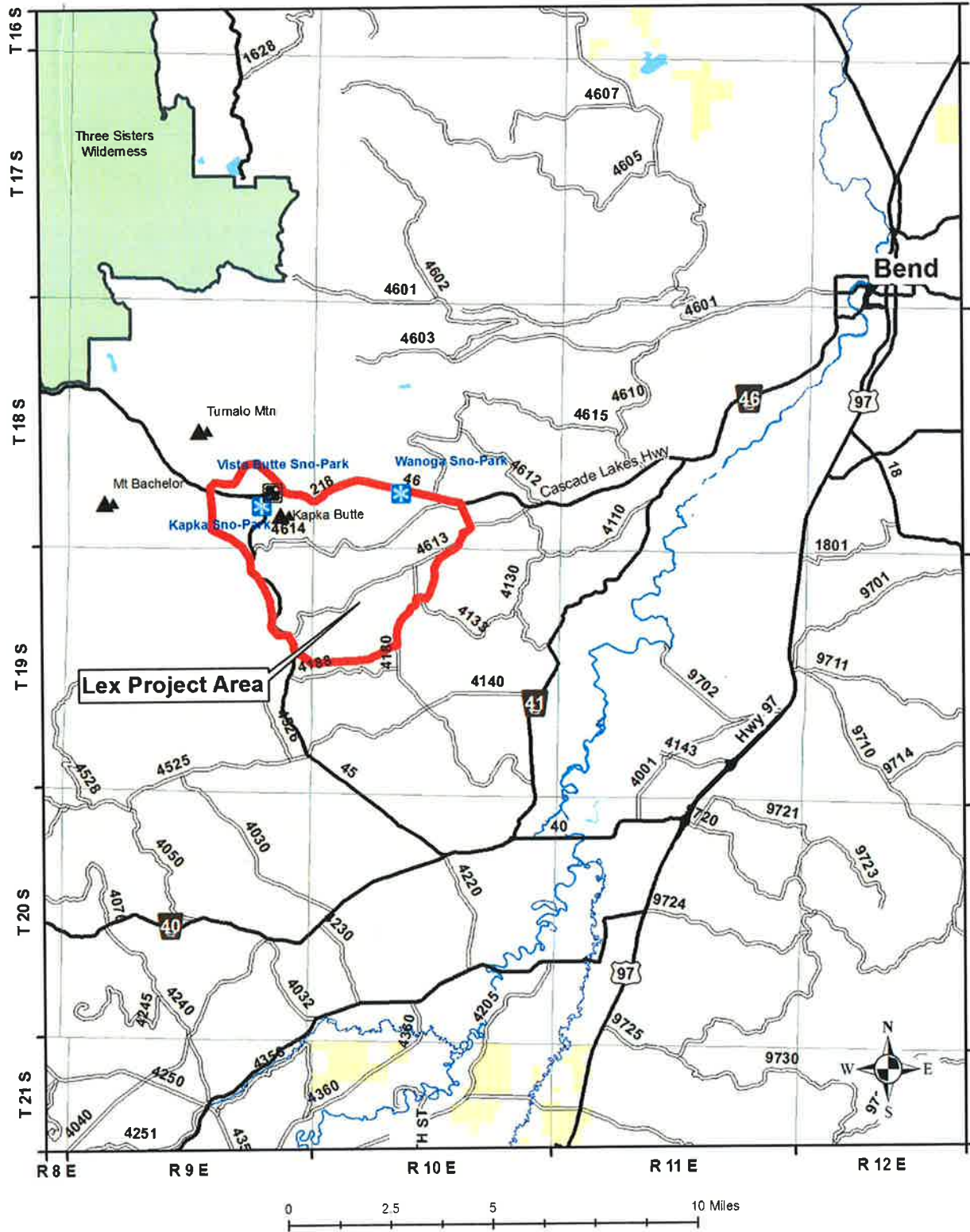


Figure 1: Lex Vicinity Map.

