

# Winema National Forest

USDA Forest Service  
Pacific Northwest Region



## FOREST MANAGEMENT

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## MONITORING

### Fiscal Year 1999-2000 Fremont National Forest Monitoring and Evaluation Report

Since the signing of the Record of Decision for the Fremont National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (FLRMP) on May 12, 1989, there have been several changes in emphasis for management of the Forest, reflecting national, regional and local issues. ♦ This report reflects specific changes as follows:

1. Up to September 30, 2000 (the end of Fiscal Year 2000), ♦ there were 18 amendments to the Fremont FLRMP. ♦ Two of these amendments (17 and 18) occurred in 1999, and were site-specific changes to allow land treatments in Old Growth (management areas 3 & 14) to reduce risks to the Old Growth characteristics from overcrowding in the understory. ♦ No amendments were made in FY 2000.
2. ♦ There has been a major societal shift nationally in the expectations of how the ♦ National Forests will be managed. ♦ This shift contrasts with the general emphasis in the 1989 FLRMP, and is manifested in the adoption of Regional Forester's Forest Plan Amendment #2 (a.k.a. the Timber Sale Screens) on June 8, 1995, and the direction in the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH) of July 28, 1995, both being directed at the maintenance and recovery of Old Growth habitats and stream conditions for fish.
3. The results of several studies and assessments, starting with the Integrated Scientific Assessment for Ecosystem Management in the Interior Columbia Basin (Sept. 1996), to the Forest's 1999 and 2000 Ecosystem Assessments at the Watershed Scale (Chewaucan and Upper Sycan), have all indicated that the Forest's ecosystems are well below the historic conditions for Late/Old Seral (LOS) Ponderosa Pine stands, and are at the same time significantly overstocked in younger age class trees and Western Juniper, both decreasing the likelihood of long-term stability and sustainability of fire-dependent ecosystems.

These shifts in emphasis have resulted in a decrease in commodity outputs (primarily merchantable timber products), and an increase in restoration activities such as road obliterations, in-stream habitat improvements, prescribed fire, and new methods of thinning to emphasize long-term protection and growth of LOS habitats.

In the period of Fiscal Years 1999 and 2000 (October 1, 1998 to September 30, 2000), the following work was done and outputs derived from the Forest:

<b>Total Forest Budget</b>	\$15,445,123	\$14,045,394
<b>Work/Outputs</b>	<b>Fiscal Year '99</b>	<b>Fiscal Year '00</b>
Grazing Allotments NEPA Decisions	14 (Warner Mountains)	7 (Chewaucan Basin)
Watershed Analysis	1 (Chewaucan)	1 (Upper Sycan)
Sensitive Species Conservation Actions		2 <i>Iliamna bakeri</i> and Bull Trout
Level II Aquatic Inventory	20 Miles	20 Miles

Streams Protected	5 Miles	9 Miles
Lakes Protected	1 Acre	5 Acres
Soil/Water Improvements	265 Acres	400 Acres
Roads Decommissioned	36 Miles	27 Miles
Wildlife Habitat Enhanced	2,769 Acres	1,522 Acres
Wildlife Structures	1,921	472
Noxious Weeds Treated	165 Acres	220 Acres
Reforestation	2,294 Acres	679 Acres
Precommercial Thinning	1,923 Acres	2,733 Acres
Fuel Treatments	32,864 Acres	11,153 Acres
Timber Sold Volume	8,165,000 Board Ft.	16,425,000 Board Ft.
Grazing Allotments Administered (to Standard)	66 (34)	65 (37)
Head-Months Livestock Grazing	56,881	56,759
Range Improvements	2 Structures	1 Structure & 2,000 Acres
Land Exchanges and Adjustments	11,420 Acres	1,000 Acres
Landline Maintenance	17.5 Miles	4 Miles
Special Use Permits Administered (to Standard)	385 (123)	271 (95)
Roads Reconstructed	23 Miles	25 Miles
Trails Reconstructed	4 Miles	13 Miles
Recreation Visits	937,806	980,530

Some additional information and findings follow:

In FY'99, Fire Season was declared on June 16<sup>th</sup> and ended on October 29<sup>th</sup>, with a total of 84 days rated "High" and 35 rated "Extreme" fire danger. ♦ The Forest was at Industrial Fire Precautionary Level (IFPL) II for 49 days and IFPL III for 18 days. ♦ The Forest experienced 44 lightning fires and 14 human-caused fires, burning 58 acres and 1,871 acres respectively, including the 1,870 Thomas fire.

In FY'00, Fire Season was declared on June 1<sup>st</sup> and ended on October 11<sup>th</sup>, with a total of 55 days rated "High" and 30 rated "Extreme" fire danger. ♦ The Forest was at IFPL II for 20 days, IFPL III for 11 days and IFPL IV for 21 days. ♦ Only 19 fire starts occurred (10 lightning and 9 human caused), burning a total of 12 acres. ♦ This fire activity represents only 25% of the 20-year average for fire starts. ♦ Because of the extreme fire danger, additional fire suppression resources were obtained and shared with the Lakeview District, BLM.

An analysis of 20 years of prescribed burning on the Forest showed that for this period, considerably more acres of the Ponderosa Pine type were burned with prescribed fire than burned in wildfire.

We are also finding that the "Ecosystem Analysis at the Watershed Scale" (EAWS) process as done by the Forest is providing information to the NEPA process that makes the latter more cost efficient, with good ecological context at a larger-than-project-site scale, resulting in better decisions.

We have also continued the analysis process with the Area Ecologist to develop a Potential Natural Community (PNC) classification for our riparian areas, and a scorecard to rate current conditions against PNC. ♦ When finalized, this will be very useful in riparian management and in the Clean Water Act Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) allocation process.

Through Fiscal Year 2000, we have applied the Proper Functioning Condition rating system to 153 of our most sensitive stream reach types in conjunction with the Consultation process with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on our grazing program. ♦ Of these ratings, 101 are at Proper Functioning Condition, 42 are Functional at Risk with an upward trend, 6 are Functional at Risk with no apparent trend, 1 is Functional at Risk with a downward trend and 3 are rated Nonfunctional. ♦ In other words, 93% of the stream reaches

analyzed are either fully functional or at an upward trend.

Of all the sites sampled for compliance with grazing Standards contained in Biological Opinions, 96% met those standards, with no repeat violations for the '99 and '00 grazing seasons. ♦ One action was taken against a permit for noncompliance with maintenance standards.

Based on what we've found in past years, the following are apparent:

1. Our streams, while still needing some improvement, are in better condition than was commonly believed.
2. The open-grown single-story Ponderosa Pine old growth condition is significantly below historic levels, and will need significant treatment, along with time, to recover.
3. Road management, particularly proper drainage, is the key to reducing impacts to hydrologic function of our streams.
4. Timber harvest has declined significantly due to a variety of factors.
5. Total Forest Budgets, and staffing levels, have also declined significantly since the Forest Plan was implemented in 1989.

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