

Public comment sought for Deschutes NF project

by Bend Weekly News Sources

CRESCENT, OREGON – Deschutes National Forest managers are seeking public comment on a plan to reduce insect, disease and wildland fire threats within a 160,000-acre project area northwest of Crescent that is characterized by mature stands of ponderosa pine and Douglas fir trees.

The Five Buttes Project objectives would be met through commercial timber harvests, controlled burns and small tree thinning around the largest trees in the area.

The area lies on the Crescent Ranger District and includes the 48,900-acre Davis Late Successional Reserve, an important northern spotted owl habitat area. It includes the Davis Fire area where thousands of acres of large, mature trees were lost in July 2003 when the blaze burned more than 21,000 acres.

Forest Service managers believe further large-scale loss of large, mature trees can occur unless work is done to reduce crowding in stands of trees in the project area.

An interdisciplinary team composed of a botanist, fuels specialist, soil scientist, hydrologist, silviculturist, archaeologist, and fish and wildlife biologists analyzed three alternatives documented in the Five Buttes Project draft environmental impact statement.

Alternative A is the no action alternative.

Alternative B involves active management of 5,522 acres and would include harvesting about 18.9 million board feet of timber. About 6.4 miles of temporary roads would be constructed to facilitate management activities and then obliterated following project completion.

Forest Service managers prefer Alternative C, which emphasizes a strategic approach to reducing the risks of large-scale fires. Management activities would take place on 7,797 acres, but would involve fewer acres of commercial harvest than Alternative B.

Alternative C would include harvesting about 14.4 million board feet of timber on 4,325 acres, with further work that would reduce brush and woody debris that can feed wildland fires on the remainder of the acres. It would include constructing 5.9 miles of temporary roads that would later be obliterated.

To view the Five Buttes Project draft environmental impact statement, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/projects/units/crescent/index.shtml>.

Public comments on the project will be accepted until March 12, 2007. Send written comments to: Crescent Ranger District, P.O. Box 208, Crescent, OR 97733. Send comments by email to comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-crescent@fs.fed.us

For more information, call Five Buttes Project Team Leader Marcy Boehme at (541) 433-3200.

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