



August 7, 2018

Shane Jeffries, Forest Supervisor  
Ochoco National Forest  
3160 NE Third Street  
Prineville, OR 97754

Dear Shane:

This letter is to provide a summary of the American Forest Resource Council (AFRC), Ochoco National Forest (OCH) and Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative (OFRC) field trip to the Mill Creek planning area that was held on July 25, 2018. Numerous Forest Service and OFRC members were present. Forest industry representatives were Dylan Fritz and Jesse Hohlt, Interfor; Rick Kriege, Kriege Logging; Jeff Maben, Consultant; and Tom Partin and Irene Jerome, AFRC.

AFRC and its members appreciate the opportunity to engage in development of projects and to strengthen the ongoing partnership between the agency, forest collaboratives and the industry. Special thanks to Jamie Serra, Vernita Ediger, and David Hatfield for pulling the field trip together.

Introductions were made and Irene read the anti-trust statement. The summary of the discussion topics follows.

### **Field Trip Objectives**

There were two main objectives for this field trip: to provide information to AFRC members and the OFRC on the mechanics of the Blue Mountain Resiliency Project (BMRP), and to get an overview of the Mill Creek planning area which is an area within the BMRP. The opportunity for industry to give direct feedback to the Forest Service and OFRC on the economic viability and operational feasibility of silviculture prescriptions and proposed logging and transportation systems in the Mill Creek planning area is invaluable.

### **BMRP Background Information**

David Hatfield provided a summary of the BMFP project: *“The USDA Forest Service PNW Region’s Eastside Restoration Strategy (ERS) was chartered in January 2013 to accelerate the pace and scale of forest restoration on National Forest System (NFS) lands in eastern Oregon and Washington. The ERS focuses on accelerating forest restoration at a larger scale and faster pace than traditional planning and project implementation processes, The Blue*

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*Mountains Forest Resiliency Project (FRP) is part of the ERS, and was chartered by the Forest Supervisors of the Ochoco, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests to restore the structure, composition, and function of dry forests, and facilitate the effective use, where appropriate, of planned and unplanned landscape scale fire across all forest types on these National Forests. The project area lies within the Blue Mountains ecoregion in northeast Oregon and southeast Washington, and consists of approximately 1,270,000 acres of NFS lands. The overall project planning area consists of selected watersheds amounting to 200,000 acres on the Ochoco, 520,000 acres on the Umatilla, and 550,000 acres on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forests.”*

The BMRP team is preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which will be accompanied by at least one Record of Decision for each Forest. Forest Supervisors may elect to sign more than one decision based on project specifics that will occur on the ground. The EIS will be the overarching analysis document, however the site-specific activities will be done at the Forest level providing the opportunity for industry and others to provide detailed input.

### **Stop #1**

Stop #1 was classified as **Savannah Warm Dry**, or dry upland forest stands on least resilient soils which includes a dry ponderosa pine, dry Douglas-fir and dry grand fir plant association group. Treatments in this area would reduce stocking levels and focus on ponderosa pine. A discussion centered around a slope that was greater than 35 percent and the viability of utilizing a cable system to remove excess volume. Industry shared that the volume for removal in this area was not sufficient to economically remove the material using a cable system. This is a significant issue on many of the OCH lands that are in need of fuels reduction, stocking level control and species management.

Industry recommended the Forest look for opportunities to use ground based equipment on slopes greater than 35 percent and describing objectives rather than identifying specific logging equipment in the NEPA. NEPA analysis should be for both ground based and skyline in these areas to provide the greatest flexibility at the implementation stage. Forest plan amendments can be requested to allow this type of activity. Cable units in these areas must be “timber subject to agreement.”

### **Stop #2**

Stop #2 was Savannah Warm Dry above the road with a potential RHCA treatment below the road. There was general agreement in the group that treatment in the RHCAs was critical to restore function, suitable riparian vegetation and hardwoods, and to mitigate the potential for loss to uncharacteristic wildfire

### **Stop #3**

Stop #3 was a Dry Upland Forest heavily stocked with large diameter trees in the overstory. The discussion centered around the ability to meet the prescription without removing trees greater than 21 inches with the general consensus that this was not possible.

In conclusion, the Forest Service, OFRC and industry concluded that 1) trees greater than 21 inches must occasionally be removed to meet objectives, 2) treating the landscape must include treating slopes greater than 35 percent, 3) monies generated from product removal will help with road maintenance and improvements, and 4) interaction with AFRC members and other stakeholders early in the planning process in the field is critical.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Irene".

Irene Jerome  
AFRC Consultant

cc: AFRC Members