

*Enclosure #3*File Code: 1570
Route To:

Date: MAR 14 2019

Subject: Objection Response for the Umatilla, Malheur, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests Revised Land Management Plans

To: Glenn P. Casamassa, Regional Forester, Region 6

This is my response on the objections to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), draft Record of Decision, and Revised Land Management Plans (Revised Plans) for the Umatilla, Malheur, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. In concluding the objections process, I am instructing you to withdraw the draft Record of Decision, FEIS, and the three Revised Plans. The existing Land and Resource Management Plans, as amended will remain in place.

My reason for this instruction is that many factors compounded to produce Revised Plans that would be difficult to implement. While my review did not identify any specific violations of law, regulation, or policy, significant changes have occurred over the 15 year time period of the planning process that led to my decision. For example, a number of plan content modifications occurred that were often complex and not well understood, and there were a number of changes in elected officials, organizations, other stakeholders, and key Forest Service staff. The Revised Plans also did not fully account for the unique social and economic needs of the affected communities. The resulting plans are very difficult to understand and I am concerned that there will be ongoing confusion and disagreement as to how each Revised Plan is to be implemented.

I do not provide this instruction lightly. I recognize the hard work and commitment of your employees over the last 15 years. I also realize how much dedication, energy, time, and effort that the public has put into this process. I am confident that the information and data collected and analyzed, as well as the breadth of objection issues, can be used to inform your next steps. As you proceed, I expect you to engage with local, State, and tribal governments, elected officials, the public, and other interested stakeholders.

By copy of this letter, which will also be posted on the Regional and Forests' websites, I am notifying all parties of the conclusion of the objection process for the Umatilla, Malheur, and Wallowa-Whitman Plan revisions.

CHRISTOPHER B. FRENCH
Reviewing Officer for the Chief