



Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative Landscape Planning Collaboration Committee Dead Mountain Draft EA Comments

Middle Fork Ranger District,

The Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative (SWFC) Landscape Planning Collaboration Committee (LPCC) would like to register its support for the Dead Mountain Draft Environmental Assessment. The LPCC has worked closely with the Forest Service since 2022, hosting 7 field tours, 5 learning sessions, 2 joint workshops, 4 roundtable discussions to develop Zones of Agreement (ZOA), and held monthly committee meetings.

The LPCC and Middle Fork District began discussing the East Oakridge Strategy after the Cedar Creek fire. The strategy proposes to manage approximately 28,000 acres east of the City of Oakridge to help reduce wildfire risk and enhance forest resilience. The strategy builds off of fuels reduction projects on private lands in the Oakridge-Westfir area. Combining shaded fuel breaks and landscape treatments can increase the ability to protect communities, improve firefighter safety, restore ecosystem functions, and enhance landscape resilience and adaptive capacity. Beginning in the Dead Mountain area specifically reduces risk to the highly vulnerable community of High Prairie, as well as a communications site indispensable to disaster response capabilities.

Starting in 2024, the LPCC developed landscape level ZOAs for the East Oakridge Strategy area as well as project-specific ZOAs for the Dead Mountain project. These ZOA represent consensus-based, multi-stakeholder recommendations on a host of issues relevant to the Dead Mountain project. Many of these ZOAs are incorporated in the purpose and need and proposed action for the project. The variable density thinning, small diameter fuels reduction, burn blocks, shaded fuel breaks, trail infrastructure, and commercial harvest as recommended are well aligned with LPCC goals and interests.

The LPCC recognizes the Middle Fork District's limited ability to address the ZOAs related to recreation trails and overuse in the Salmon Creek corridor, and appreciates the willingness to address those requests through different means. Additionally, the LPCC looks forward to working together to restore Mule Meadow through other projects.

Projects such as the proposed Dead Mountain EA are instrumental in addressing the wildfire crisis and reducing wildfire risks to communities. Shaded fuel breaks and strategic harvest and prescribed burning are crucial for community protection in eastern Lane County. The LPCC hopes that the draft environmental assessment will highlight the extensive scientific

literature documenting fuels reduction treatment effectiveness, evidence provided by agency fire management experts, as well as community support for this project.

Thank you for your continued dedication to this project. On behalf of the LPCC the SWFC looks forward to its timely implementation and continuing cooperation with the Forest Service.

Sincerely,



Sarah Altemus-Pope
South Willamette Solutions Executive Director
Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative Facilitator

Enclosed: [East Oakridge Strategy](#) Zones of Agreement; [Dead Mountain](#) Zones of Agreement

*SWS Board of Directors/ SWFC Steering Committee on behalf of the Landscape Planning
Collaboration Committee:*

David Chamberlain

Career Instructor, University of Oregon

Sue Cathcart

Willamette Mountain Mercantile

Kathy Holston

Previous Oakridge Mayor

D'Lynn Williams

Previous Westfir Mayor

Craig Marcus

Professor, Oregon State University

Susan Obermeyer

Lane Electric Board of Directors

Laurie Patty

Oakridge Postal Pharmacy (Retired)

Bryan Cutchen (Advisory)

Oakridge Mayor



Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative
Landscape Planning Collaboration Committee

East Oakridge Strategy
Landscape Level Zones of Agreement

1. Fuels Treatments and Prescribed Fire:

A. Plan fuel breaks adjacent to the project boundaries, particularly in areas affected by the Cedar Creek fire, and fuels reduction treatments along roads, ridges and trails.

B. Use proactive management to create and maintain defensive depth between east wind wildfire events and Oakridge community, prioritizing treatments based on risk reduction to communities.

C. Leverage previous projects and wildfire control lines to increase prescribed fire with broadcast and understory burning (while mitigating smoke impacts) including in recently burned areas.

2. Forest Health and Timber Harvesting:

A. Use timber harvest to create defensible space using fuel breaks in the immediate vicinity of the communications site, critical infrastructure, along roads and control lines, and closest to homes.

B. Create structurally and compositionally diverse stands using commercial and non-commercial thinning that facilitates prescribed fire and natural fire that reduces surface fuel.

3. Economic Development

A. Support local economic development by retaining project-generated funds within the stewardship area and design contracts that enable small operators to participate.

B. Create diverse biomass utilization opportunities by coordinating fuels and forest restoration activities with local businesses in mind and design projects to support both traditional and small-diameter wood operations.

C. Support the recreation economy by maintaining and building infrastructure and amenities that enable year-round recreation.

4. Boundaries with Private Lands

A. Create shaded fuel break corridors along private boundaries to reduce fire risk.

B. Emphasize cross-boundary coordination between public and private lands.

C. Educate the public about Forest Service land management process and rules related to management methods and how they differ from private lands (e.g. project planning and implementation).

5. Wildlife, Aquatics and Cultural Resources

A. Reduce and mitigate trash and fire risk from overuse camping (recreational and non-recreational), dumping and other illegal activities by increasing enforcement activities, adding signage, partnering with local groups, and by providing opportunities for other legal uses.

B. Restore and protect sensitive habitats in meadows, riparian areas and oak ecosystems to improve wildlife habitat.

C. Maximize treatments that aid the local elk herd by thinning and creating less dense structure to improve their habitat.

D. Incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into restoration and management approaches.

6. Recreation

A. Improve existing recreational opportunities to increase access and create new opportunities for underserved users.

B. Develop recreation infrastructure, utilizing existing roads and new trails, for a variety of user groups and skill levels.

C. Use signage to improve wayfinding, provide interpretive opportunities, improve trail etiquette, and raise awareness of alternative recreation options to disperse traffic and reduce negative effects of recreational impact.

Dead Mountain EA Project Level Zones of Agreement

Dead Mountain Project Level ZOAs

- A. Restore Mule Meadows to protect sensitive habitats by treating invasives, removing encroaching trees, and using traditional ecological knowledge to reintroduce cultural burning.
- B. Improve river access, increase law enforcement, and promote diverse recreational uses along Salmon Creek to reduce illicit activities such as illegal camping, shooting, and trash dumping.
- C. Convert Respect the River sites to Day use Only, while maintaining accessibility.
- D. New Trail Opportunities (see map)
 - 1. Add a connector trail from town to Dead Mt. trail using the old haul road.
 - 2. Add accessible and beginner trails on the lower slope of Flat Creek.
 - 3. Add trails to expand connectivity between Dead Mountain and Salmon Creek trail systems.