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First name: Jamie

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Organization: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Title: Regional Habitat Biologist

Comments: April 3, 2026

Robbie Piehl, Acting Paulina District Ranger Ochoco National Forest

3160 NE 3rd Street Prineville, OR 97754

RE: North Slope Vegetation Management Project #68971 Dear Mr. Piehl,

As the agency mandated with management of Oregon's fish and wildlife (ORS 496.012), the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is responding to your request for comments for the North Slope Vegetation Management Project (Project). The Project is located approximately 48 miles east of Prineville, OR and proposes to reduce stand density (commercial and non-commercial) of live and dead trees along the roadsides and adjacent to private lands to mitigate for future potential fire impacts along approximately 30 miles of road. The project aims to improve forest conditions by addressing overstocked, dead, and declining stands using timber harvest, thinning, and prescribed burning.

The Department recognizes the need to improve forest health and has no major concerns over the proposed project. The Department appreciates measures included in the proposal that benefit fish and wildlife habitat.

The Department has the following specific comments/recommendations:

- * The Department appreciates that all temporary created roads would be decommissioned post-treatment. We would like more details regarding what the decommissioning of the temporarily created and re-opened closed roads would look like (e.g., berms, gates, ripping), and if the decommissioning will be successful with a more open habitat post treatment.

- * The Department appreciates the avoidance of treatments within category 1, 2 and 3 RHCAs.

- * Within the Category 4 RHCAs, the Department would like to know which stream crossing type will be selected for each proposed crossing (e.g., bridge, culvert). The Department encourages the stream crossings to be designed to meet the objectives of the FSM 7700 so that the physical, biological, and chemical integrity of the waters of the United States are protected and restored in accordance with Section 101 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (Chapter 7720.2) Specifically, we encourage the minimization of bank erosion along with riparian zone and stream bed compaction, especially in instances where these Category 4 RHCA streams are connected to Category 1-3 waterbodies since the impacts may be realized the following year when flow resumes.

- * In response to the significant number of complaints received during the 2025 hunting seasons, the Department recommends that tree removal and prescribed burning activities be conducted outside of hunting seasons whenever practicable. Below are the 2026 season dates applicable to this area:

Pronghorn: August 22 [ndash] August 30

Archery deer and elk: August 29 [ndash] September 27 Turkey: September 1 [ndash] January 31

Rifle Deer: October 3 [ndash] October 14

Rifle Elk: August 15 [ndash] December 31 (youth #1), October 17 [ndash] October 25 (youth # 2),

October 28 [ndash] November 1, November 7 [ndash] 15

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have questions or want information that the Department can provide, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Jamie Bowles

Regional Habitat Biologist

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

CC:

Sara Gregory [ndash] Deschutes Watershed Manager Greg Jackle [ndash] Ochoco District Wildlife Biologist
Stephan Charette [ndash] John Day District Fish Biologist