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Ochoco National Forest

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Attention: North Fork Crooked River Forest Resilience Project Scoping

The Oregon Department of Fish has reviewed this scoping document and provide the following comments. This Project area is within the boundary of two cooperative travel management area's (TMA) in the Ochoco wildlife management unit (WMU). South Boundary TMA was established in 1991, is to the West of the North Fork of the Crooked River and is a year round cooperative road closure between ODFW and the Ochoco National Forest. Rager TMA was established in 1973, is East of the North Fork of the Crooked River and is a road closure focused around established hunting seasons.

ODFW recommends that all existing green roads identified within South Boundary TMA and Rager TMA remain open.

It is worthwhile to note that the majority if not all the roads slated for closure already are closed during most fall hunting seasons. This project will effectively close these roads year round and provide greater sized blocks of wildlife habitat as well as greater elk security. The extended closure of these roads will in effect limit disturbance and harassment during the spring and summer months. These months can be critical to the development and survival of adult wildlife and their young.

ODFW and the Ochoco National Forest have been working collaboratively on multiple projects to increase elk security on the National Forest and attempt to attract elk to stay as long on public land and avoid being displaced to private lands. This project aims to ensure elk stay longer on public lands for the benefit of both consumptive and non-consumptive users.

ODFW is in the middle of a cow elk monitoring program that will inform us on cow elk seasonal habitat use in the future. ODFW also has been collecting data with respect to vehicle traffic on different classifications of Forest roads. ODFW will share that relevant data from the project area with the Interdisciplinary Team if requested.

While not discussed in great detail in the scoping document, ODFW would recommend any temporary road developed for the commercial thinning be decommissioned after the project is completed.

In regards to thinning within riparian areas, it appears that only trees from noncommercial thinning (<9-inches dbh) will be felled into streams. Many streams are below INFISH management objective for large woody debris where large woody debris is defined as being >12-inches dbh and >35-feet long. We recommend felling larger trees, that meet the definition of large woody debris and that will be hydrologically appropriate for the stream size, in sufficient numbers to achieve INFISH management objectives and in random directions that mimics natural falling. We also recommend leaving enough trees within the riparian areas that will recruit into future large woody debris.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and if you have any follow up questions, please feel free to contact us.

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