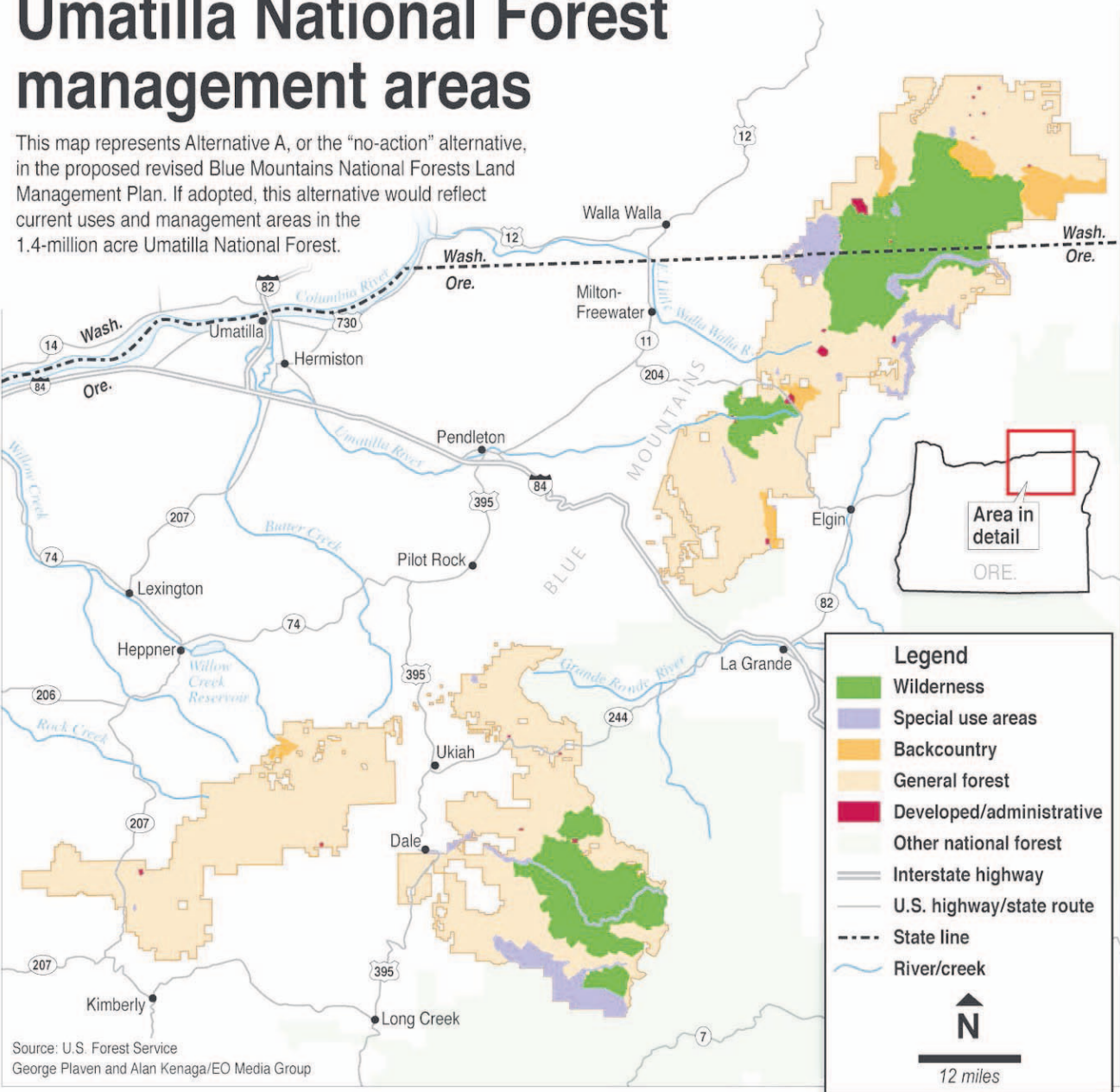


Umatilla National Forest management areas

This map represents Alternative A, or the “no-action” alternative, in the proposed revised Blue Mountains National Forests Land Management Plan. If adopted, this alternative would reflect current uses and management areas in the 1.4-million acre Umatilla National Forest.



FOREST: Not simply a ‘tree farm’

Continued from 1A

modifying one of the agency’s alternatives, or crafting an entirely new proposal.

The Forest Service was on schedule to select its final plan by April 2016. Instead, it will continue reaching out for ideas on how to solve difficult issues.

“As long as we’re moving in a positive direction, I think we’ll get the time,” Martin said.

The forest plan does not make any project-level decisions. Rather, it is a strategic documents that identifies desired conditions and objectives. It must also follow federal laws, such as the Wilderness Act and Clean Water Act.

The goals of the plan are three-fold: to promote social, economic and ecological well-being.

“There’s a variety of ways you can lay out a plan,” Martin said. “We want people to work with us, be creative and work together.”

Social well-being

The Blue Mountains are an integral part of the lifestyle in rural Eastern Oregon. Outdoor recreation is a major draw, not only for residents but for visitors from across the country.

According to figures from the National Shooting Sports Foundation, 196,000 people hunt in Oregon every year. Of those, 15,000 come from outside the state. All together, they spend \$248 million annually, supporting 3,700 jobs.

One of the top concerns in the forests is maintaining an appropriate road system that provides access while protecting sensitive habitats. In its proposed plan, the Forest Service claims the current road system is not sustainable, given the level of funding and growing backlog of maintenance needs.

Art Waugh, a member of the John Day-Snake Resource Advisory Council representing recreation interests, said the proposal appears to set the stage for road closures, setting aside more land that could be more productively managed.

“Once we see what the forests want to do on a project level, that’s when we’ll have to fight for what we can get,” Waugh said. “I would like to see the maximum access available, within sustainability guidelines.”

Forest Service figures show the three forests are already growing at a rate of 791 million board feet per year. Critics of the proposed forest plan say it is too passive to keep up with the overgrowth.

Umatilla County Commissioner Larry Givens has said the Forest Service is taking a “look but don’t touch” approach to managing federal lands. Mark Webb, a former Grant County judge and member of the Blue Mountain Forest Partners collaborative, said the plan is not near aggressive enough, resource-wise, to protect healthy forests and healthy communities.

“The forests aren’t simply a tree farm. They’re disturbance-driven,” Webb said. “You’ve increased the fuel loads so much, that when a fire comes through, it doesn’t do what it used to do. It just wipes everything out, and destroys the ecosystem.”

Economic growth

Boosting active management would benefit not only the ecosystem, but the rural economy as well.

Cutting more trees means more work for the region’s lumber mills. Under the Forest Service’s preferred alternative, the predicted annual timber harvest would be 162 million board feet per year, supporting 1,330 jobs.

Zach Williams, a consultant with Iron Triangle Logging in John Day, said the target remains low when compared to forest growth. By itself, Iron Triangle delivers 20-30 million board feet to mills each year.

Furthermore, a study by the American Forest Resource Council and Associated Oregon Loggers shows mills need to harvest 247-335 million board feet per year from the Blue Mountains forests just to sustain current infrastructure.

The wood is there, Williams said, if they can agree on a forest plan that encourages enough logging.

“My feeling is it has to do with existing budget restraints under the Forest Service,” he said. “What we’re saying is: ‘Let’s set a goal we want to attain, and work backward from there.’”

Boise Cascade, a large paper and wood products manufacturing company, operates five mills in Eastern Oregon. Inland Region Manager Tom Insko previously said four of those facilities have cut down to a single shift based on the amount of raw material they are able to harvest from the woods. If they could add those shifts back, it would mean 180 new jobs.

Lindsay Warness, a collaboration specialist with Boise Cascade, said only 10 percent of their timber comes from the national forests. She said the proposed plan is based on outdated science

that doesn’t suit the needs of the forests or the communities.

“We need to see an increase in the ability to harvest timber off of federal forest lands,” Warness said. “We’d like to see the industry expand a little more.”

Environmental aid

The forests, however, aren’t only for people. A vast array of plants and animals call the forests home, including old-growth trees and some endangered species.

The preferred forest plan alternative calls for 91,000 acres of wilderness among the three forests. Oregon Wild, a group that describes itself as a leader in the conservation of roadless areas on the national forests, says it has identified 1.8 million acres of suitable wilderness.

Erik Fernandez, the organization’s wilderness coordinator based out of Bend, said the proposed plan is far from the middle ground.

“In our view, it’s a two-way street,” Fernandez said in an email. “There is going to be some logging that happens on these forests, but there has to be some increased protections for our last great wild places.”

Wilderness areas remain an important place where people can find solitude, said Rob Klavins, Oregon Wild’s northeast Oregon field coordinator in Enterprise.

Decades of under-management have left the forests damaged, Klavins said, though the Forest Service should be careful not to swing the pendulum too far toward over-logging and clear-cuts.

“What makes this place special are those areas that aren’t criss-crossed by roads,” he said. “Those areas are ever more important, and worth protecting.”

Bruce Eddy, east region manager for the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, said the real nitty-gritty will come down to specific projects once the final plan is in place. He is confident sides will settle on the right strategy, and said the Forest Service has taken an encouraging first step by doubling down on its level of engagement.

“There’s a perspective out there that this plan is terrible, and needs to be thrown away. I don’t think that’s necessarily the state’s perspective,” Eddy said. “I just think there’s ways to work things out. I’ve seen it happen before, and I don’t see any reason why it can’t happen again.”

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CONSPIRACY: Browning faces up to 29 years in prison

Continued from 1A

one count each of second-degree assault and riot and four counts each of felon in possession of firearms, among other crimes, including in connection with a shooting this past Christmas Eve in Pendleton. Browning faces 12 counts in all, Mauer 17 and Tinnell 21.

Hampton asked Jenkins what possible sentence Browning faces. After some math, Jenkins said Browning could serve 346 months, or almost 29 years.

Local defense attorneys entered not guilty pleas for each defendant, and each has a preliminary hearing sometime in the next two weeks. Most of the defendants kept quiet except for answering yes or no questions. But during a moment when the court was deciding on hearing dates, Mauer flipped through the pages of his indictment. He closed the document and said, “Well, there goes my life.”

Primus also charged an associate of the gang members. Sarah Frankford, 30, of Pendleton, pleaded not guilty to two felony counts of conspiracy to assault another woman. Pendleton police uncovered her crimes while investigating the gang, Primus said after the hearings, and more crimes and defendants could be in the pipeline.

This is Primus’ first racketeering case in his tenure as

district attorney, and it may be the first racketeering case against a gang in the county’s history. Racketeering is a criminal activity that benefits an organization and can include extortion, bribery and money laundering.

Primus explained an organization does not have to run a money-making scheme to fall under the law. Rather, he said, an organization can claim to be one thing while operating as another. Roberts stated gang members and documents at Mauer’s apartment professed the United Aryan Empire wanted to target methamphetamine dealers, but the gang actually wreaked general violence and mayhem. Primus said the gang may have started as one thing, but they became a danger to the public through plots to assault, kill and commit violent crimes.

Primus said the grand jury heard evidence and listened to 11 witnesses for almost six hours Thursday before turning in the true bills. He credited Jenkins with the heavy lifting needed to bring the racketeering charges and championing use of the law.

The district attorney also said this case would test what he and his staff could do with that law and may lay the groundwork for future cases.

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AIRPORT: City invested \$535,000 into test range

Continued from 1A

Keeping things close to the vest offers a public advantage as well.

The UAS range has competitors of its own in the form of the six test sites that were approved by the Federal Aviation Administration in 2013.

The Pendleton UAS Range is a part of the Pan Pacific UAS Test Range Complex, which covers nine ranges throughout Oregon, Alaska and Hawaii and is headed by the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Chrisman said 11 companies and organizations are in the process of obtaining authorization from the FAA to run tests at the Pendleton UAS Range. Four applications have already been authorized, with two of those companies in negotiations with the city to start testing.

While the path seems clear for the UAS range to start accepting business, continual bureaucratic obstacles have slowed the process. Already three months into it, Chrisman said the FAA recently informed airport staff that all drones would need to obtain identification numbers, tacking on an additional 60 days to the process.

This new requirement comes on the heels of previous confusion regarding which entity would receive money in a business transaction, with the FAA maintaining all money had to be paid to a public body.

To solve the problem, Chrisman said all payments for UAS testing will go to the city. Pendleton will then pay other entities involved in developing and managing the range, like Peak 3 Technical Services.

Although Chrisman admitted meeting FAA compliance can be frustrating, he said he understands the administration’s commitment to safety and is still optimistic about the range’s potential.

Addressing recent concern that he didn’t have time to market the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport to people in the UAS industry, Chrisman said the city has hired Eastern Oregon University business student David Anderson to help with that effort.

The airport could also be getting outside help from private investors looking to build hangars.

Chrisman said two people were interested in personally financing hangars, which are in high demand for both manned and unmanned aerial vehicles.

Infrastructure will be a persistent need if the city stays with its ambitious long-term plans for the UAS

“I’m a big believer that the suit makes the man. And the suit was a little dingy up here.”

— Steve Chrisman, airport manager

range, which includes an industrial park.

The city has invested \$535,000 into the test range, with an unspecified date to terminate local funding.

That’s where SOAR Oregon could step in.

SOAR Oregon is a statewide, not-for-profit dedicated to developing Oregon’s three test ranges in Pendleton, Warm Springs and Tillamook.

SOAR Oregon Executive Director Mark Morrisson said financial support from the state and federal levels is “essential” to the growth of the UAS ranges.

Morrisson said government investment could return dividends in the form of jobs.

According to a recent study by Oregon State University economist Bruce Sorte, the range could create roughly 317 jobs and generate \$178 million in economic impact in the first three years of operation.

“The mathematics are very compelling,” Morrisson said.

To help support the ranges, SOAR Oregon applied for a \$3.5 million grant from Business Oregon, with \$2.25 million earmarked for the state’s test ranges.

While many of SOAR Oregon’s board of directors are based out of the western part of the state, Pendleton does have a seat at the table.

Mike Thorne resigned from the Airport Commission to accept an appointment from the SOAR Oregon board. Thorne replaced Mayor Phillip Houk, who left the board to avoid a conflict of interest.

Besides the UAS range, other areas of the airport have received attention.

Chrisman said SeaPort Airlines enplanements were up 15 percent last year, with December 2014 being the best December since 2009.

Airport staff also recently demolished four dilapidated homes in the airport area.

“I’m a big believer that the suit makes the man,” he said, “and the suit was a little dingy up here.”

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SHOOTING: Witnesses not willing to talk

Continued from 1A

kinds of major crimes, he explained, where “events takes place and law enforcement is left trying to connect dots and ascertain what truly happened versus what a person wants us to believe happened.”

The lack of straight information from witnesses and others involved also could point to gang involvement. Gang members and affiliates often do not talk to cops, sometimes holding to a code of silence and sometimes out of fear of retaliation from other gang members.



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Police stand outside the caution tape marking a crime scene outside Foxwood Apartments near Victory Square Park in Hermiston where one man was shot and another seriously injured.