



## Forest health on the Ochoco...

Forest health is a major concern here on the Ochoco National Forest - in fact, it's the number one management issue we're dealing with right now!

The primary problem area is situated on what we call the "north slope" of the forest; those predominantly north-facing drainages near the northern boundary on the Prineville, Big Summit, and Paulina Ranger Districts. The Forest is also experiencing insect infestations in ponderosa pine on the Snow Mountain Ranger District north of Burns. The forest health problem area encompasses nearly 400,000 acres of mixed-conifer stands, which is *almost 50% of forested land on the entire Ochoco National Forest!*

A recently completed survey of vegetation on the north slope shows that the problem is most serious on about 130,000 of the total affected acres.

"Things are really bad in these areas," commented Forest Supervisor Tom Schmidt. "In a healthy forest, you would expect to see mostly green trees, with a few dead and dying trees scattered around. In these mixed conifer stands, the situation is just reversed. You see mostly dead and dying trees, with a few scattered green trees...there are areas where everything in view is dead."

Not just trees are affected by the problem. Big changes have occurred in riparian areas, old growth habitat, forage and cover densities, and water quality and yields. Basically, the entire ecosystem is affected by the problem and we have designed our projects to address the problem on an ecosystem level.

According to Jack Ward Thomas, Forest Service research wildlife biologist, "This is the first time we've ever seen a forest ecosystem begin to unravel like this."

Some of the concerns that we plan to deal with in the mixed-conifer stands on the Ochoco include:

- \* the threat of infestation of healthy stands of trees unless preventative measures are taken;

- \* the threat of catastrophic wildfires in so much dry dead material;

- \* the loss of old growth habitat;

- \* severe impacts to visual quality;



**"To be successful, we must focus community interest on what is possible in their forest future."**

Tom Quigley, Blue Mountain Natural Resources Institute

