



CRISIS IN THE BLUES...

WANTED! Public Involvement

Dear Friends:

The Ochoco and other National Forests in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon are in a *real* crisis, and as forest land managers, we need **your help!**

This insert is intended to provide you with information regarding the crisis situation pertaining to "forest health", as we are calling it, as it relates to your National Forests.

We are trying to reach as many central Oregonians as possible. This insert is included in newspapers in the communities where most of the customers and neighbors of the Ochoco National Forest live.

The back page contains a response form where we ask you to tell us how we can best meet your needs in keeping you informed and up-to-date concerning the forest health situation. A quarterly Forest newsletter describing current and upcoming projects on the various Forest Service Districts will be distributed to the respondents of this insert.

After reading the following important information, I believe that many of you will want to know more about forest health and how together we can all manage our lands for the good of people and resources alike.



Healthy Forests
Make A World
Of Difference

**We really need your help
in this important time, for
now and for the future!**

So just what *IS* "forest health" and *WHY* is it such a crisis?

"This is not a minor event. Sixty percent of the forests in eastern Oregon are either dead or dying at the present time."

Ochoco National Forest Supervisor Tom Schmidt

Forests east of the Cascades are in a distressed condition. Weakened by years of severe drought, entire stands of trees are being attacked and killed by insects and disease. The problem is most severe in the northeast quarter of the state in the area known as the **Blue Mountains.**

Over 3.2 million acres of National Forest lands including the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla, Malheur, and Ochoco National Forests are affected by the epidemic. **That's 5,000 square miles!**

"This is not a minor event", explained Ochoco National Forest Supervisor Tom Schmidt. "Sixty percent of the forests in eastern Oregon are either dead or dying at the present time", Schmidt said, "and we're losing more trees to insects and disease than to wildfires."

In fact, Schmidt contends that if it weren't for Northwesterners' preoccupation with the spotted owl controversy, forest health would be the number one resource management concern in the region.

Others have also characterized the problem as being very serious. Ochoco National Forest Silviculturalist Don Wood states "There are four primary reasons why forest health is a problem in the affected National Forests: drought, insect infestations, society demand for ponderosa pine, and the suppression of forest fires."

The composition of forests has changed from open stands of ponderosa pine and larch to mixed-conifer stands dominated by true fir and Douglas-fir which usually occur in dense multi-canopy levels thereby

promoting infestation by insects from nearby infested trees. According to Blue Mountain Natural Resources Institute acting manager Tom Quigley, "There are no easy answers.... (concerning forest health problems). It is very important for people to realize the ecosystem that exists today in the Blue Mountains is not a natural ecosystem." The natural ecosystem began to disappear with the advent of forest fire suppression in the early 1900's.

John Butruille, Forest Service Regional Forester characterizes the forest health problem as "...a world-class environmental problem." Butruille sums it up by saying "I have never seen anything like it in all my years with the Forest Service."

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