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ALTERNATIVE FACTS

Forest Service releases predicted timber harvests for new alternatives

By Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle

In response to public comments calling for increased timber harvests and pace and scale of forest restoration, the Forest Service developed two new alternatives that will be included in the forthcoming Blue Mountains Forest Plan revision final environmental impact statement.

The plans are intended to be updated every 10-15 years, with the last update occurring in 1990, and the Blue Mountains plan covers the Malheur, Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla national forests.

Although some of the details of the new alternatives will not be released until the environmental impact statement is finalized, which is expected near the end of June, the Forest Service has released timber harvest volume estimates for the new alternatives.

Alternative E Modified and Alternative E Modified-Departure each increase the pace and scale of restoration, and timber harvests, beyond Alternative E, which was released with five other alternatives in the draft environmental impact statement in 2014.

After the original alternatives were released, about 1,000 people provided feedback, some acrimoniously, at public meetings. The Forest Service received 1,000 letters with 4,000 comments from people upset about the agency's proposed plan to manage public lands.

Malheur National Forest Supervisor Steve Beverlin said, after the first round of soliciting comments in 2014 — and hearing from people, “You didn't hear what we were saying” — the Forest Service hosted 24 more meetings throughout 2015 to assess more comments on grazing, access, wilderness, pace and scale of restoration and timber volumes.

“The unique part of this plan was that we basically spent that year to re-engage,” Beverlin said. “We used responses we got in that, plus the comments we got in 2014 to craft two new alternatives. ... We think those two new alternatives much more accurately reflect the concerns that were raised, the needs and desires of the local public, and still appropriately manage the resources in a sustainable way for future generations.”

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Steve Beverlin

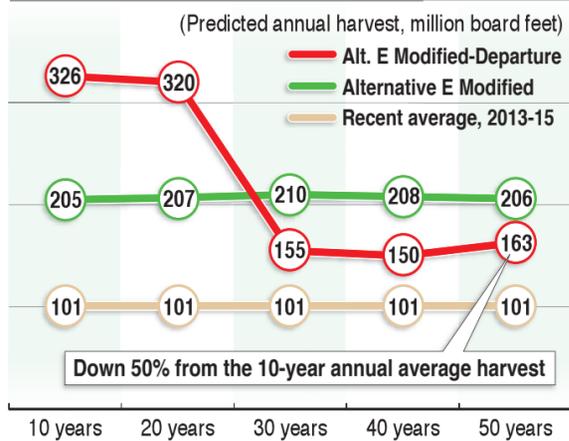


The Malheur Lumber Co. mill in John Day May 1. Two new alternatives in the U.S. Forest Service's Blue Mountains Forest Plan revision address comments from the public to increase the pace and scale of restoration for forest resilience and the flow of forest products to mills.

New alternative harvest volumes

(For Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests.)

Alternative E Modified-Departure includes a temporary suspension of a National Forest Management Act "non-declining flow" requirement to limit harvests to a volume that can be harvested annually in perpetuity.



Source: U.S. Forest Service Sean Hart and Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group



The Malheur Lumber Co. mill.

Eagle photos/Rylan Boggs

Senate passes bill to allow removal of guns

By Peter Wong
Capital Bureau

People deemed at “imminent risk” of killing themselves or injuring others could have their guns taken away under a bill the Oregon Senate passed Monday.

Senate Bill 719, which goes to the House, was approved largely along party lines, 17-11.

But 16 Democrats were joined in support by Republican Brian Boquist of Dallas, who lost his oldest son and Navy veteran to suicide more than a year ago — and three soldiers under his Army command to suicide after they returned from the Iraq War more than a decade ago.

Ten Republicans were joined in opposition by Democrat Betsy Johnson of Scappoose. Two others were absent.

“Everyone wants to promote this as a gun bill. It's not,” said Boquist, the bill's main floor manager.

“We want to make sure individuals do not lose their gun rights. We are trying to help family members help those individuals.”

The bill allows members of a person's immediate household — or police at their request — to seek an “extreme risk protection order” from a judge to deny possession of firearms if the person is at imminent risk of suicide or a danger to others.

The judge would have to decide on the request that day or the next judicial day, but the petitioner would have to present “clear and convincing evidence” to justify the order. A person would have 30 days to request a hearing to rescind an order.

“We are targeting only those individuals who want to commit suicide and unfortunately may murder their spouse, their children or their roommate in the house,” Boquist said. “This is not some broad, sweeping confiscation like you see in Breitbart News.”

His reference was to the website formerly run by Steve Bannon, now chief strategist for President Donald Trump.

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City manager proposes solution to housing woes

By Rylan Boggs
Blue Mountain Eagle

When Nick and Harmony Piazza moved to Grant County, they couldn't find a house.

Try as they might, everything was either outside of their price range or too small to raise a family. Nick had graduated from Grant Union and moved back to work at Blue Mountain Hospital. Despite having a steady job, he was unable to find a desirable house in John Day to buy or rent.

Former John Day city councilman Louis Provencher said he faced the same problem when he moved to John Day in the 1980s.

The continuing problem is also affecting local businesses.

“I've lost two manager candidates after the interview process because of this,” Blue Mountain Hospital CEO Derek Daly said. “They would have accepted the job and would have



Former city councilor Louis Provencher

moved here but simply couldn't find housing.”

John Day City Manager Nick Green presented a proposal to fix the housing problem and boost the city's tax base during a April 25 city council meeting.

Potential John Day residents are presented with smaller, older homes and depressed market values for new homes, Green said. He suggested re-



A for sale sign in John Day.

ducing regulations and fees for new homes, incentivizing buyers with cash and making home construction more cost effective by building multiple homes simultaneously.

While the proposal was generally well received, there was some hesitation and push-back from city council members and the public at the meeting. Provencher said he was not in support of using city dollars for private homes.

He said financial lending should be left to experts and established lending institutions.

Councilor Paul Smith said the idea was fine conceptually, but he had reservations about using city funds as cash incentives for home builders. He said maintaining the city's infrastructure and foundation was a priority.

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