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Forest Service axes 21-inch rule

New guidelines still call for retention of old trees but will be more flexible

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

The U.S. Forest Service lifted its ban on logging large trees in six national forests in Central and Eastern Oregon, removing a 25-year-old rule on cutting trees larger than 21 inches in diameter.

The new rule still emphasizes the protection of old trees but will not prohibit the removal of some larger trees in certain situations.

The 21-inch rule was part of the Eastside Screens, a set of standards

which came to be in 1995 to protect wildlife habitat and water quality on nearly 10 million acres of public land. Although approved as an interim measure, they remained in effect for all or parts of the Malheur, Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman, Ochoco, Deschutes and Fremont-Winema national forests.

Emily Platt, Forest Service team leader, said the agency had amended the Eastside Screens 24 times throughout that period because the 21-inch standard limited the ability to restore forests in Eastern Oregon and Southeast Washington.

"We wanted to find a better way to be able to restore these forests with a policy that was updated to incorporate current science," she said.

In an executive summary published

on Friday, the Forest Service noted that it would move from the 21-inch standard to a guideline that emphasizes the "recruitment" of old and large trees.

The Forest Service defines an old tree as over 100 years old and a large tree as 30 inches for grand and white fir and 21 inches for any other species of tree.

The new guidelines prioritize old trees. When there are not enough old trees to develop late and old structure conditions, larger, fire-tolerant trees are to be protected.

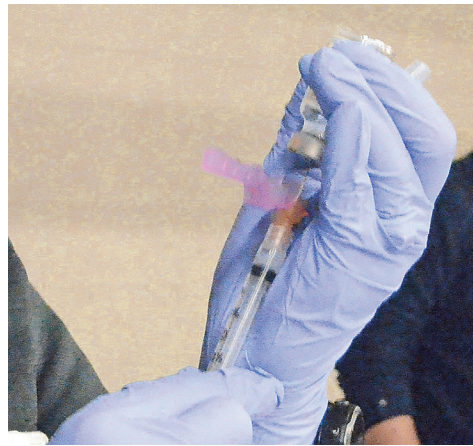
A standard to a guideline

The new guidelines will allow Forest Service managers more flexibility. While the guidelines expect the man-

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Eagle file photo
A view of the Strawberry Mountains from Keeney Fork Road on the Malheur National Forest in Grant County.



Rebekah Rand, director of emergency management services at Blue Mountain Hospital District, gets a vaccine shot ready Friday.

VACCINATION CIRCULATION

Grant County planned to vaccinate 400 people with the first dose by today



Eagle photos/Steven Mitchell

Cindy Baker, Grant County Health Department staff member, answers paperwork questions Friday as the health department and Blue Mountain Hospital vaccinated educators and health care workers in the county.

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant County planned to have 400 people vaccinated for COVID-19 by Wednesday.

Kimberly Lindsay, Grant County's public health administrator, said the county would likely be out of first doses of the two-shot series this week.

"We will continue to receive more vaccines, but at this time, it looks like they will be boosters shots only," she said.

Lindsay said she does not know when the county will receive more of the first doses.

Jessica Winegar, health department clinic manager, said the county vaccinated 88 people Friday at the Grant County Fairgrounds Pavilion.

Lindsay said the vaccine event was a "closed pod," meaning the event was not public.

She said people in Phase 1a, including health care workers, care center residents, staff and medical providers showed up Friday, along with county educators. She said

some had changed their mind and decided they wanted the vaccine after all or had not received or responded to the health department's notifications that they could get the vaccine.

Anytime someone from a previous phase decides to get the vaccine, they take priority, Lindsay said.

Lindsay said they ended up having to turn people away Friday, and she anticipates having to turn people away at vaccination clinic that was planned Tuesday past press time for

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Dollar General breaks ground

Grand opening set for this summer

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Construction of the anticipated Dollar General store in John Day is underway.

Angela Petkovic from Dollar General Public Relations said the store opening is slated for summer 2021, but construction progress may alter the date.

The construction of the 9,100-square foot store is taking place across the highway from Napa Auto Parts, in between Timbers Bistro and the John Day Trailer Park, at 700 W. Main Street.

"When completed, we look forward to serving the John Day community in our new location and to demonstrate our commitment to being a positive business partner and good neighbor," Petkovic said. "Our customers are at the center of all that we do, and meeting customers' needs is Dollar General's top priority when choosing store locations."

The store will employ approximately six to 10 employees, depending on the individual needs of the store, according to Petkovic.

Along with the services and items available at Dollar General, they also provide communities with access to The Dollar General Literacy Foundation.

"Dollar General is deeply involved in the communities it serves and is an ardent supporter of literacy and education through the (DGLF), which awards grants each year to nonprofit organizations, schools and libraries within a 15-mile radius of a Dollar General store or distribution center..." Petkovic said. "Since its inception

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