

# Forest

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general approach to determining land uses. The Forest Service's Tom Montoya said these administrative recommendations go through a review process under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Trulock said in a Feb. 11 phone call the goal was to come to a collective understanding about the Forest Service's process: Even if there are no additional set-asides, they still have to go through the analysis to get to that point and make that recommendation.

Another topic the subcommittee discussed was inventoried roadless areas. The 2001 rule established 58 million acres that mapped out areas within the inventory that prohibit permanent roads.

Trulock said the decision-making elevates "quickly" to the regional forester level and up to the chief in order to propose something within an inventoried roadless area.

Trulock said a proposal such as a commercial timber harvest is complicated for supervisors to propose within a roadless area without a "robust and pretty extensive analysis." On the other hand, he said getting authorized to use bulldozers in a roadless area to corral a quickly growing fire is a rapid process.

"There are mechanisms in place for firefighting that allow us to have more latitude, that save wilderness," he said.

Trulock said it is possible to get authorization for forest restoration, such as non-commercial thinning and other activities that do not involve tree removal. Trulock said there is not enough timber value to warrant things like helicopter logging.

Overall, Trulock said the discussions have been "a little slow," but the meetings have been positive regarding transparency.

"A lot of what led to the BIC was to gain some transparency that was maybe lacking in the last forest plan revision process amongst all the government agencies," he said. "And so I think that has been going really well."



Eagle file photo

The trail from Forest Road 1370 to Monument Rock passes between numerous large rock outcroppings.

Owens said there needs to be a balance between set-asides areas and "working forest" areas.

"The direction they continue to take is to take more forest out because it qualifies as a scenic river in somebody's mind," or a wilderness area, or a roadless area, he said.

He said the plan needs to designate part of the forest as a "working forest" for communities like Grant County to prosper, even if it's at a reduced scale from where it used to be in the 1980s and 1990s.

"We need that working forest to be able to have some commercial harvest, have some mushroom picking and have some resource extraction from it that is sustainable," he said.

He said, if the forests remain "locked up," communities will be

unable to manage wildfires.

"I believe 90% of the communities far and wide want a fire-resilient forest," Owens said.

He said there are areas within the forests where fire restoration crews cannot reach to remove the fuels.

"Whether it be a pre-commercial or commercial harvest or wilderness areas," he said, "there is a tinderbox."

### 'It is semantics'

Scheeler, the tribal wildlife manager, said most of the travel and access restrictions they are talking about could allow them to get in, do management activities and remove fiber from the forest to reduce wildfires.

Scheeler said the Forest Service put the travel management plan on

hold within the Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur national forests. Still, he said, there are issues within the forest plan that have implications for travel and access, including elk security habitat.

He said they have created "surrogates" out of some of the future wildlife "desired conditions" that have been challenging.

"The open roads on the forests and access for vehicle travel is a really big issue in some communities with some individuals, and it's very emotional, and it's become highly politicized," he said.

Scheeler said he has worked for 25 years on the elk issue on the Blue Mountain Elk Initiative. He said the problem is "real" and "compelling" for private landowners who have elk pushed on to their land. But, he said,

for people who do not want to lose their favorite hunting area or firewood spot, they get pushback.

He said trying to find common ground on that issue has been "very challenging." Again, Scheeler said that wilderness and set-asides are used as a "surrogate" for access and travel, which has been put on the back burner pending completion of the forest plan.

He said the county commissioners have "leaned in" and better understand the issue, and they have found "reasonable compromises."

He said, when talking about desired conditions, they are not talking about anything specific. Scheeler said so much of these talks is how they say things to one another.

He said there is a lack of trust in how the plan will look once it hits the ground, but the group has been working hard to come together to the extent that they can agree on those issues.

He said he believes that the group will come to some "reasonable recommendations" on set-asides and the language in the "desired conditions."

Scheeler said he had not spoken to Owens and that they would speak on the steering committee level "shortly." He said, so far, there have not been any real "non-starters." He said it is just a matter of articulating their concerns to the Forest Service so that they are understood.

Scheeler said, when they talk about desired conditions, they are not far apart.

"It is semantics," Scheeler said.

He said, when they are talking from the "30,000-foot level," there is a lot of general agreement.

Scheeler said everybody would like to see elk on public lands where they're accessible for both hunters and people who want to view wildlife. Nobody, he said, wants to see elk pushed off onto private lands and into agricultural areas where they will cause economic and social problems.

He said the way the desired conditions are written would have implications that they don't know how they will play out.

"So there's a general fear," he said, "that it may impact somebody's sacred cow and that it's not in their interest."

# Leather

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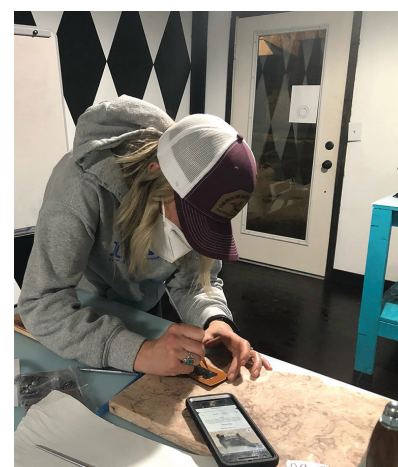
ciated with leatherwork, according to Kehrberg.

"You can show up and use our tools and get your feet wet or get back into it to see if you want to make the investment in your own tools," Kehrberg said.

Seeing the students have fun, talk with each other and put creativity into a project has made it worth it for her, she said.

More beginning tooling classes and more types of leather classes are planned, and the center is seeking additional tools and instructors. Kehrberg said anyone interested should contact her or center Director Kim Randleas.

"As we get more tools and some sewing machines, we'll be able to offer more classes," Kehrberg said. "If anybody has tools to donate or would like to make a monetary donation, that would be fantastic as the program grows."



Contributed photo

Lindy Cruise creates a leather patch for a hat based on a picture from her phone during a leather class Feb. 19.

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