

Agenda Item No.:	6
Work Plan:	State Forests Work Plan
Topic:	Land Acquisition for the Gilchrist State Forest
Presentation Title:	Benefits and Values of Managing Eastside State Forests
Date of Presentation:	April 22, 2015
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### **SUMMARY**

This informational agenda topic provides an overview of State Forests operations in eastern Oregon.

### **CONTEXT**

- Gilchrist Forest acquisition is expected to be complete in summer 2015 with all approvals and financing in place.
- Development of this acquisition began in the summer of 2008 and is near completion.
- Goals of acquisition are to conserve working forests, generate revenue for Klamath County and to provide for other social and environmental values through integrated management of these lands.

### **BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

State Forests managed lands in eastern Oregon provide many benefits to Oregonians in the form of jobs, recreation, income to the county that support vital programs and many other social, economic, and environmental benefits and values. The Gilchrist and Sun Pass State Forests are in the Eastern Oregon Area and are managed by the Klamath-Lake District. These are relatively small forests located amongst a large, predominately federal forest landscape.

The Sun Pass State Forest is located about 40 miles north of Klamath Falls and includes other scattered tracts. The first acquisition of the Sun Pass occurred in 1943 and has expanded since then. Most of the Sun Pass consists of uneven-aged, mixed conifer stands dominated by ponderosa Pine with smaller cohorts of sugar pine and white pine.

The Gilchrist is located about 45 miles south of Bend. This acquisition began in 2008 and is the first new State Forest in nearly 70 years. The area is dominated mainly by lodgepole pine and Ponderosa pine with smaller cohorts of douglas-fir. Due to previous management many of the stands are relatively young. These are dry, fire prone forests that benefit greatly from active management and are an integral part of eastern Oregon forest landscape.

- Sun Pass State Forest is 20,804 acres with an additional 12,928 acres of scattered parcels (total 33,732 acres).
- Gilchrist State Forest is currently 43,200 acres. The final acquisition will add 28,472 acres (total 71,672 acres).
- Total of all Klamath-Lake District managed forest lands is 105,404 acres.

Management focuses are quite different between the two State Forests. Management of the Sun Pass focuses on partial cut harvest that produces volume and generates revenue. Current priorities for the Gilchrist are active management to promote the growth of this young forest, fuels reduction for fire prevention, and density management for long term forest health. The purchase of the Gilchrist ensures that these lands remain working forests. Recreation throughout these areas are disperse and open use.

5-year average of Klamath-Lake District State Forests Management:

- 1,039 acres of partial cut harvest annually
- 53 acres of regeneration havest annually
- 6.7 MMBF harvested annually
- 362 acres reforested annually
- 3,000 acres treated with small log thinning annually in the Gilchrist State Forest.

A number of forest operations have occurred in the Gilchrist with the long term target of treating 3,000 acres annually. The main objectives are fuels reduction and density management without jeopardizing future sustainable harvest. These stands have grown into an overstocked state that is not sustainable. Current forest conditions present substantial risks associated with insect outbreaks, disease and fire. Reducing stocking levels will create healthy insect and disease resistant stands, which will also provide a fire resistant buffer for the adjacent communities. Most of the operations cut smaller diameter trees, skid all the material to the landing, chip the material on site, then haul biomass product to various destinations. A small percentage of this volume is removed as saw log.

The Gilchrist State Forest is a proven example of successful small diameter logging for fuels reduction, density management and revenue generation. We estimate that we receive \$450/acre in timber stand impovement work accomplished with these operations. These operations also generate for Klamath county, approximately five times more revenue compared to what would have been received in property taxes.

The Department works in conjunction with a number of collaborative partners including Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon State University extension, Crescent Water Supply, Walker Range Forest Protective Association and Gilchrist High School to ensure successful management of the forest. Fire protection is provided by Walker Range Forest Protective Association for the Gilchrist State Forest and two scattered parcels while the Klamath-Lake District protects other lands within the Protection District boundaries.

The Department of Forestry plans to complete the purchase of the remaining Gilchrist State Forest parcels owned by The Conservation Fund by the fall of 2015. The \$5.2 million bond sale occurred in March 2015. These funds will be available shortly thereafter. The Department is completing the final steps in the Forest Legacy process. This should be completed in June at which time the \$3 million Forest Legacy grant will become available. Final closing on the property is expected to occur in September 2015.

The April 23 field tour will include three stops: the first stop discusses the current state funding package (\$2.88) and provides a vision for the next package (\$6.05) of state funding on federal forests, stop two will provide a brief overview of the Gilchrist State Forest, and the last stop will show a fuels reduction project and how the project is intertwined with the community.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Informational item.