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## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: June 1, 2004

## Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management - Biscuit Fire Recovery Project – Release of Final Environmental Impact Statement

**Medford, OR** – The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest and the Medford District of the Bureau of Land Management announce the release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Biscuit Fire Recovery Project.

“Our proposal is an investment in the land and people”, said Scott Conroy, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest Supervisor. “We are investing in growing trees, restoring fire to its natural role in the forest, protecting communities and old growth from wildfire, and capturing opportunities to provide jobs and wood for America. This recovery plan provides opportunities for all – including those who seek solitude; clean, clear water; abundant wildlife; and jobs.”

Alternative 7 is the preferred alternative. The FEIS is available on the web at [www.biscuitfire.com](http://www.biscuitfire.com). Hardcopies of the FEIS will be mailed June 2.

Acting upon a wilderness proposal recommended by Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski, the Forest Supervisor supports consideration of 64,000 acres of lands adjacent to the Kalmiopsis Wilderness for their outstanding wilderness character.

The FEIS preferred alternative protects communities and habitats by building 300 miles of fuel management zones, reforesting 31,000 acres, restoring 700 acres of meadows, implementing 83,000 acres of prescribed burns, and completing 70 miles of road work including closure, decommissioning, and stabilization. The proposal calls for removing 370 million board feet of fire-killed wood, which is enough to build 24,000 homes. The proposal to remove fire-killed wood is restricted to 4% of the project area. Helicopters will be used to minimize impacts and reduce temporary road construction (5 miles). No permanent roads will be built.

The preferred alternative also includes a research plan for a Landscape Management Experiment on Restoring Late-Successional Forest Habitat. The management experiment was developed to provide scientific information for producing late-successional forest habitat as part of restoration after a fire. This would be the largest replicated experiment in the Northwest at 36,000 acres and allows comparisons at the scale used in forest management. Little scientific information currently exists on this topic or at this scale.

Over 23,000 comment letters were received on the Draft EIS. The comments and fieldwork resulted in changes between the Draft EIS and the Final EIS, including reduced salvage acres, reduced timber volumes, and additional analysis.

Forest Supervisor Conroy said that during the preparation of the FEIS other federal agencies provided valuable comments and contributed to the consultation process. "Their input was an important part of helping us make changes in the final EIS and in our preferred alternative," said Conroy. "We appreciate all of the input we have received from the other agencies and from the public."

"It has been a pleasure to work with our sister agencies on this very important project. We will continue to work together as an interagency partner and look forward to implementing the final decision on the ground," said Tim Reuwsaat, Medford District Manager.

"We appreciate the work the FS and BLM have done to protect and conserve salmon in this project," said Ken Phippen, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Service. "The partnerships and the work in this FEIS show the commitment these agencies have in working together to develop long-term ecological management strategies."

"We support this project and will continue to work with the Forest Service in finding ways to minimize and avoid impacts to listed species and their habitats," said Craig Tuss of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

"EPA is very encouraged by discussions with the Forest Service on proposed changes to the preferred alternative that would reduce impacts to water quality and aquatic resources," commented Dave Powers. "We look forward to reviewing the final EIS and working with the Forest Service and BLM as the records of decision are finalized."

The Forest Service and BLM will prepare and sign separate Records of Decisions (RODs) for the lands they administer. The RODs will be issued after the official notice of availability of the Final EIS is published in the Federal Register on June 4, 2004.

Forest Supervisor Conroy requested an Emergency Situation Determination for the salvage portion of the project. If granted, there will be a 30-day period between the Final EIS and RODs, and then salvage may be implemented immediately after the decisions are signed. The Forest Service will issue 3 RODs, segregated on the basis of different management objectives. All Forest Service projects are subject to appeal under 36 CFR 215. All BLM projects are subject to protest under 43 CFR subpart 5003 –Administrative Remedies.

The Biscuit Fire Recovery FEIS is available at "<http://www.biscuitfire.com/>". Copies or CDs of the FEIS can be requested by e-mail at: "[r6\\_biscuit@fs.fed.us](mailto:r6_biscuit@fs.fed.us)", or by calling (541) 471-6574.

The Biscuit Fire, located in southern Oregon and northern California began on July 2002 and reached 499,965 acres in size; on approximately half the burned acres, greater than 75 percent of the vegetation was destroyed. One of Oregon's largest fires in recorded history, the Biscuit Fire burned most of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/rogue-siskiyou/news/2004/news06-01-2004-biscuit-fire-feis-release.shtml>