

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Mt. Emily Recreation Area (MERA) was purchased by Union County in November 2008 for its recreational values and resource management opportunities. The acquisition was accomplished through a combination of grants from Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department ATV Grant Program (\$4.4 million) and the Blue Mountain Habitat Restoration Grant Program (\$250,000). The 3,669 acres is 2 miles north of the City of La Grande and extends from the low foothills adjacent to the Grande Ronde Valley floor upward to the steep slopes and west side of Mt. Emily. The terrain is extremely varied including grassy lowland meadows, flat benches, and steep cliffs with a mixture of rangeland and forestland. Forestland soils predominantly include Tolo silt loam and Hall ranch stony loam, some of the best timber producing soils in the County. The property had been managed for commercial timber production and livestock grazing use. Boise (formerly Boise Cascade) owned and managed the property for approximately 35 years. Boise sold their timber land holdings to Colter Ridge Properties, Inc. (sometimes and hereinafter referred to as Forest Capital Partners, LLC) in 2005. Forest Capital Partners, LLC evaluated their timberland holdings and did not find this property met their long-term objectives. Community concerns were elevated when speculation suggested the property could be divided into 15 residential properties and public access denied. The surrounding community has historically used this property for multiple recreational activities, including but not limited to ATV and other motorized uses, hunting, hiking, mushrooming, jogging, biking and horseback riding. In addition, the property includes the Grande Ronde Bowmen archery range.

The County negotiated a Purchase & Sale Agreement with Forest Capital Partners, LLC and pursued grant funding. Local controversy led to an advisory vote that resulted in 62% of Union County voters supporting County acquisition.

Shortly after acquisition, the Union County Board of Commissioners formed and appointed two Mt. Emily Recreation Area Advisory Committees comprised of motorized users, non-motorized users, and resource oriented management agencies. The Advisory Committees provide a public forum and make recommendations on planning, development, management and maintenance to the County Board of Commissioners.

1.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Plan

The plan purpose is to: 1) identify the MERA management objectives recognizing the current ecological, social, economic and political environment; 2) provide the formal program and policy guidelines

that will direct the MERA short term and long term management and use; and 3) develop strategies for implementation of various management components.

The overall objectives are as follows:

- Provide and promote safe, diverse and enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities while minimizing detrimental impacts upon natural, cultural and visual resources and neighboring properties.
- Protect, manage and enhance natural, cultural and visual resources, including maintaining and promoting healthy ecosystems and their processes.
- Define implementation policies, programs and responsibilities as well as provide implementation steps where appropriate.
- Enhance and preserve wildlife habitat where feasible.

A long term goal is that the MERA will be financially self sustaining subject to sustainable recreation and resource management practices.

1.2 Plan Scope and Organization

The Master Plan for the MERA addresses three areas- 1) a review of existing conditions, including natural, cultural and recreational uses; 2) identification of management plans necessary for short and long term development and management; and 3) establishing review procedures for future project proposals and long-term monitoring.

1.3 Public and Agency Involvement

Extensive public and agency involvement was utilized prior to and following property acquisition to ensure full representation of various interests in MERA. Two Advisory Committees were established to provide resource expertise and diverse user input into the preparation of the resource management plan. The Advisory Committees met monthly during the planning process and participated in public meetings to establish critical information regarding the property and to assist with identifying issues for the management plans.

Public and agency participation will continue to play a major role in long-term property management. The Advisory Committees will review and make recommendations on future project proposals. The County Board of Commissioners will hold public meetings to evaluate future recommendations and proposals and make final decisions.

2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

2.1 Overview

The Mt. Emily Recreation Area (MERA) is about 3700 acres on the east face and western uplands of Mt. Emily adjacent to rural residential development on the south and east and large tract private and public (US Forest Service) land on the west and north.

Historically, this property was owned by private commercial timber companies such as Boise Cascade Corporation and managed for timber production and seasonal livestock grazing use. The previous owners allowed public motorized and non-motorized recreational uses, as well as leasing 40 acres to the Grande Ronde Bowmen for an archery range.

As discussed above, Union County purchased MERA in November 2008 to perpetuate public recreational uses and implement sustainable natural resource management practices. Unfortunately, the County was only able to purchase one third of the property's timber volume. Forest Capital Partners, LLC retained the remaining two-thirds of timber volume and they began timber harvest in three of the eight timber units in 2009. The remaining units will be harvested over the next 2 to 3 years.

The County has pursued this Master Plan utilizing a Motorized Advisory Committee for the west portion of the property and a Non-motorized Advisory Committee for the east portion. The Advisory Committees have developed improvement and trail system recommendations through a public process. The recommendations are advanced to the County Board of Commissioners who make all final decisions for MERA.

This Master Plan is the product of the Advisory Committees', Public's and County Board of Commissioner's efforts and it is intended to guide future development and maintenance of the MERA.

2.2 Cultural Resources

Union County contacted Boise Cascade Corp. and Forest Capital Partners, LLC prior to property acquisition and no known cultural resources had been identified on the property. However, recognizing the County would be pursuing development activities such as constructing parking lots, a campground and recreational trails, Union County contracted with Kathryn M. Boula, Cultural & Natural Resources Consultant, to prepare "Proposal for Cultural Resources Investigations, Mt. Emily Recreation Area, Union County, Oregon"- April, 2009.

The County has also received a hand drawn map from Dennis Griffin, State Archaeologist with the State Historical Preservation Office, that identifies “high probability area[s] that should be surveyed” (see Map A).

Ms. Boula’s report explains that Phase I pedestrian surveys will be conducted in Dr. Griffin’s high probability areas where development activities are proposed; such as new trails, trailheads and campgrounds.

With projects proposed for 2009 and 2010 the County again contracted with Ms. Boula to prepare “2009 Archaeological Surveys on the Mt. Emily Recreation Area, Union County, Oregon- April 2010” which includes a draft survey report and four site reports. These Survey Areas were identified and evaluated as follows:

- Area 1- 53.4 acres- ATV Fox Hill Staging Area, ATV training area, campground & parking lot
- Area 2- 15 acres- Onion Flat
- Area 3- 0.25 acres- Gravesites above Haywire Creek

Area 1 includes a 10 acre area on the south side of Fox Hill Road in a swale associated with a spring and intermittent stream. This area is west of the kids learners loop and not planned for any development activities. This area includes an old homestead site and surface lithic scatter.

Area 2 Onion Flats (11 acres) is identified to include an extensive prehistoric lithic procurement (quarry) site. This area is northeast of the campground. No development activities are proposed for this area.

Area 3 Suspected Historical Graves

Three suspected historical graves are identified by three piles of encircled basalt boulders near the MERA west property fence. These sites were not disturbed during logging activities in 2009. No anticipated development activities are proposed for this site.

3.0 MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

Union County purchased the Mt. Emily Recreation Area to provide public multi-use, sustainable recreational opportunities and implement sustainable resource management practices. Individual management plans will be developed, implemented and amended for a wide variety of uses and resource elements.

The following descriptions identify individual management plans for existing and anticipated recreational uses and resource elements. Many of the management plans will be developed in cooperation with the

County's Motorized and Non-motorized Advisory Committees and resource management agencies.

The County acquired MERA using two financial grants- Oregon Parks & Recreation Department ATV Fund and Blue Mt. Habitat Restoration Program. Each funding source included its own approval conditions that have been collectively coordinated. The ATV Fund required the County to include a Conservation Easement on the property guaranteeing long term recreational use. The ATV grant specifies motorized recreation on the property's western portion above the rim and identifies some motorized access through the lower (eastern) portion of the property. The Blue Mt. Habitat Restoration Program entered into an agreement with the County to limit motorized use on the property's east side for reduced wildlife disturbance. These conditions have been integrated into the Motorized and Non-motorized Trail Management Plans.

Each management plan is designed to identify existing conditions, goals and objectives and short-term and long-term plans. The following descriptions provide the purpose and intent for each management plan.

3.1 Master Plan Preparation Process

Shortly after acquisition Union County appointed two advisory committees to investigate, deliberate and make recommendations to the County Board of Commissioners. The Motorized Advisory Committee includes adjacent landowners and members from the following three motorized recreational user classes:

- Class I- ATVs or quads
- Class II- Jeeps & other full size off-road vehicles
- Class III- motorcycles or single-track

The Non-motorized Advisory Committee includes representatives for adjacent landowners, Grande Ronde Bowman Club, mt. bike, horse back and hiking users.

Both committees include the same representatives for adjacent landowners, livestock grazing, US Forest Service, Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, Oregon Department of Forestry and Oregon Parks & Recreation Department.

The Advisory Committees have conducted an extensive public process to develop motorized and non-motorized user opportunities. The Committees' recommendations are reflected in this document and will be advanced to the County Board of Commissioners for formal adoption. The

Advisory Committees will continue their review role as management plans are refined and submitted for adoption.

New recreational proposals are anticipated and the protocol will continue to first require appropriate Advisory Committee review with recommendations to and final action by the County Board of Commissioners.

All Advisory Committee and County Board of Commissioner meetings are advertised in The Observer newspaper and open to the public. An opportunity for public comment is provided on each agenda.

All decisions affecting the MERA will be made in context with the original funding acquisition conditions and the overall goals and objectives of this master plan and individual management plans.

4.0 NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Natural resource management plans address the health and dynamics of the plant and wildlife communities and cultural resources found in the MERA and the preservation of natural geologic features, including natural springs. For purposes of this plan, natural resources management is grouped into six categories: forest management, grazing management, fire management, weed management, wildlife management and cultural resources. Union County's goal is to protect, restore, and maintain the natural resources in the MERA.

4.1 Forest Management Plan

Union County will work with Oregon Department of Forestry to develop a Forest Management Plan (FMP). The FMP will outline a number of tools aimed at the protection, restoration, and maintenance of a healthy, sustainable forest. Forest management including timber harvesting activities will occur on the MERA property in accordance with the Oregon Forest Practices Act and FMP to meet a variety of goals and objectives including:

- To honor community commitments providing sustainable resource management for a healthy forest and to minimize the need for County financial commitments to MERA while at the same time recognizing that the property was purchased with recreational funds with the intention to provide public recreational opportunities.
- To provide for a working, managed forest with a variety of high quality, safe recreation opportunities.

- Stands of trees or other woody species not native to forests of this region may be removed to preserve, perpetuate and interpret natural features that existed historically on MERA.
- Forest management activities including timber harvesting may be necessary to address an insect or disease issue, or to thin the stand for better growth.
- Trees may need to be harvested to restore visitor access by clearing trails and other facilities, and to reduce fuel loads and to salvage commercial timber following a storm event.
- Forest operations will be conducted in accordance with Oregon Forest Practice Act requirements.

One of the management objectives in conducting a timber harvest on the MERA will be to aid in the restoration and preservation of natural communities within the property. Timber harvest is a tool among a set of resource management activities the County will use to pursue its obligations for resource protection and restoration. During timber harvest activities there may be short term impacts on visitors– trails and other nearby facilities may be closed during the harvest or parking areas being used for staging equipment may not be available for public use. Long term timber harvest benefits for visitors include the following: timber removed will improve access and safety for visitors along trails and other facilities, and restored native communities will enhance visitor experiences and revenue generated from commercial forest management activities can potentially enhance the infrastructure and economic viability of MERA.

Prescribed burning or biomass removal may be used as a tool to restore the natural burning cycle, and to decrease fuel loads, improve habitat for native species that evolved with periodic fires, and control exotic plant species.

Other issues that will be included in the FMP are:

1. Recreation and Tourism
2. Forest Resource Management
3. Sustainability
4. Commercial Forest Products
5. Fire
6. Water Resources
7. Information and Education
8. Adjacent Lands
9. Scenic values & visual aesthetics

4.2 Grazing Management: Plan

Milo Hibbert and Wayne Waite entered into a Grazing Lease Agreement on June 1, 2007 with Forest Capital Partners, LLC that included four renewal options. Union County agreed to honor this Agreement which will expire December 31, 2011. The Leasees are authorized to run up to 424 AUMs from June 1 to October 15 each year. This lease includes rules and conditions that will be incorporated into a Grazing Management Plan.

Union County will implement a Grazing Management Plan (GMP) which is intended as a landscape-level management tool. While other tools such as controlled burns and chemical spraying (to control invasive weeds) will also be used, livestock grazing will be the primary management tool for MERA.

As a management tool, cattle grazing, when conducted properly, can have the following benefits:

- Reduce fuel load for potential fires
- Improves grass regeneration
- Improves habitat for many animal and plant species
- Reduces encroachment of noxious weedy species, and undesirable types of plants
- Improves maintenance of grasslands and forestland diversity

Goals addressed in the Grazing Management Plan will include:

- Minimize land degradation from trespassing, trash, human and animal waste, and soil erosion
- Enhance woodlands and understory
- Maintain & enhance corrals and fencing
- Improve & develop livestock water
- Protect and enhance wildlife habitat
- Improve forage production and condition of existing Residual Dry Matter (RDM)
- Minimize soil erosion
- Improve riparian zone management

Revenue raised from the grazing lease fees will be used for property improvements and property taxes. The Grazing Management Plan will be a “living document” and the management strategies will be reassessed as conditions and land uses change.

4.3 Fire Management Plan

Union County and the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) will maintain a Fire Management Plan that details fire management guidelines for operational procedures and values to be protected and/or enhanced. The Fire Management Plan for the MERA will provide guidance on preparedness, prescribed fire, wildland fire, and prevention. Values that will be considered in the Fire Management Plan include protection of neighboring private properties and resources, effects of burning on habitats/biota, and firefighter safety. MERA resources include properties, structures, cultural resources, scenic and visual resources, and wildlife including endangered, threatened, and special concern species, and their associated habitats. The Fire Management Plan will be reviewed periodically to ensure that the fire program is conducted in accordance with local and state fire goals and objectives. Recreation access is very important and the county will work with ODF to develop strategies which will still allow recreational use and access. The county will take measures to help reduce fire risks from recreational uses and implement measures such as law enforcement, education, signing, mapping and on-site fuel reductions to minimize fire risk. There are times during the fire season where fire danger may require public use restrictions. Extreme fire danger or lack of adequate fire fighting resources may require suspension of use.

Fire Management Objectives:

Considerations

- Fire is an essential part of maintaining native biotic communities.
- Prescribed fire can have positive effects on vegetation and wildlife when conducted during the appropriate burning conditions, time of year, and plant phenology, using the proper techniques.
- Uncontrolled wildland fire has negative impacts (damage to neighboring properties, health and safety, etc.)

Fire Management Objectives (General)

- Protect life and resources / property.
- Use prescribed fire for hazard fuel reduction and habitat improvement.

Fire Management Objectives (Specific)

- Prevent human-caused wildland fires.
- Safely suppress all wildland fires using strategies and tactics appropriate to safety considerations, suppression costs and values at risk.
- Provide for and protect habitat for wildlife, especially endangered, threatened, and species of concern.

- Use prescribed fire to reduce hazardous fuels and improve habitat conditions.
- Educate the public regarding fire management and wildfire prevention.

4.3.1 Fire Prevention

Union County and ODF will cooperatively manage recreational access and fire prevention practices. The goal is to allow the maximum amount of safe recreational access during the higher use summer months while increasing fire prevention and education measures as fire risk escalates.

Union County and ODF signed a Fire Prevention Agreement in August 2009 that regulates motorized use on MERA during an ODF declared fire season. This Agreement will remain in effect until amended as conditions warrant.

Annually the County will need to obtain an ODF "Permit to Operate Power Driven Equipment" for maintenance and improvement projects using power equipment- chainsaws, backhoes, SWECO, etc. ODF will be notified of annual listed activities and ODF will provide fire prevention information to operators.

The County will take measures to help reduce fire risks from recreational uses and implement measures such as law enforcement, education, signing, mapping and on-site fuel reductions to minimize fire risk. There are times during the fire season where fire danger may require public use restrictions. Extreme fire danger or lack of adequate fire fighting resources may require suspension of use.

Each summer Oregon Department of Forestry declares fire season which places extra restrictions on access on forestland protected by ODF, such as Mt. Emily.

The next step in fire prevention after fire season is in effect and wildland fire risk becomes more elevated is to declare a Regulated Use Closure which commonly includes the following restrictions:

1. Prohibition of smoking while traveling, except in vehicles on improved roads, in boats on the water, and at designated locations. An "improved road" is a road that has been constructed for automobile use and is maintained clear of flammable debris.
2. Open fires such as campfires, charcoal fires, and cooking fires are allowed only in designated locations. Portable cooking stoves using liquefied or bottled fuels are allowed. Currently there are no

- designated areas on MERA, but potential exists to take the necessary legal fire prevention measures at Fox Hill campground to develop it into an officially recognized designated campground.
3. Restrictions or prohibition of non-industrial use of chainsaws which includes private woodcutting. An axe, shovel, and fire extinguisher of at least 8 oz. capacity must be kept with each saw.
 4. The use of motor vehicles, including motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles, may be prohibited, except on improved roads
 5. Possessing the following fire equipment while traveling in timber, brush or grass areas may be required: one axe at least 26 inches in length, with a head weighing at least 2 pounds; one shovel at least 26 inches in length, with a blade at least 8 inches wide; and one gallon of water or one fully charged and an operational 2.5 lb or larger fire extinguisher.
 6. Prohibition on the use of fireworks.
 7. Prohibition on the cutting, grinding and welding of metal in dry, grassy or forested areas between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.
 8. Prohibition on the use of exploding targets.

The 2009 Fire Prevention Agreement reduces some of the usual Regulated Use Closure restrictions because of the County's prevention and education practices. In light of these extra measures provided by the County to educate, regulate and enforce fire prevention regulation with MERA users, ODF-NEO District has reviewed the restrictions and agrees to allow OHV (ATVs and motorcycles) use under Regulated Use Closure until an extreme fire danger level is reached with the following conditions.

1. OHV use would be limited to designated roads and trails clear of flammable debris. The County would post and actively enforce usage of only open trails meeting these criteria.
2. ATVs and motorcycles would not be required to carry a shovel or a fire extinguisher. The County would inspect and enforce requirements for adequate exhaust systems and spark arrestors on ATVs and motorcycles using MERA.
3. Other regulated Use Closure requirements such as prohibiting smoking while travelling in vehicles (including ATVs and motorcycles) and prohibiting camp fires (including MERA campground(s)) would be in effect under regulated closure.

However when ODF-Northeast Oregon District declares extreme fire danger all OHV use on MERA would be suspended. The only exception to this total suspension will be motorized use including OHVs of the Old Mt. Emily Road. Other improved roads clear of flammable debris may be considered by Union County and ODF following current logging activities. It would be necessary for any vehicles or OHVs (excluding motorcycles) traveling the Old Mt. Emily Road under extreme fire danger to comply with the standard tool requirements of carrying fire fighting equipment of one shovel and one operational 2 ½ pound or larger fire extinguisher. It will be the County's responsibility to inform MERA users when the suspension is in effect.

ODF may also implement as a final precaution an Absolute Closure where all uses are prohibited on forestlands.

4.4 Weed Management Plan

Union County will manage invasive plants and native plant species within the MERA boundaries. Although MERA initially appears to have a relatively low number of exotic species, the property has very high native biological diversity in the riparian areas and meadows where there is considerable potential for spreading weeds.

Exotic species are the greatest threat to maintaining natural diversity. Non-native plants, animals, and pathogens harm the native ecosystem by competing with and displacing native species, accelerating erosion, impacting wetlands, and causing disease and mortality to plants and wildlife. Invasive weed control within the property is needed to preserve and restore the characteristics that are vital to a natural experience. Union County will select and implement the most appropriate weed management tools in the MERA. A comprehensive evaluation of potential impacts associated with exotic plant management will be completed to determine the appropriate methods of weed management for the MERA. Standardized survey, treatment, and monitoring methods will be determined and implemented.

The purpose of the MERA Weed Management Plan is to:

- Decrease weed plant cover and increase native plant cover;
- Document and standardize best management practices to more effectively meet goals and objectives;
- Provide options or tools to managers for reducing the threat to natural and cultural resources;
- Use monitoring to more effectively implement and adapt management practices;

- Determine the minimum tool/treatment or combinations of treatments that restore functioning native plant communities; and
- Restore/maintain native plant communities and wildlife habitat to reduce the County resources dedicated to weed removal.

4.5 Fish and Wildlife Management Plan

Union County will work with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop a fish and wildlife management plan for MERA. The plan will provide the fish and wildlife management direction for the property and will be updated periodically to maintain its value as a flexible working document. It will identify needs and guide activities on the area based on the County's commitment to protect, restore and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats on MERA while providing motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities.

The following goals and objectives directly apply to the fish and wildlife management:

- Provide sustainable recreational opportunities compatible with maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations and habitats.
- Maintain healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations and habitats.
- Protect, restore and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.
- Ensure MERA activities, programs and facilities are consistent with state and local regulations that protect and recover fish, wildlife and their habitats.

Fish and wildlife management concerns, issues and objectives identified by the Advisory Committees are:

- Access/Recreation
 1. Provide multiple use recreational opportunities.
 2. Limit camping to specific areas on Fox Hill.
 3. Regulate the duration of camping stay.
 4. Manage motorized access points.
 5. Manage motorized and non-motorized recreation to minimize wildlife disturbance.
 6. Complete road closures/re-routes where identified.
- Habitat
 1. Identify key habitats and locations.
 2. Identify problems that may affect identified species and prioritize research needed to improve the situations.

3. Describe proposed actions for conservation of the identified wildlife and/or habitats.
 4. Identify how the species and results of the actions will be monitored.
 5. Conduct forest thinning projects and prescribed fires where necessary to improve stand health and reduce fire hazard.
 6. Provide information about wildlife species numbers and distribution.
- Roads
 1. Reduce disturbance to wildlife by abandoning some roads and restricting access to portions of the property by motorized vehicles by placing gates and implementing seasonal closures.
 2. Monitor, survey, and inventory use.
 - Other Issues
 1. Assess value of grazing program for habitat improvement by monitoring changes in plant communities and plant vigor and identify potential improvements to current grazing program.
 2. Keep the public informed in a timely fashion regarding planned actions that affect user groups
 3. Include the public in the decision making process on important issues.

4.6 Cultural Resource Management

Union County contracted with Kathryn M. Boula, Cultural & Natural Resources Consultant, to prepare "Proposal for Cultural Resources Investigations, Mt. Emily Recreation Area, Union County, Oregon"- April 2009.

Future development proposals such as new trails, trailheads and parking lots will follow the protocol identified in Ms. Boula's proposal. Prior to any development excavation activities Phase I pedestrian cultural surveys will be conducted by a qualified consultant for high probability areas. If cultural resources are suspected, a site will be further evaluated or abandoned for an alternative site not containing suspected cultural resources. All cultural resource finds will be reported to the County and the State Historical Preservation Office.

5.0 RECREATIONAL MANAGEMENT

5.1 Motorized Recreation Management

5.1.1 Motorized Trailheads & Staging Areas

A primary motorized trailhead and staging area was developed in 2009 adjacent to Fox Hill Road which includes a parking lot, loading ramp, trailhead access, campground, portable bathrooms, and informational signs and materials. A youth learner's loop and parking area were also constructed in 2009 across Fox Hill Road from the primary staging area. A new ATV training area is proposed west of the primary staging area that will be fenced and gated.

The Fox Hill Road staging area is the primary motorized access for the MERA and provides excellent connectivity to the motorized trail systems on the west portion of the property. This staging area is also intended to provide motorized access for users planning longer rides onto the adjacent US National Forest lands.

Expansion opportunities for all facilities at the Fox Hill Road staging area have been considered and annual monitoring will evaluate the long term need for facilities expansion and improvements. This site is intended to provide day use and overnight camping opportunities. A vault toilet will be added in 2011 in the day use area. Additional restrooms may be needed, especially in the overnight area. Picnic tables and fire pits will also be provided. Campfires currently are not allowed during the summer regulated use period. Based on future desire, fires may be allowed, based on coordination with ODF. Future use may need to expand the Fox Hill staging area to accommodate more riders. This could occur north along Fox Hill Road at the safety training area or to the NE along road #1.

Two secondary motorized trailheads and staging areas have been identified primarily for local users. Owsley Canyon Trailhead is primarily designed for mountain bike, horseback and hiking users. However, ATVs and motorcycles legally authorized will be able to ride up Owsley Canyon Road and access the upper motorized trail system from Mt. Emily or Owsley Canyon County Roads. Unloading motorcycles and ATVs from vehicles will not be allowed here. This is a secondary trailhead, intended to provide access to local residents. Access will be encouraged at Fox Hill Road staging area.

Local motorized users will also be able to access the motorized trail system from Igo Lane. Again, ATVs and motorcycles legally authorized will be able to drive up Igo Lane to the Upper Igo Lane Trailhead, proceed up the Igo Lane extension connecting to Trail No. 9 and 9A and the upper motorized trail system. Unloading motorcycles and ATVs from vehicles will be allowed here, but trailers will not be allowed due to the narrow road and lack of room to turn around. This is a secondary trailhead, intended to

provide access to local residents. Access will be encouraged at Fox Hill staging area.

The County will maintain a map identifying authorized County roads open to legal ATV and motorcycle access.

5.1.2 Trail System

The Mt Emily Recreation Area is currently used extensively by motorized recreationists, such as 4-wheelers (Class I ATV's), 4x4's (jeeps, trucks, etc. Class II ATV's) and motorcycles (Class III). The close proximity to the City of La Grande and the contiguous Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, make the area a popular destination for ATVer's.

Primary use occurs in the spring and summer time. Winter often has the site snowed in. There is also a lot of use in the fall season associated with hunting. The area provides a variety of trails for Class I, II, and III vehicles. Generally, existing roads will be open to all motorized classes. Trails will be built about 3-4 feet wide and designed for ATV's which will also accommodate Class III motorcycles; or just Class III motorcycles with a 1 to 2 foot width.

Miles of trail per square mile will vary based on terrain, location to staging areas, and proximity to private residences. The highest density of trails is located between the top of the ridge and Fox Hill Road and USFS Road 3120. This area has some gentle terrain which would be well suited to OHV trail construction and is located away from most houses. It is important to have short loops around the staging area so kids and beginners can learn and practice riding skills without getting too far from their vehicles or camp. As the distance increases from the trailhead density will decrease.

Most of the motorized trail system is and will be focused on the upper plateau, west of the Mt. Emily rim. This is to protect wildlife resources, provide a buffer from residential areas and avoid erosion on the extremely steep face.

The Master Plan map will guide managers in the development of the trail system. The lines drawn on the map are conceptual and generally show how the trail system can be laid out. The trails have not been ground checked and will be fit to specific trail construction standards. This motorized trail system map demonstrates trail density, approximate miles of trails, connectivity, destinations and loops.

There are many different experiences that motorized trail users are looking for. The concept is to provide an array of opportunities such as

families looking for an easy group ride or several friends looking for a challenge for the day. Since this property is relatively small only so many miles of routes are possible. This entire system could be easily ridden in one day by experienced riders but constructing loops will allow riders to vary the direction and path to create different experiences. Access to the USFS will provide a larger riding area at a much lower trail density.

All trails will be managed to prevent water erosion. Design and maintenance will be in a sustainable manor. Maintenance will need to be provided with hand crews and often times heavy equipment.

The motorized trails system will be a **use-specific designated** trail system, which will help to reduce conflicts, maintain trails in a desired condition, provide specific opportunities, and prevent damage to trails. Each trail in the motorized area will be open to specific use types. Use-specific designed trails will be constructed differently for each use. Trail design can accommodate recreationists' desire for different features. Conflicts can arise from mixing uses. For example narrow motorcycle trails can become ruined if wider ATVs or Jeeps travel on them. Alternatively, a 4wd rock crawl area for jeeps may create conflicts if used by motorcycles. Trail impacts such as bridges, culverts, and tread surface will be considered for each type of use.

Class I (4-wheelers) users will be able to share existing and new roads with Class II (Jeep) and Class III users. In addition, specific Class II trails (3-4 feet wide) will be constructed that can be shared by Class III users. Degree of difficulty will be varied with alternative routes for more complex areas.

Class II users (Jeeps & 4x4's) currently use existing logging roads. Some roads will be modified to increase the features and complexity. New Class II routes will increase connectivity and allow for detours around more difficult features for the novice driver. The area has a relatively rocky soil which holds up better to vehicle traffic. There are also some rock outcroppings and rock quarries, which can be used to create rock crawls for some extreme challenges. There are several areas with bluffs overlooking the Grande Ronde Valley which make nice areas for groups and families to take a break or enjoy lunch. The Class II system will provide trail opportunities which will range from an easy drive in the woods with the family to more challenging rock crawl sections to test the skills of the driver and the capability of the vehicle. Considerations will be given for side-by-side vehicles, which are Class II vehicles, but may be managed slightly different due to size and weight. Mud bogs and extreme hill climbs will not be provided.

Class III (motorcycles) will be able to share all Class I and Class II routes. Specific Class III trails will be constructed (1-2 feet wide) that will be exclusively for Class III users.

5.1.3 Conceptual Motorized Trail System Map

Roads. (Black Lines)

Approximately 15 miles of roads have been identified to remain open. The road numbers are 1, 2(Mt Emily Road), 3, 4 and 8. Some of these roads are gravel while others are natural surface. Generally these roads will not be maintained for a passenger vehicles(cars). People should expect to need a Four Wheel Drive truck or SUV to travel most of these roads. Since ATV Funds purchased most of the property and is helping to pay for maintenance and development, ATV Stickers will be required on all vehicles. All the Roads open to vehicles will also be open to Class I, II and III users.

Class II Trails. (Red Lines)

The concept is to create Four Wheel Drive opportunities throughout the area. There would be multiple loops. One small loop would be within the first two miles of the Fox Hill Staging area. A second loop would be further north on the property. These two loops would also be connected to each other, USFS land and Mt Emily Road with Class II trails. This would allow a vehicle to make smaller loops on top, or continue north on USFS Land or circle back to town via Mt Emily Road. Difficulty levels of the routes would vary. Use of natural rock outcroppings would be used to provide rock crawl areas along the trails. Challenge would be created on the trails with rough surfaces, large water bars and possible obstacles along the route. The intend is to provide some extremely challenging trail opportunities which at times will only allow vehicles to move at 1-2 MPH as they negotiate the trails. Drivers and vehicles would also be able to bypass some difficult sections by using the open roads. Sometimes a bypass route may also be built right at the crux of the trail. There would be approximately 10 miles of trails for open to Class II Vehicles. These vehicles would also have access to the 15 miles of road for a total of approximately 25 miles.

Class I Trails. (Green Lines)

The general layout of these trails would be similar to the Class II trails. Create 2 or 3 loops which connect to each other, to USFS Land and to Mt Emily Road. The ATV trails will also connect to the Igo Lane easement route. There is also potential to create some extra trail networks in the NW portion of the property. The trails would be designed

differently from the Class II trail. Extreme challenge would be less of a focus and creating fun loops would be more of a focus such as having narrow trails which wind through the trees and take you to scenic points. Some of these trails may be suitable for Side-by-Side Vehicles and could be open to that use if deemed by the county. (Currently side-by-side trails all considered Class II vehicle, but due to their small size and low weight, they may be redesignated into a new class.. This would make it easy to evaluate the Class I trails and if appropriate redesignate some of the Class I trails to be open to side-by-side type vehicles.) There would be approximately 11 miles of Class I ATV trails on the top and 4 miles with the Igo Lane Access Routes. ATVs would be allowed to travel on all the Class II Trails and Roads for a total of 40 miles of routes.

Class III Trails (Blue Lines)

A perimeter trail is desired to provide a single track trail around the edge of the property. Since this is on the outside it reduces the amount of trail crossings and will provide a more remote trail experience. The trail would be maintained at a 12-24 inch width. Physical trail barriers may need to be installed to keep Class I vehicles from driving on these routes. The trail might be Most Difficult in a couple of sections but would be designed to allow more novice riders to bypass, either on an easier Class I, II or III trail. There would be approximately 12 miles of trails. There would be a total of approximately 52 miles of trails roads open to Class III Vehicles.

There would also be a couple other riding opportunities around the Fox Hill Staging Area:

Youth Riding Area. This has already been constructed on the southwest side of Fox Hill Road. Modification or expansion may occur based on site monitoring and how well it functions.

MotoCross area. A track approximately ½- 1 mile in length would be developed directly south of the Youth Riding Area. The Youth parking area would need to be expanded. This area would be south facing and would melt from snow very early. Jumps, whoops, and tight corners would provide rider challenge. The trail would be wide enough for both motorcycles and quad and allow riders to pass each other. The track should be designed to allow competitive events.

ATV Safety Training Area. This would be located in the large open area on the east side of the road about a ½ mile past the main parking area. This would only be open to instructors to teach the Class I and III hands-on ATV Safety Training Class, which is mostly focused on youth. Courses mostly occur on weekends and are limited on number of students. Since

these are training sessions, students are riding at slow speeds and sound does not tend to be an issue. Because there is a nearby residence, the limited use of the site will help to reduce sound issues.

5.1.4 Over Snow Use

The County intends to accommodate “over the snow machines” based on snow conditions. Generally, snow conditions less than 18 inches require over the snow machines to be confined to designated roads and trails. MERA access gates will remain open for snow users unless there is a resource use issue(s) such as impacts to big game or erosion. Once snow conditions exceed 18 inches depth, over the snow machines will be free to travel across country.

Currently, the Snow Drifters Snowmobile Club develops a parking area at the junction of USFS 3120 and Fox Hill County Road. They begin grooming a trail on USFS 3120 from this parking area and proceed north. The County and USFS will work with the Snow Drifters Snowmobile Club to pursue authorization for the snow wheelers (4x4 vehicles equipped for going over snow) to use the MERA property and exit on MERA Road No. 8 onto USFS 3120 and proceed south to the Snow Drifter’s parking area.

Motorized over snow use will be monitored and adjusted if conditions warrant.

Long-term a new “snow park” somewhere on USFS 3120 may be pursued in cooperation with USFS to accommodate multiple snow use types.

5.2 Non-Motorized Recreation Management

The Mt. Emily Recreation Area provides local non-motorized recreation opportunities for a wide variety of trail users. Non-motorized trails are defined as those trails used for hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, mountain bicycling, walking, backpacking, jogging, running, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hunting, and hiking with pack stock such as horses, mules and llamas. The Grande Ronde Bowman Archery Club range is included within the non-motorized area and discussed in Section 5.3.

The MERA Non-Motorized Advisory Committee has developed a trail plan that identifies and maps trail resources and characteristics for non-motorized trails and trailheads in MERA. This trail plan also identifies and encourages key trail linkages between and among local and regional trails to better use existing non-motorized trails on adjacent federal lands.

The Committee identified numerous considerations affecting non-motorized recreation in the MERA throughout the planning process. These considerations included:

- Public access to trail opportunities
- Interagency coordination
- Coordinated volunteerism
- Social issues such as adjacent lands, unregulated OHV use, and lack of trail ethics by other users
- Trail density and difficulty
- Funding sources
- Development of new trails
- Enforcement of rules and regulations/monitoring
- Environmental concerns, such as litter, trash dumping, erosion of trails, damage to historical or archaeological sites
- Trail support facilities such as parking areas, trash cans, trail signs, restrooms and drinking water
- Shared use trails vs. multi-use trails
- Cultural and environmental impacts including wildlife

5.2.1 Non-motorized Trailheads and Staging Areas

There will be three main staging areas to provide access to the non-motorized trail system: Owsley Canyon, Lower Igo and Upper Igo.

Owsley Canyon Trailhead. This will be the main non-motorized trailhead. The site will be designed for horse, mt bike and hiking activities. Construction is planned for 2011, funded by RTP grants and in-kind donations from Forest Capital Partners. Phase 1 will have parking for 20 vehicles and 6 horse trailers, one vault toilet, information board and picnic tables. Future expansion for additional parking may be necessary toward the northeast based on increased use. This site will be monitored and can be expanded if desired by the Advisory Committee and the Union County Commissioners.

Lower Igo Trailhead. This site is located on private property with easements from the landowners. It is intended for parking for horse trailers, since the road above the site is too narrow for safe travel and turning around with trailers. At the request of the landowners minimal development will be pursued. Fencing and signs would be installed. No restrooms would be located here, unless requested by the landowner and advisory committee in the future. This is a secondary trailhead, intended to provide access to local residents and equestrian access will be encouraged at Owsley Canyon trailhead.

Upper Igo Trailhead. This site would be designed for vehicle parking without trailers. It can provide motorized trail access to trail #9 and mt bike and hiking access to the non-motorized trail system. Fencing and signs would be installed. No restrooms would be located here, unless requested by adjacent landowners and the advisory committee in the future. This is a secondary trailhead, intended to provide access to local residents. Access will be encouraged at either Fox Hill Road or Owsley Canyon trailheads.

5.2.2 Mt. Bike and Equestrian Trail System

The non-motorized trail opportunities for hikers, mt. bikers and horseback riders in the Mt Emily Recreation Area will be provided below the "Rim". Some trails would be designed specifically for each type of use while other trails would be designed more for multiple use. All trails will be open to non-motorized multi-use-hiking, mt. bike and horses. Horses will be allowed to travel cross county in non-motorized trail areas as long as they do not create resource damage or create new trails with repeated use. Cross country use will be monitored and re-evaluated for resource damage.

Trails will provide a connection between staging areas, be constructed as loops, provide access to the USFS land to the north, and traverse most of the non-motorized area. Easy trail loops will be constructed and maintained, which is generally desired by a majority of riders. More difficult trails will provide additional challenges to other riders.

15 miles	Mt bike designed trails. Skills, U-Hot Shot, Caffeine, and Buzz
8 miles	Horse designed trails. Backcounty Riders, Rough Riders
8 miles	Multiple use trails (horses & mt bikes) Wapiti, Indian Rock, Flow
16 miles	Multiple use roads (horses & mt bikes)

Mt bike trails on the property will vary from easy to most difficult.

Easy Trails. Indian Rock, Roads

Many people are looking for easy routes which then can go for a family or beginner ride. The trail system will create a network of loops using old roads and easy trails. This system will traverse most of the property and will provide loop experience for the novice rider. This system of easy trails can provide access to the more challenging trail system.

Moderate Trails. Flow

These trails would provide more ups and downs and more curves. There would be some technical challenges but not too extreme. This could provide good access to the most difficult trails.

Most Difficult Trails. Caffeine, U-Hot Shot, Buzz

These trails would vary from fast, technical and flowing trails to Technical Man Made Features (TMMF) using logs, dimension lumber, rock and earth burms and jumps. TMMF would be constructed in designated areas and along some difficult trails. These trails will be focused in areas with reduced wildlife concerns. These trails will also be located in areas to reduce conflicts with other forest visitors, especially horses. Within the range of TMMFs there should be a variety of easy, moderate and most difficult trails. Access along Mt Emily Road would be good for technical area.

Horse designed trails such as Backcountry Riders and Rough Riders will be constructed to horse trail standards, considering clearing height and width, trail tread, sight distance and bridge standards.

Trails will generally be open year round to all users, but may be closed to specific uses or all use due to fire restrictions, events, logging activities, resource damage, wildlife concerns or wet soil conditions as determined by the Union County Commissioners.

The Non-motorized Advisory Committee recommended all non-motorized trails be open to equestrian and mt. bike riders. Future conflicts, safety concerns or trail impacts may warrant the need to restrict specific trail users from some trails. Future trail restrictions would be reviewed by the Non-motorized Advisory Committee.

Trail users will follow the standard protocol for yielding to different users. Bikes yield to horses and hikers; hikers yield to horses.

5.3 Grande Ronde Bowman Archery Range

5.3.1 Existing Conditions

The Grande Ronde Bowman Archery Club is a non-profit community organization established in the 1950's to promote and encourage archery as a sport. The Club serves over 160 members and operates and maintains an existing 40 acre site on the MERA property and has historically renewed annual leases with the previous landowners. The existing 40 acre site includes practice archery targets, a 3D course, a target field and a target range. The Club promotes archery education through its association with the National Bow Hunters Education Program,

the Oregon Bow Hunters Association, the National Field Archery Association and the International Bow Hunters Organization.

5.3.2 Proposed Expansion

The Grande Ronde Bowman Archery Club has requested the opportunity to expand the existing 40 acre site to include an adjacent 60 acres to the north and sign a 20 year lease agreement with the County. The expanded 100 acre site would allow the Club to develop four separate shooting ranges that would enhance their ability to host on-site tournaments and secure funding grants. The Club also proposes to lay out the ranges so two public use non-motorized multi-use recreational trails can bisect from east to west the 100 acre site. The entire 100 acres will be fenced by the Club to exclude livestock grazing. Gates for the two trails will only be closed during the 8 to 14 shoots or tournaments per year.

The 100 acre site is included in the Trails Timber Unit (about 550 acres) which is proposed for a commercial timber harvest in July 2010. Fencing, trail construction and range improvements are not anticipated until the timber harvest is completed.

The Club proposes the following site improvements over the next 5 years-

Following timber harvest 2011 to Sept. 30, 2013

- The multi-use trail through the 60 acre expansion area will be constructed prior to building the parameter fence.
- Fence & sign entire 100 acre site
- Establish course layout & design, including targets & trail locations
- Expand & improve parking area
- Begin course construction

April 1, 2015 to Sept. 30, 2015

- Continue course construction
- Complete all targets, backstops & broad head pits
- Make any necessary course adjustments
- Improve infrastructure for clubhouse, storage, picnic tables, etc.

The Grande Ronde Bowman Archery Club will be solely responsible for site operations and maintenance. The Club will enter into a separate lease agreement with the County that specifically outlines site operations and responsibilities and provides for a cooperative annual review with the County. Future site events such as shoots and tournaments will be authorized through the County's special use permitting identified and explained in this Master Plan.

5.4 Cabin

The MERA includes an unimproved cabin below the Mt. Emily rim in the southern property area. The cabin is structurally sound but needs maintenance and facility improvements, including a restroom. Pursuing grants for initial upgrades is desired, while normal operations and maintenance will be paid through rental fees. The cabin is located on the edge the motorized trail system and within a couple of miles to the Fox Hill staging area. It is desired to have passenger car vehicle access to the cabin either by existing roads from Mt Emily Road or construct a new road from above. The County anticipates working with a volunteer group or club to perform these tasks. Ultimately, the cabin will be rented for overnight use through the County. Rental agreement forms, cleaning deposit and use information will be provided by all users.

5.5 Volunteer Plan

Volunteers are an important part of MERA for the development, operations and maintenance of the trail system and property. Volunteer hours can be used as match for grants. A volunteer management plan will be developed encouraging donated labor, materials and equipment use. This plan will describe policies and procedures for volunteers including camp hosts, trail construction, trail maintenance, adopt a trail, adopt a cabin, equipment operation, trail patrol and administration. Special use permits will be issued by the County for all facility new construction or reconstruction. Volunteer maintenance activities will be coordinated through the County Staff. Volunteers will be required to sign liability waivers and catalog hours donated.

5.6 Law Enforcement

Law enforcement will be performed by the Union County Sheriff's Office. Historically Union County has received grant funding through Oregon Parks & Recreation Department ATV grant funds on an annual basis for law enforcement duties on MERA and other OHV riding areas throughout the county. Continued Law Enforcement grants will be pursued in the future. Deputies will enforce all MERA regulations. Law Enforcement officers will patrol the property with trucks, ATVs and motorcycles. Enforcement will focus on rules such as ATV stickers, spark arrestors, proper sound levels, proper trail use, safety regulations, possession of ATV Safety Education Card, damage to resources, illegal dumping and other state laws and county ordinances.

In Oregon, Search and Rescue (SAR) operations are the responsibility of the Sheriff's office. Any SAR activities will be the responsibility of the Sheriff and coordinated through their office.

5.7 Sign Installation & Management Plan

A uniform sign installation system will be used for both motorized and non-motorized trails and roads. Signs will be directional and informational, and annually monitored.

6.0 MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT

6.1 MERA Staffing & Operations

The Mt. Emily Recreation Area acquisition was initiated by local volunteers organized into the Mt. Emily Recreation Area Coalition. The Coalition developed the Proposed Mt. Emily Recreation Area Feasibility Study updated on February 18, 2008 and submitted for funding grants. Many of the Coalition volunteers are members on the two Advisory Committees and have contributed many hours to acquisition and management plan development.

The County Planning Department has provided part-time staffing to the Coalition and Advisory Committees and has directed day to day operations since County purchase.

The County Board of Commissioners have budgeted a full-time staff position to carry out day to day operations and implement the Master Plan beginning July 1, 2010. As needs increase the Board of Commissioners will evaluate staffing requirements and may increase staffing levels.

County Staff will coordinate MERA operations under the direction of the County Board of Commissioners. The County Staff will direct youth crews, volunteers and any seasonal employees and they will pursue grants and work with other agencies on resource management issues. Volunteers will be encouraged to continue participation on the Advisory Committees and encouraged to pursue individual projects. A volunteer management plan will outline the process and commitments required to pursue individual projects or conduct long term management activities. A volunteer management plan will include application forms such as insurance waivers and volunteer agreements.

6.2 Maintenance

Trail system maintenance and development will be pursued with the use of grant funding and volunteer labor. Funding is available for construction and maintenance of OHV trails through the Oregon Parks & Recreation Department ATV and Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant

programs. Once the trails system has been constructed, yearly maintenance will be evaluated and pursued where necessary. Revenue from the property (grazing, camping fees, day use fees & timber sales) would also be used for area maintenance. Currently, Morrow County OHV Park has an ATV funded SWECO which could be loaned to MERA for both trail construction and maintenance. Additionally, the USFS in Unity has ? which was also funded through OPRD ATV funds which could also be borrowed with an operator to work on MERA trails.

6.3 Monitoring

A monitoring management plan will be developed to annually evaluate recreational and resource management activities. Monitoring will assist with meeting long term sustainability goals.

6.4 USFS Neighboring Land - Wallowa Whitman National Forest

Land north of the MERA is public land managed by the US Forest Service. Currently, the area is open to cross county motorized travel. Within the USFS lands there are existing roads and motorized trails (both designated and user built) that provide a popular riding area for OHV enthusiasts. Nationwide the USFS has been mandated to develop Travel Management Plans which will designate specific OHV routes. The Travel Management Plan will change existing motorized use on the public lands, resulting in less opportunities than currently exists. The Travel Management Plan is anticipated to be implemented in 2012.

Upon completion of the USFS Travel Management Plan, the County and the USFS have mutual interest to plan and develop both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities that connect with the MERA. The County and USFS intend to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines this interest and agreement on how to proceed with planning, implementation, maintenance, and enforcement of expanded trail systems.

USFS lands could provide longer loops for motorized and non-motorized users which are an important part of a recreation experience. The adjacent USFS lands provide commanding views of the valley and large forest landscapes to the west. Trailheads and campgrounds could be focused on the MERA, providing recreation users with appropriate staging facilities and the opportunities for both short and long recreation loops.

6.5 Economic Benefits

Aggressive economic development within Union County has resulted in one of the lowest unemployment rates in the region. Local and county leadership understand that continued community development and diversification efforts are essential to create a sound economic base and to guarantee future prosperity.

The State of Oregon released its economic development strategy in the summer of 2004 with a series of goals and strategies. Goal 1A is to **“assist businesses, both large and small, to create, retain, and expand jobs.”** The Mt. Emily Recreational Area is located only three miles from Interstate 84 and the impact it will have in drawing Northwest tourists to the area will have a significant economic benefit to many local La Grande/Island City area businesses.

The MERA property has good potential to provide motorized Class I, II, and III trails for local residents and other travelling recreation users. The Grande Ronde Bowman archery tournaments will attract out of area participants. The proximity to La Grande makes an excellent close-to-home opportunity for all types of local outdoor users. In the summer people are able to access the trail systems and the archery range in the afternoon and evening after school or work. There are potentially enough trail miles for day rides. As for travelers, the close proximity to I-84 makes for easy access, whether it is for a destination or a stop-over on an extended trip.

ATV users and non-motorized recreationists have a variety of restaurants, motels, and retail outlets at their disposal. Sporting goods, camping equipment and grocery outlets are numerous, as are associated recreational equipment and mechanical support and repair services. An expanded Wal-Mart Super Center is a visible testimony to the health of the County's prosperity and potential. There are more than 900 people employed in leisure and hospitality enterprises within Union County to support recreational enthusiasts.

One of the primary factors for companies currently relocating into the Union County area is the availability of quality recreational opportunities. The Mt. Emily Recreational Area provides expanded recreational opportunity for local residents, but also is an added feature for Union County's economic and development efforts providing an attraction for future employers and their families.

Goal IC of the State Economic Development Strategic Plan is to **“Market Oregon”**. This goal is intended to market products and services within Oregon. Union County has positioned itself as a statewide leader in

the manufacturing of recreational vehicles. The Mt. Emily Recreational Area is a perfect fit for those local firms that market and manufacture associated equipment designed for such recreational use. Union County is a major fabricator of all types of recreation trailers in addition to ATV sport units.

There is a clear benefit from this project to residents of Union County, as well as to those in all surrounding Counties. Today, private landowners and investors are closing many areas formerly open to recreational opportunities. "No Trespassing" signs are appearing on land once accessible, leaving little ATV use close to residential and commercial areas.

The Mt. Emily Recreational Area offers guaranteed benefits to Union County citizens, who have enjoyed use of this area for decades and also offers a real possibility for increased "controlled recreational" uses.

Only two miles from the City of La Grande, the Mt. Emily Recreational Area is easily accessible to over half of the County's population. It offers quality recreational opportunities for residents regardless of income, but more especially for those who own and operate ATV's and non-motorized recreational equipment and horses. Based on data from the year 2004, the median family income in Union County was \$47,800. It has a working population of some 12,000, representing 61.4% of the county's 19,302 total population of 16 years and older. And, the unemployment rate is one of the lowest in the region.

Although the County's economic status is stable compared to many rural areas, 8.5 percent of the families are below the poverty level. An added tangible benefit to the community is that the Mt. Emily Recreational Area would offer accessible, quality recreational opportunities for residents of the County regardless of income level or recreational equipment ownership.

6.6 Emergency Closures & Public Safety

Emergency closures may occur for resource protection and public safety. Temporary closures may occur associated with timber harvest or other natural resource management activities, increased fire risk, wildlife protection, spring thaw or extremely muddy conditions, and special use events.

Timber harvest activities require temporary closures to protect the general public from logging and timber hauling activities. Other natural resource management activities such as stream restoration may require specific area closures. During extreme weather conditions Oregon

Department of Fish & Wildlife may request an emergency closure to protect wildlife species.

The County and Oregon Department of Forestry have entered into a Fire Prevention Agreement (July 23, 2009) that limits motorized uses on MERA during ODF designated Regulated Use Closure periods and prohibits motorized use on MERA during ODF designated Extreme Fire Danger periods.

The MERA Administrator has the discretion to implement temporary and/or area specific closures to protect against resource damage. Such closures may be limited to specific trails until conditions improve.

Special use events may require general public closures for public safety in the affected area. For example, during Grande Ronde Bowman Archery Club shoots or tournaments the gates to the two bisecting trails will be closed, locked and signed.

6.7 Special Use Permits

Special Use Permits will be issued by the County for all recreational user events, resource management activities and other short term activities. Users applying for Special Use Permits will complete an application form including locational maps (see Appendix SUP), receive MERA Administrator authorization and display a Special Use Permit during the activity(ies).

Applications for recreational user events will provide proof of insurance, all information about the event and may require a fee, deposit and/or bond based on the type and size of event. The MERA Administrator will evaluate the application and grant event authorization where conflicts with other events will not be detrimental. Where conflicts may occur users may mediate with the Administrator. Where mediation is unsuccessful this issue will be referred to the County Board of Commissioners for a final decision.

Applications for resource management activities will include location, travel routes, activity method, proof of insurance, duration and any necessary closures. Timber harvest and management, stream restoration and other ecosystem practices are examples of resource management activities the MERA Administrator may authorize in accordance with the specific MERA management plan.

Other short term activities that may qualify for a Special Use Permit include access for one-time or short-term activities. Such activities may be authorized by the MERA Administrator where it can be found the activity will not significantly impact the MERA recreational or natural

resource goals and objectives and will not be in conflict with other authorized uses.

6.8 Other Land Acquisition

The MERA area has two 40 acre inclusions and is bordered by other private lands that may become available to enhance the area. Where opportunities exist the County will work cooperatively with interested landowners.

Fox Hill Road is very steep with pitches up to 22% grade. Even in dry conditions this road is difficult to go up and come down. The County will continue pursuing alternate routes with gentler grades to improve MERA access.

The County will follow a similar process used for the initial MERA land acquisition. The County and interested landowner will enter into a purchase and sales agreement, and pursue appraisals and grant funding. All land acquisition activities will be authorized and administered by the County Board of Commissioners. The County will not exercise its eminent domain powers unless requested by the affected landowner(s).

The County's overall land acquisition goals and objectives are to enhance the recreation opportunities and resource management benefits of the MERA.

6.9 Signs & Maps

All directional and informational signs will be uniform in type and conform to other similar areas in Oregon where possible. Temporary signs may be necessary to identify periodic closures, reroutes or events. All signs will be authorized or installed by Union County.

The County will prepare informational maps for public distribution. A fee may be charged to cover the cost of map reproduction and MERA operations.