

Private Land Resource Report

Approximately 26,282 acres of private land are within the Toolbox Fire Complex and within the National Forest boundary (23,858-Toolbox and 2,424 Silver) (GIS, 2003). About 91 percent of the private land is in the Toolbox portion and about 9 percent is in the Silver portion.

Private forestland is often classified as “industrial or “non-industrial”. Industrial forest land is owned by businesses directly engaged in the production of raw material for the forest products industry. These businesses may also own processing facilities that specialize in the manufacture of wood products or they just supply raw material to other companies. Weyerhaeuser Company previously owned all of the industrial forestland in the project area. Non-industrial forest land is primarily owned by individuals, ranchers, companies, and others who occasionally sell raw material to wood product manufacturers. On non-industrial forestland, supplying timber is not the primary reason for owning the land.

Ninety-eight percent of the private land in the Toolbox Fire is industrial forestland that is currently owned by U. S. Timberlands Company (UST). The remainder is non-industrial forest land. Industrial forest land and non-industrial forest land is evenly divided in the Silver Fire. Four individuals or companies own land in the Silver Fire while two companies own land in the Toolbox Fire area. In the total project area, 93 percent is classified as industrial and 7 percent is non-industrial forestland.

Map and aerial photo interpretation was used to estimate the amount of land in the following three categories: Plantation (the area appeared to have been clear cut and planted prior to the fire and there was very little marketable timber volume in the plantation); commercial forest (the area appeared to have been logged in the past and a marketable timber component from the residual stand was present); non-commercial forest (the area appeared to be meadow, rock, scab flat, marginal timber, and high voltage power line right-of-way that was not capable of producing commercial timber stands). Where possible, landowners were contacted to verify the information gained by map and photo interpretation. The landowners were also asked about past and present activities and future plans for their property. The attached spreadsheets contain information about the three categories for the total project area, by fire area, and by subwatershed. The spreadsheets also identify the current owners of the properties.

Past Activities

Industrial Forestland—The parcels of industrial forestland have been logged numerous times in the past. From the 1940s through 1960s Weyerhaeuser primarily prescribed partial cutting of large ponderosa pine. Seed from the ponderosa pine trees that remained in the overstory naturally regenerated openings created by harvest activities. Where white fir and lodgepole pine were present in the residual stand, the composition of those species in the understory increased. During this period most of the logs were skidded with tractors to railroad lines and were hauled by train to the Weyerhaeuser mill at Bly, Oregon.

In the 1970s ponderosa pine trees above 24 inches dbh were harvested. Most of the relatively pure ponderosa pine stands were logged resulting in a mosaic of clearcuts and partial cuts. There was an increase in reforestation by planting in this decade. In clearcut units, the logging slash was piled and burned to prepare the site for planting. Both hand planting and machine planting techniques were used in clearcut areas. In partial cut areas where residual tree stocking was below Oregon Forest Practices Act minimum densities and Weyerhaeuser’s standards, seedlings were interplanted throughout the stands. Railroad logging was being phased out and more of the timber was being transported by truck. Part of the volume was hauled by truck to reload areas where the timber was scaled and trains were loaded to haul logs to the company mill. The property that includes the 500 Reload in the Silver Fire currently belongs to Wasser and Winters Company.

In the 1980s through 1990s, the diameter limit was lowered to an average of 15 inches dbh. When market conditions were favorable to harvest white fir and lodgepole pine, those stands were also entered. By 2000 almost all commercial forest stands were logged at least once. The exceptions were minor amounts of steep rocky ground that would have required helicopter or cable systems to remove the timber. Each successive logging operation resulted in clearcuts and partial cuts that reforested naturally or were planted to meet or exceed State of Oregon timber stand stocking requirements. Because of the increasing number of openings and reduced stand height, more light was reaching the forest floor, allowing brush to increase. Beyond stocking control resulting from logging, no precommercial thinning operations were conducted on industrial land in the project area. Prior to the fires, the commercial forest areas of industrial land appeared to be densely stocked plantations of unmerchantable reproduction and brush or densely stocked areas of unmerchantable reproduction, brush, and merchantable small sawlog timber that did not meet diameter limits and species requirements of previous harvests. Railroad logging ended and the company mill at Bly was closed. UST purchased most of the Weyerhaeuser land

and operations were moved to Klamath Falls, Oregon. Small wood harvesting techniques such as mechanical felling and bunching, grapple skidding, and mechanical limbing and bucking machines were employed in the woods to increase efficiency. Logs and occasionally chips produced in the woods were hauled by truck to processing facilities.

By 2000, approximately 17 percent of the industrial forestland was in plantations consisting of trees that had not reached marketable size. Approximately 72 percent was in previously logged and reforested land that contained a scattered commercial component that was merchantable. The remaining 11 percent was in land that would be classified as unsuitable by Forest Service standards. Included in the unsuitable land would be rocky areas and marginal stands that would not be expected to regenerate within 5 years if harvested. Some of the steep, rocky areas previously not logged by Weyerhaeuser or UST would fall into the unsuitable category if they were on National Forest System land rather than on private land.

Just prior to the fires in the summer of 2002 the Wasser and Winters Company harvested the remaining merchantable timber from their holdings in the vicinity of the 500 Reload. A fully stocked pole stand remained after the logging. In addition, UST re-entered approximately 6,000 acres of the stands that contained commercial volume. For both land owners, the trees were mechanically felled and bunched, skidded tree length, and mechanically limbed and bucked at the landings. No additional slash treatment was planned beyond the piling of limbs and tops that accumulated at the landings. Some of the slash piles burned during the fires. The slash piles that were not consumed will be left for wildlife habitat if a chip market does not develop before the wood deteriorates. Wasser and Winters Company is tentatively relying on natural regeneration of lodgepole pine to reforest their land. For UST, activities such as site preparation by ripping and subsequent planting are ongoing at the present time.

Non-industrial Forestland—Past logging activities on non-industrial forestland were sporadic and generally involved partial harvesting of a limited number of large ponderosa pine and other trees affecting the health of the stand. No plantations resulting from clearcutting were evident prior to the fires. Approximately 59 percent is commercial forest and 41 percent is non-commercial forestland. The commercial forest areas were similar in appearance and structure as adjacent Forest Service System land managed with unevenaged silviculture systems. The non-commercial areas include meadows, lakebeds, scab flats, grassy riparian areas, and marginal timberland with widely scattered trees. Cattle grazing was the primary use of the land prior to the fires. Several homestead sites are on the private land in the fire areas.

Present Activities

The “present” is defined for the purposes of this report as being the time from the control of the fires in 2002 until reforestation activities are complete which is estimated to be in 2005. The reason this time frame was chosen was that it includes activities primarily precipitated by the Toolbox and Silver Fires.

Industrial Forestland—UST began salvage logging operations as soon as the fires were controlled. They plan to salvage approximately 16,000 acres as long as there is a market for small timber. The 6,000 acres harvested just before the fires had enough commercial volume to enter again during salvage operations. The diameter limit is 12 inches dbh to an 8 inch top for all species. Both dead and alive timber is being harvested to make the logging operations economically viable. The majority of the salvage acreage was logged in 2002 and the remainder will be logged in 2003 depending on markets. Wasser and Winters Company does not feel there is enough remaining commercial volume to conduct salvage on their lands. Wasser and Winters Company is tentatively relying on natural regeneration by lodgepole pine.

In 2003 approximately 5,000 acres of UST land received site preparation by ripping. More site preparation will be conducted if areas are found that require ripping prior to planting.

Approximately 2,000 acres of plantation burned sufficiently to require replanting. UST plans to plant approximately 18,000 acres (10,000 from salvage, 6,000 from logging prior to the fires, and 2,000 from burned plantations) of clearcut and partial cut units to meet or exceed State of Oregon stocking density requirements. Approximately 8,400 acres will be planted in 2003 and the remainder will be planted in 2004. The acreages are gross figures since non commercial land was included in the estimates.

Some fences may be constructed or reconstructed to control cattle grazing in the reforested areas. The amount is not known at this time. Most of the industrial forestland will appear to be clearcuts with some advanced regeneration that is taller than the majority of the trees in the even aged plantations. The areas will contrast sharply with most of the adjacent Forest Service System lands.

Non-industrial Forestland—The owners of non-industrial forest land have individual goals for their properties but in general, they plan to salvage fire killed timber, trees that affect stand health, and some large green timber to make the salvage operations economical. The owners intend to plant areas that do not meet State stand density requirements. The

stands will appear to be a mosaic of seedlings through large saw timber. The appearance of non-industrial forestland will be similar to most of the adjacent Forest Service System lands.

Future Activities

The reasonably foreseeable future is defined, for the purposes of this report, as being the time period following the completion of reforestation to about 30 years into the future.

Industrial Forestland—Once reforestation is complete, no additional investments or harvests are planned in the foreseeable future. The stands will be free to grow naturally. Advanced regeneration may grow to the minimum merchantable size for saw logs before the majority of the trees in the even aged plantations attain saw log size. Brush and trees will close roads not continuously used or maintained for access. Grazing by cattle is likely to continue as long as plantations are not damaged sufficiently to retard tree growth and stem quality. Grazing may be curtailed in plantations until seedlings are established.

Non-industrial Forestland—Because the holdings will contain unevenaged stands with trees that range from seedlings to large saw timber, the land owners are likely to occasionally conduct light partial harvests. Harvests are not scheduled. The entries will generally be governed by the opportunity for extra income, the need to reduce stocking levels of larger trees in the stands, or both. Capturing mortality from fire, insects, or disease may also trigger harvest in the future. Areas that are planted following salvage logging will be rested until seedlings are established. Plantations may be fenced to exclude cattle while seedling establishment is taking place. In general, access will be controlled by fences and locked gates. Roads not used by the owners will close naturally by the encroachment of trees and brush.

This Toolbox Fire Recovery Project specialist report was prepared during March, April, and May of 2003. It will be used, along with specialist reports from multiple resource areas, to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Toolbox Fire Recovery project. This specialist report will become a part of the planning record for the project, filed under:

“Toolbox/ Planning Record/ E_Specialists_reports_data_inventory_and_collection”

This report will be filed both in the ‘hard-copy’ planning record binders, on file at the Silver Lake Ranger District, and on the Fremont National Forest “K-Drive”. In the interest of planning process efficiency, particularly in light of time and budget constraints, editing that occurs to the content of this report during the preparation of the DEIS will be reflected in the DEIS and will not necessarily be entered back into the content of this report. To insure the accuracy of such edits, I will review the content of both the DEIS and the (Final) FEIS and certify that their content is consistent with the analytical conclusions in this report. If during DEIS or FEIS editing, substantially different conclusions or interpretations are reached or substantial additional analysis is prepared from that displayed in this report, an addendum to this report will be prepared.

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