

Land trust showcases thinning techniques on Metolius Preserve

By Jim Fisher
Correspondent

More than 25 people braved winds and a chilly February shower last Friday to take a first-hand look at some innovative logging and management techniques on the Deschutes Basin Land Trust's Metolius Preserve.

This 1,240-acre area, located west of Sisters between the Camp Sherman Road and the Jack Lake Road, is being carefully thinned and managed under an intensive forest management plan.

A 10-acre demonstration tract was set up for inspection by public agency representatives, Land Trust Board members and other interested individuals.

They heard presentations and saw the results of applying the latest technology for effective and environmentally sensitive treatment of hazardous fuels.

"We are working to restore forest conditions that were here historically before this area was first logged," said Darin Stringer, senior project manager with Integrated Resource

company was hired by the Land Trust to develop a master plan for the area.

The company wants to apply different levels of thinning to the second-growth ponderosa pine to reduce tree density and also to reduce fuels on the area to minimize damage by wildfires.

They demonstrated state-of-the-art timber harvesting equipment that harvests, limbs and bucks trees into the most economically viable lengths.

Other equipment mulches the thinning residues.

Economics is a major part of the demonstration, according to Stringer. Currently, the high quantity of fire-killed salvage logs on the market has kept down the value and demand for thinning.

That could change, he added.

Other forest resources, including wildlife, birds and butterflies also are being monitored and protected in this effort, according to Amanda Egertson, land steward with the trust.

Plans call for the Metolius Preserve to be open for recreation with trails signed for hiking and biking with others open for through horse travel.

There is limited access for motor vehicles.

The area has also become an interpretive and educational site for students of all ages, showing how timber harvesting can be carried out while protecting other resources.

The Metolius Preserve was recently acquired when Weyerhaeuser Company purchased Willamette Industries lands in Central Oregon.

The Land Trust had an option to purchase these lands to restore salmon and steelhead in the Upper Deschutes Basin.

They were interested in protecting over three miles



PHOTO BY JIM FISHER

Observers watch mechanical thinning in the Metolius Preserve.

of Lake Creek, an important tributary of the Metolius River.

Grants and contributions funded the \$2.4 million purchase.

The Deschutes Basin Land Trust is a private, 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt, charitable

organization with a mission to protect special lands in the 6.8 million-acre Deschutes River Basin.

Other projects in the Sisters area are in the Camp Polk area and along Trout Creek west of the Sisters High School.

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