

**UNION COUNTY, OREGON
FEDERAL LAND USE POLICY**

ORDINANCE 2021-06

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this Federal Land Use Policy (Policy) is to help federal land managers understand and incorporate Union County's existing plans into federal land management policies.

Overall, Union County requests to be involved in decisions regarding federally managed land as a cooperating agency. Union County supports a collaborative, coordinated, and cooperative approach to federal planning decisions affecting land within Union County boundaries via active and early outreach from federal agencies.

Union County requests that this Policy be reviewed by federal land managers to be used as a starting point for an open dialogue between federal land managers and Union County Commissioners.

Union County promotes interdisciplinary and cooperative approaches to conservation and management of natural resources on federal lands. Federal land managers have a responsibility to consider and address inconsistencies with Union County's Policy.

Union County, Oregon, citizens rely on federally managed lands for social, economic, and environmental benefits. Restrictions on federally managed lands (and economic opportunities associated with use) can have a significant impact on the fiscal and social stability of Union County.

This Policy serves to expand on the elements described in Union County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan (Union County, 1985). This Policy also details policies that the Union County Commissioners' feel would encourage a collaborative and positive relationship with federal land managers to best serve the needs of the people and the environment of Union County.

Union County's priority policies for federally managed lands include:

- **Federal Coordination:** Take a collaborative, coordinated, and cooperative approach to federal planning decisions affecting land within Union County boundaries via active and early outreach from federal agencies. Ensure Union County is a cooperating agency when any decisions are made.
- **Livestock Grazing:** Promote sustainable grazing practices that benefit producers, fisheries and wildlife resources, and the landscape.
- **Forestry:** Support optimum multiple benefits (timber production, watershed management, grazing, fisheries and wildlife, recreation, and reforestation) on forested areas.
- **Emergencies:** Promote integrated emergency management policies and locally adopted plans (Community Wildfire Protection Plan, etc.).
- **Fish and Wildlife Protection:** Protect fish and wildlife habitat and threatened and endangered species.
- **Wildlife Management:** Encourage public land managers to implement management actions that support wildlife needs.
- **Invasive Species:** Focus on limiting the spread of invasive species.
- **Water:** Protect watersheds, surface water, and groundwater.

- **Access:** Union County supports sustainable access to federally managed lands in a way that balances multiple use land management goals.
- **Wilderness:** Ensure new federal wilderness area studies are compatible with Union County's "custom and culture" and economic viability goals.
- **Recreation:** Promote policies that satisfy the recreational needs of Union County citizens and visitors, including the promotion and support of already established recreation areas.
- **Economic Development:** Promote economic development on federally managed lands by strategic management of natural resources County-wide and region-wide (other forests affect Union County [i.e., Umatilla]).
- **Protection of Cultural and Historic Resources:** Conserve open space and protect natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources on federally managed lands. Protect all tribal treaty rights; in addition, involve tribes with decision making and vice-versa.

Union County's citizens have a custom and culture that involves a multiple use vision that includes supporting a healthy economy composed of agriculture, grazing, forestry, and social services, which can provide a means for citizens to thrive now and for generations to come. It is the goal of this Policy to protect the custom and culture of Union County by preserving multiple uses of federally managed lands while maximizing economic benefits derived from these resources in a socially and environmentally sustainable way.

Union County will coordinate, collaborate, and cooperate with federal land managers. Union County supports following federal laws that require agencies to make federal plans consistent with local plans through coordination and communication.

1.0 - Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Need

Federally managed lands are vitally important in Union County, Oregon. Union County has a rich history of advocating for the protection of fish and wildlife resources, the sustainable use of natural resources including timber, aggregate materials, and pastureland, and the promotion of recreational activities such as hiking and traveling along roads in Union County. Union County has made it a priority to describe goals and policies related to all statewide planning goals in its Comprehensive Land Use Plan (Union County, 1985). The Comprehensive Land Use Plan includes goals related to state, private, and federal lands.

The Union County Commissioners believe that detailing Union County's priorities in relation to activities on federally managed lands is an important addition because federal land use policy requires more specific consultation and long-term strategy development than is provided in the existing Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This Federal Land Use Policy (Policy) serves to expand on Union County's goals described in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This Policy also details policies that the Union County Commissioners feel would encourage a collaborative and positive relationship with federal land managers to best serve the needs of the people and environment of Union County.

This Policy has been developed by reviewing Union County land use policies, discussing policies with County Commissioners, and providing opportunities for input by the Federal Land Use Policy Advisory Committee and the public (see Appendix A for Federal Land Use Policy Advisory Committee Members).

1.2 Policy Revision

This Policy is intended to be a living document that will change and require updates with changes in environmental, social, and economic conditions in Union County. This Policy will be reviewed as needed and can be modified at will following Union County public notice procedures.

1.3 Land Use Overview

Union County is 2,039 square miles in area and is located in northeast Oregon in the lush valley of the Grande Ronde River, surrounded by the expansive Blue, Elkhorn, and Wallowa Mountain Ranges. The larger Grande Ronde River Watershed system drains to the Snake River, then the Columbia River. Elevations in Union County range from 2,700 feet at the valley floor to more than 6,000 feet in the mountainous areas that bound the region. The climate is semi-arid with hot, dry summers and cold, moist winters. Mean annual precipitation ranges from 12 to 25 inches for elevations of less than 3,000 feet to more than 50 inches above 5,000 feet (Grande Ronde Water Quality Committee, 2000). Mean annual precipitation throughout the entire County is approximately 28 inches per year. The hydrology of Union County is dominated by snowmelt runoff. Sixty percent of Union County is forestland, 20 percent is rangeland, and the majority of the remaining acreage is used for crops and pastureland, with a small percentage located in residential areas.

Federal agencies manage approximately 51.5 percent of the land in Union County, comprising a total of 1,016,511 acres. Approximately 33 percent of Union County is managed by the U.S. Forest Service,

18.5 percent is managed by the Bureau of Land Management, and an additional 10,067 acres, or 0.5 percent of Union County, is managed by the State of Oregon. The remaining 48 percent of the land in the County, approximately 950,382 acres, is privately owned.

1.4 Custom and Culture

It is the goal of this Policy to protect the custom and culture of Union County by preserving multiple uses of federally managed lands while maximizing economic benefits derived from these resources in a socially and environmentally sustainable way. Union County requests genuine consultation and coordination efforts from federal land managers on an on-going basis for planning purposes. For federal planning purposes, the phrase “custom and culture” essentializes social, economic, and environmental values. What follows is a brief discussion of the history and modern elements that compose these Union County values that are centered on always growing and improving our natural resource-based economy.

The beginning of Union County’s customs and culture began long before Union County was established. Historically, many tribes included the Grande Ronde Valley within their territories. Historical, archaeological, and ethnographic evidence indicates that the vicinity of the area was utilized by the Cayuse or *Weyíiletpuu*, the Umatilla or *Nixyéwita*, and the Nez Perce or *Niimíipu*, (Stern 1998). Currently, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) represents Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla tribes. Nez Perce is represented by both the Colville and Nez Perce Tribe. The length of the Grande Ronde River from Washington through Oregon was dotted with at least eighteen recorded seasonal camps and use sites utilized by the Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Palouse, and Nez Perce for fishing, hunting, quarrying, and root and berry gathering during the seasonal round (Hunn et al. 2015; Suphan 1974).

The Grande Ronde Valley was neutral ground for hunting, quarrying, and harvesting roots and berries. The Grande Ronde River provided sustenance to the tribes with its abundance of whitefish, salmon, trout, and lamprey. The CTUIR identifies first foods as water, fish, big game, roots, and berries, all of which are supported in the Grande Ronde Valley.

European Americans contact with the native peoples of the region first occurred in 1805, when Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery navigated the Clearwater, Snake, and Columbia Rivers. The possible discovery of gold by a lost group of emigrants along the Malheur River spurred a greater exploration of northeastern Oregon. With miners and emigrants constantly passing through the area, settlements soon sprang up in the Grande Ronde Valley. In 1864, Union County was created from a portion of Baker County (Mead, 2006).

Mining and timber production surrounded the Grande Ronde Valley, which provided a steady demand for goods. The first agriculture in the area mostly included raising livestock, but later crops of small grains, potatoes, and other vegetables became important to the area (Hug, 1961). In 1862, fruit trees (mostly apples and pears) were brought to Union County from Vancouver, Washington, which started the fruit industry in the area. Hay was grown and harvested to feed livestock (cattle, sheep, horses) over the winter, allowing increasing numbers of livestock in the valley. Cattle continued to become an important economic staple to the settlers of Union County; at first providing the surrounding mining and logging camps and with meat and dairy products, and then expanding to Portland, Oregon, once the railroad arrived in 1884. Sheep were also a common commodity in the area; however, around 1900, the increase in cattle production and overgrazing caused sheep numbers to decline.

Wheat was a thriving staple for farmers in Union County and flouring mills were abundant in Union County. Surplus flour was sold to mining camps and fed to hogs (Hug, 1961). Other crops were also essential including potatoes, sugar beets, grass seed, and peas.

In addition to agriculture, productive forestlands surround the Grande Ronde Valley and are a vital and long-standing resource to Union County. The first settlements were built from the trees harvested from the forests and red fir and tamarack were used to make hundreds of miles of fencing. Sawmills began to populate Union County. The continued growth in railroad and roadway infrastructure opened up the logging market throughout much of Union County. Splash dams were created on waterways throughout the region to transport logs to the mills on the valley floor. The splash dams were mostly replaced by railroad transportation in the early 1900s (Mead, 2006). The logging industry continued to expand with technological advances. Tractors and log trucks entered the forests, increasing logging efficiency.

Historically, agriculture has been a primary economic driver in Union County with timber, public sector jobs, and a service economy also providing economic opportunities in the region. In the 1980s, the logging industry sharply declined, putting Union County into a time of economic hardship. Not only were logging operations strained, but multiple sawmills went out of business. Although exporting logs is becoming more prevalent, finished timber products still dominate the exports in Union County. Currently, federal timber is not exported as whole logs.

Currently, Union County's natural resource economy relies on agriculture and forestry, which have been able to remain in existence; however, environmental conditions, regulations, and other limitations have restricted the ability for these parts of the economy to flourish. The natural resource component is only one part of the overall economy of Union County. Health care, manufacturing, education, tourism, and government services are also important economic drivers.

Union County currently faces challenges, including a struggling economy where many citizens are forced to move away for economic opportunities.. Although times are tough now, with expanded opportunities and increased access to federally managed lands, significant improvements could be made to the economic viability of this natural resources-based economy. It is Union County's goal to continue to promote the custom and culture of the region to allow people to use their talents to make productive use of natural resources to provide a strong economic base for the communities within Union County.

In summary, Union County recognizes and promotes the following elements of custom and culture:

- Maintain traditional hunting, fishing, gathering of first foods, and other practices of regional tribes.
- Ability of people to live in the area and make a living while enjoying a sustainable economy.
- Agriculture and livestock grazing.
- Active management of forest resources, including habitat restoration.
- Tourism, recreation, and service.
- The role of federally managed lands in promoting multiple use.

2.0 - Principles for Federal Land Management within Union County

Union County seeks a collaborative working relationship with federal land managers. Because approximately 51.5 percent of land in Union County is federally managed, decisions related to natural resource management made by federal agencies directly impacts the way of life in Union County.

Union County recognizes its responsibility to have a proactive, cooperative, collaborative, and coordinated approach in working with federal land managers to achieve optimal outcomes for Union County citizens. Union County also encourages federal land managers to be equally proactive in reaching out to Union County for consultation.

In recognition of the value and necessity of integrating federal planning processes with those at the state and local level, laws including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and National Forest Management Act (NFMA) were created for the express purpose of helping provide guidance on how to consistently and correctly coordinate with local interests when developing plans at a national level.

These laws require federal agencies to engage in meaningful consultation with interested parties related to actions on federal lands. Local jurisdictions have a critical role to represent local interests to federal agencies to enable the best decision-making possible (42 USC § 4321-4370h). Operating agreements and intergovernmental agreements are methods that can be utilized for coordination, cooperation, and collaboration.

This Federal Land Use Policy reflects Union County's desire and willingness to be involved with federal land management decisions. It also represents Union County's desire to be included as a partner in decision-making and to provide local knowledge to inform national-level decisions.

While coordination is mandated by NEPA when a federal nexus is associated with a project or action, the Union County Commissioners want additional voluntary coordination, which will enhance large-scale ecosystem management and planning for natural resources in the region.

Union County requests to be involved in decisions regarding federally managed land as a cooperating agency.

Union County promotes interdisciplinary and cooperative, collaborative, and coordinated approaches to conservation and management of natural resources on federal lands.

3.0 - Federally Managed Lands Policies

The following sections detail categories of policies for federally managed lands in Union County. The overall policy is shown in bold and italics while the bulleted statements represent smaller actions that will be taken to support the larger policy.

3.1 Coordination Policy

Union County will provide input through early consultation on federal land use plan drafts or revisions to produce an outcome consistent with Union County goals and policies. Through early discussions, opportunities to achieve joint objectives can be more readily accomplished and the planning process can generally be smoother.

Preserve Union County's "Custom and Culture" by Incorporating it into Land Use Decisions on Federally Managed Land

- Share the Federal Land Use Policy with federal land managers to allow a greater understanding of Union County's goals.
- Federal planning decisions affecting land within Union County boundaries should be communicated with Union County. It is requested that federal land management agencies notify Union County Commissioners of potential plans and actions early to resolve conflicts in an amicable way. It is also requested that federal land managers inform Union County Commissioners of potential conflicts with federal plans prior to public participation when given the opportunity to review upcoming Union County plans and policies.
- Union County will coordinate with other local, state, and federal agencies in implementing environmental standards. Union County will reach out for early consultation from federal land managers on federal projects and policies and requests that federal land managers will seek early consultation with Union County on prospective projects.

3.2 Livestock, Grazing, Ranching, and Agriculture Policy

Agriculture in Union County includes both livestock and crops. Livestock production significantly benefits from utilizing grazing leases on federally managed land during summer months. This includes land managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management.

Union County supports grazing and specifically targeted grazing on federally managed lands.

Support Livestock Grazing on Federally Managed Lands in a Sustainable Way that Allows Multiple Uses

- Union County will work with federal land managers on an integrated grazing strategy to meet multiple uses for the land.
- Union County will consult with federal land managers about the ongoing permitting process and determine if Union County can assist in analysis or decision making.

- Union County will work to support land management decisions that encourage grazing as a component of the multiple use management strategy for federally managed lands.

3.3 Forest Resources (Timber) Policy

Union County seeks a sustainable timber harvest regime to help reduce wildfire, provide natural resources jobs, and improve the forest ecosystem.

Support Sustainable Forestry Practices on Federally Managed Lands

- Review and provide comments on proposed federal land management actions to support the goal of multiple use management.
- Promote policies to encourage sustainable harvest and management of timber. Sustainable harvest plans include those that bring economic benefit, protect the environment from natural hazards such as fire, and benefit the overall ecosystem in a cost-effective manner.

3.4 Emergency Management Policy

Union County has an all hazards comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) that provides guidance on hazard vulnerability, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. The EOP creates a response framework covering a variety of concerns including wildfire, flooding, and other natural and human-caused emergencies. Union County jointly developed the Union County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) to provide implementation strategies for the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy (CWS). The CWPP was developed by local, state, and federal partners. Federal land managers play key roles in supporting the EOP, including providing resources both on the ground and in overhead positions in support of a coordinated response.

Promote Integrated Emergency Management Policies with Both Long- and Short-Term Visions

Support and implement mitigation action items identified in the CWPP and the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program.

- Actively participate in the CWPP steering committee.
- Actively participate and further the all hands/all lands approach and the three CWS goals (resilient landscapes, fire-adapted communities, and effective wildfire response).
- Integrate federal emergency response plans with Union County's Emergency Operations Plan.
- Ensure communication among law enforcement agencies and ensure the Union County Sheriff's Office has access to public lands.

3.5 Fish and Wildlife Policy

Federal, state, and local agency coordination is essential for the management and protection of fish and wildlife because many of these animals migrate and are affected by decisions made in different jurisdictions.

Our surrounding forests support a variety of wildlife and fisheries, many that are adapted to human activity. We support conservation efforts that are consistent with the law. The U.S. Forest Service has clarified that it is a land management agency and fisheries and wildlife management is the responsibility of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Protect Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Threatened and Endangered Species

- Engage partners to actively restore and protect threatened and endangered species habitat on federal lands.
- Promote a healthy ecosystem that maintains a diverse balance of native plants and animals.

Support Federal Policies to Manage Wildlife Populations

- Management of wildlife, particularly big game such as deer and elk, will be coordinated with Union County as population impacts from herds can reach past the borders of federal land to private land. Union County supports effective elk management.

3.6 Invasive Species Policy

Invasive plants and animals are an ever-present threat to Union County economic and environmental interests. Coordination and support at a federal level is essential to limit the spread of these species and conduct management efforts.

Focus on Limiting the Spread of Invasive Species and Reducing Populations in High Risk Areas

- Union County supports ongoing efforts to limit the spread of invasive species in accordance with federal, state, and local noxious weed laws. This includes working to stop invasive weeds from going to fruition.

3.7 Watershed, Surface Water, Groundwater Policy

Groundwater and surface water are connected in Union County, and protection of the entire watershed is important to support the sustainable use of these resources for the future to meet both in-stream and out-of-stream needs.

Protect Watershed, Surface Water, and Groundwater

- Coordinate and cooperate with state and federal agencies in regulating of surface and groundwater resources.
- Encourage conservation of water resources and protection of municipal watersheds.
- Union County's first priority for use of water resources is supporting overall watershed health, as well as domestic and stock water use and production of food, fiber, and energy. Union County supports the State of Oregon in their regulation of water when it is limited.
- Support relevant goals developed through Union County's place-based integrated water resources planning process.

3.8 Access and Roads Policy

Access to federally managed lands in Union County represents a delicate balance of supporting the public's use of public lands and existing roads; limiting development of new roads, which create environmental impacts; and preserving existing wild areas without restricting the rights of people.

Support Access to Federally Managed Lands

- Limit road closures and allow public input for all closure decisions. Union County promotes access to roads.
- Union County supports maintaining access to the land for a variety of purposes including, but not limited to, sustainable logging, ecological benefits, supply of clean water, cutting firewood, grazing, recreation, hunting, fishing, hiking, use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and full fire suppression.

3.9 Wilderness Policy

Wilderness areas on federally managed lands are important to preserve vital characteristics of the landscape. A balance between allowing for respectful enjoyment of federally managed lands and keeping wilderness areas safe from human-caused environmental impacts, is what a coordinated policy between Union County and federal land managers could accomplish.

Limit New Wilderness Areas

- Ensure the designation of new federal wilderness areas are compatible with Union County's custom and culture and economic viability goals.
- Coordinate closely with federal land managers when changes or new land use classifications are proposed.

3.10 Recreation and Tourism Policy

Recreation and tourism are an increasing part of Union County's modern economy.

Promote Policies that Satisfy the Recreational Needs of Union County's Citizens and Visitors

- Union County is supportive of encouraging developed recreational use of existing National Forest multiple use lands, consistent with recognized natural resource management practices.
- Union County desires connectivity of roads and trails for extended recreational opportunities within Union County that will contribute to large-scale trail systems extending to other counties, states, and regions.
- Improve, maintain, and develop facilities to support recreational opportunities. Some examples include parking, camping, bathroom facilities, trails and connectors, roads, and road maintenance.

3.11 Economic Development Policy

Union County seeks to promote diversified and sustainable economic development. The economy of the region is supported by retail trade, health services, construction, professional services, leisure and hospitality, natural resources and mining, manufacturing, financial activities, information services, and government services (Union County, 2011). Union County recognizes economic value in federally managed lands. Timber resources can be harvested through private or forest stewardship contracts and sustainable energy development. Private livestock can graze in the summertime on portions of federally managed lands that will not negatively impact critical fish and wildlife habitats, riparian areas, or waterbodies. Other economic goals include support of recreational users (both local and non-local) who come to Union County and hike, bike, camp, ski, horseback ride, hunt, fish, snowmobile, ATV, and take in the scenery.

Promote Economic Development on Federally Managed Lands

- Support federal agencies completing an economic and social analysis before major federal actions and verify actions will not adversely impact vulnerable populations (environmental and social justice analysis).
- Support federal agencies issuing contracts for private or public-private partnership projects on federally managed lands and policies, increasing the ability for individuals to cut firewood.

3.12 Special Designations and Cultural Resources Policy

Significant cultural and historic resources are found on public lands in Union County. Coordinated efforts are needed to ensure that these irreplaceable resources are protected.

Conserve Open Space, Promote Scenic Values, and Protect Natural, Cultural, Historic, and Scenic Resources on Federally Managed Lands

- Union County supports state and federal laws of historic preservation to ensure recognition and protection of historical and cultural locations and structures, and protection of significant views and sites.
- Union County supports tribal use of federally managed lands and supports the preservation of all treaty rights.
- Union County supports the preservation of areas of scenic value.

3.13 Mining Policy

There is limited mining in Union County. Union County will coordinate with federal land managers for mining activities on these lands.

4.0 - Conclusion

Union County is principally interested in working cooperatively, collaboratively, and in coordination with federal land managers to ensure optimal decisions are being made. Managing natural resources and access to these resources, when on federally managed lands, is critical to preserving the custom and culture of Union County citizens.

Overall, Union County requests to be involved in decisions regarding federally managed land as a cooperating agency. Union County supports a collaborative, coordinated, and cooperative approach to federal planning decisions affecting land within Union County boundaries via active and early outreach from federal agencies.

5.0 - References

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APPENDIX A

Federal Land Use Policy

Advisory Committee Members*

*Lindsay Warness is no longer part of the committee.