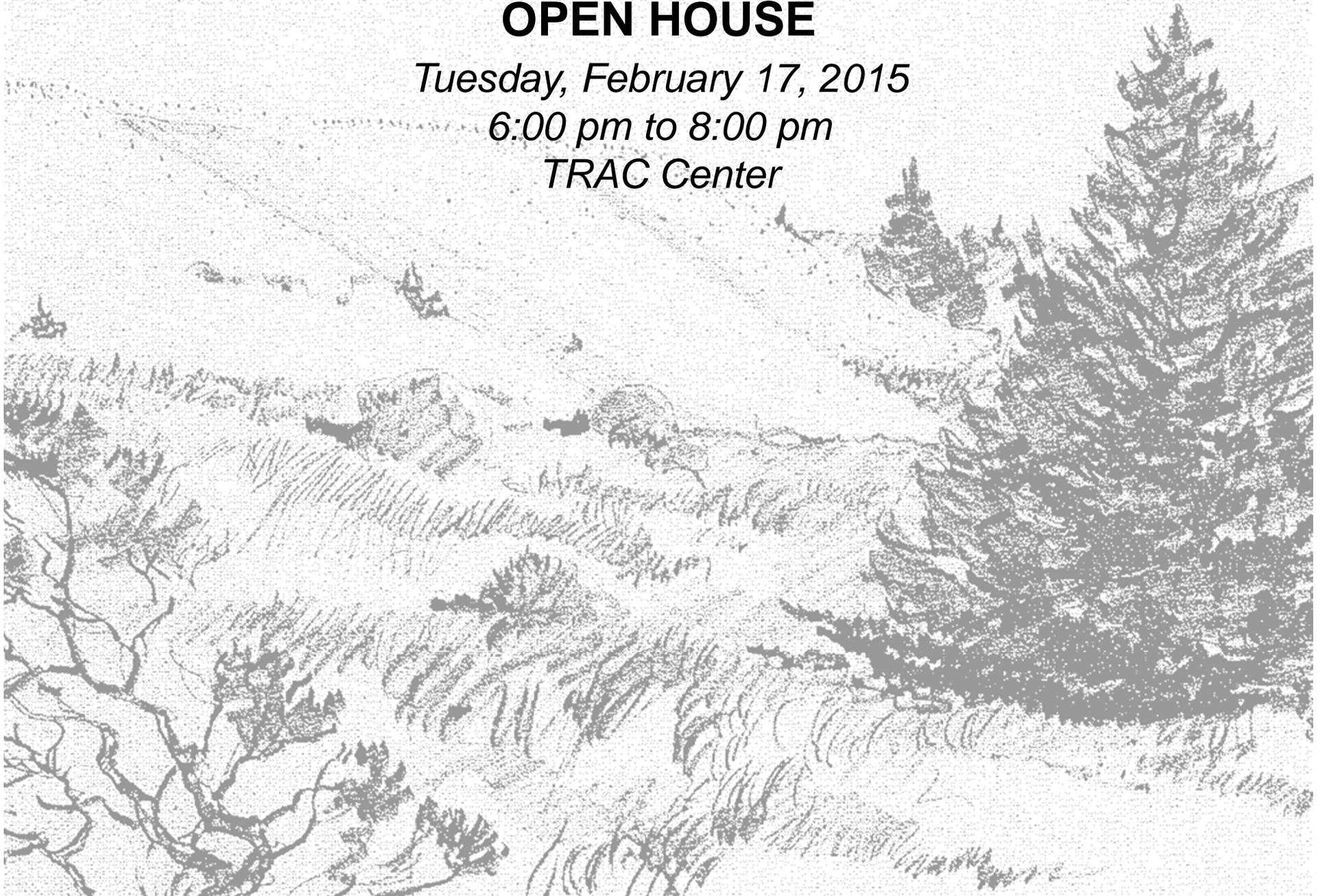


JUNIPER DUNES RECREATION AREA ACCESS ROAD OPEN HOUSE

Tuesday, February 17, 2015

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

TRAC Center



What is the Juniper Dunes Area?

- Located in southeastern Franklin County (north and west of Pasco-Kahlotus Road)
- Total area: 19,600 acres
- Used for hiking, off-highway vehicles, biking, horseback riding, camping, hunting (within designated areas)
- Consists of three areas:
 - Juniper Dunes Wilderness: 7,100 acres of wilderness area; fenced; no motorized or mechanized uses (including bikes) are permitted
 - OHV "Open" Area: 3,920 acres of off-highway vehicle (OHV)-permissible area
 - ACEC: 8,620 acres of Area of Critical Environmental Concern; OHV use is only permitted on designated trails in this area
- Juniper Dunes Area is not serviced by a public access road, so access is currently at the discretion of surrounding private land owners

History of the Juniper Dunes

- The Juniper Forest Management Area has been utilized by residents of the Tri-City metro area since the 1960s.
- In 1971, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) began program of acquiring associated lands, resulting in 4,500 acre management area.
- In 1981, Washington State Wilderness Act increased wilderness area by 1,800 acres.
- In 1987, BLM completed the Wilderness Management Plan for Juniper Dunes Wilderness.
- Between 2001 and 2007, several closures of access to privately-owned land initiated the process of trying to build a public access. While this ran through various avenues (direct negotiations between BLM and landowners, proposed federal legislation, *etc.*), a comprehensive outcome did not occur.

History of the Juniper Dunes (continued)

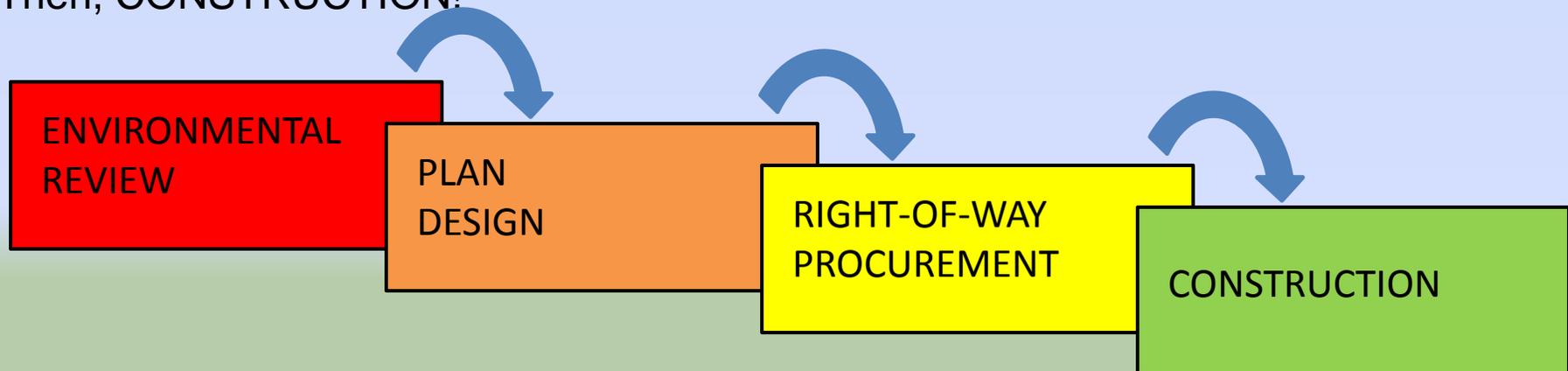
- In 2011, Franklin County received a grant from BLM for \$716,500 to complete the first phase of a public access road to the Juniper Dunes area. However, mitigation for concerns regarding existing irrigation water lines risked exceeding available funds.
- In June 2013, Franklin County was awarded a Federal Land Access Program grant, administered through the Federal Highway Administration's Western Federal Lands Highway Division (WFLHD). This provided funding for an access road.
- In August 2013, Franklin County committed to its portion of the funding match.
- In April 2014, Franklin County executed a memorandum of agreement with WFLHD and BLM to work together on the project.
- In February 2015, WFLHD, BLM and Franklin County published a Environmental Assessment to document impacts to environmental resources per the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Juniper Dunes Access Road - Purpose and Scope

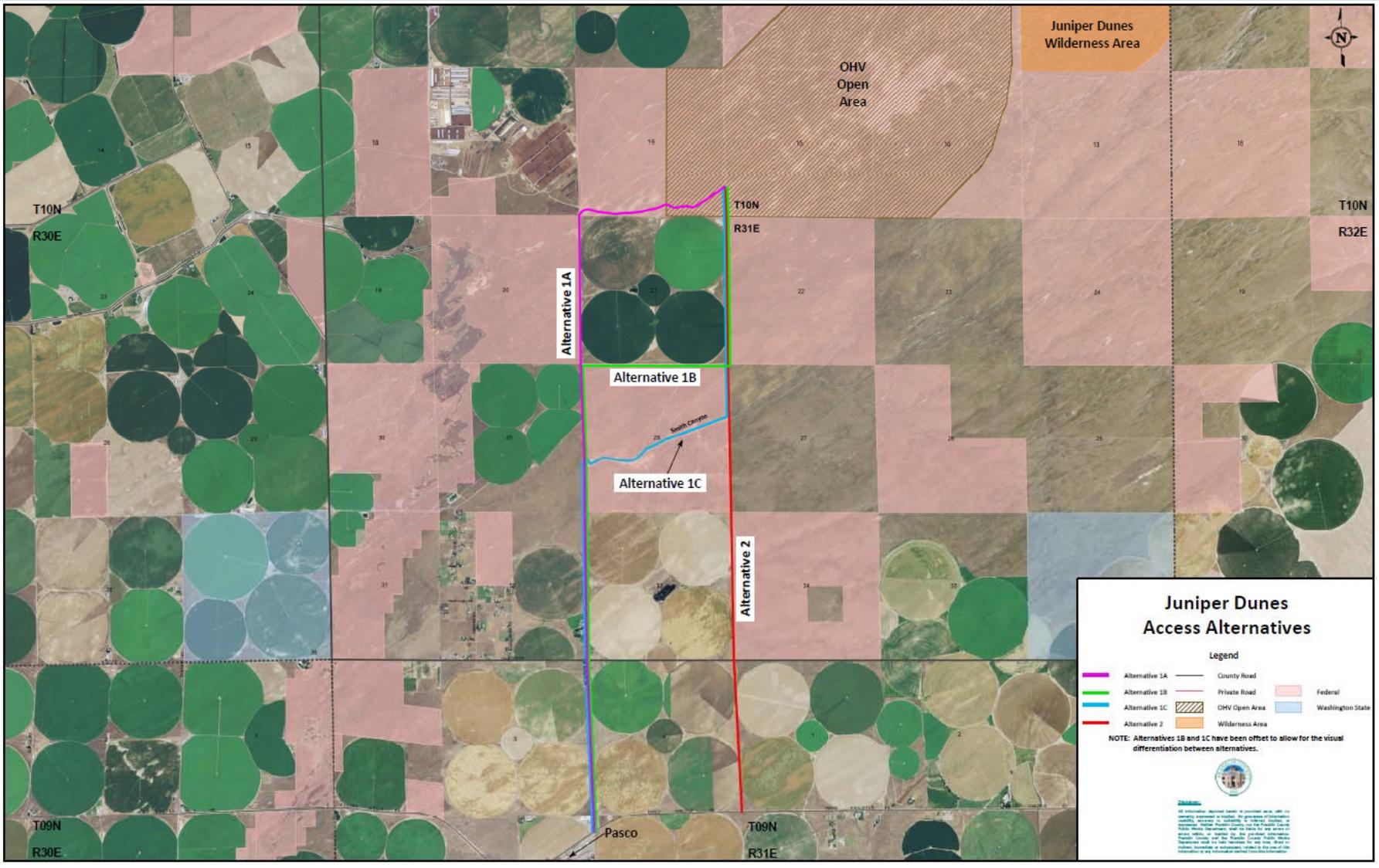
- Provide a legal public access road to the Juniper Dunes Wilderness Area and the adjacent off-highway vehicle (OHV) open area, starting at a public road and ending at a staging area adjacent to the Juniper Dunes open area.
- The project aims to address the following issues:
 - No public access (all access currently traverses private property)
 - Public access has been legally restricted in the past (by property owners)
 - Bring public access to the area to County road standards: drainage, sight distance, road conditions, consistent and necessary road width
 - Prevent or reduce opportunities for vandalism and disturbance of surrounding properties
 - Provide better access for emergency responders
- The BLM's need for the proposed action will be to respond to a right-of-way application submitted by Franklin County and to implement the 1987 BLM Resource Management Plan's action to acquire public access rights to the Juniper Dunes area.

Juniper Dunes Access Road – Current Stage

- Currently in the environmental review stage:
 - National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires consideration of biological, cultural, historical, population impacts.
 - Requires resource assessment surveys, consultation with local tribes, community input (such as this meeting).
 - All technically viable alternatives must be considered.
- Once the environmental review stage is completed, Project Partners select an alignment and then construction plans can be finalized.
- After plans are completed, right-of-way can be purchased from landowners.
- Then, CONSTRUCTION!



Juniper Dunes Access Road – Current Stage



Project Benefits

- Provide legal public access to Juniper Dunes
 - Improved access to recreation
- Franklin County would maintain road
 - Improved road conditions and safety
- Coordinate with adjacent landowners to fence the road (as necessary) to reduce trespassing

Summary of Impacts from the EA – Property Acquisitions

- Acquisition of property is required with all build alternatives

	Total ROW Required (est. acres)	Easements on Federal Land (est. acres)	Acquisition of Private Land (est. acres)
Alternative 1A	51.41	27.00	24.41
Alternative 1B	48.02	19.80	28.22
Alternative 1C	47.08	22.48	24.60
Alternative 2	40.76	11.64	29.12

- These are conservative, preliminary, estimates; as project designs advance, project partners will look for opportunities to decrease private property acquisitions
- Fair market compensation will be provided for all property acquisitions, in compliance with the federal Uniform Act
- Alternatives 1A, 1B, and 1C would likely impact private utility pipe near Peterson Road

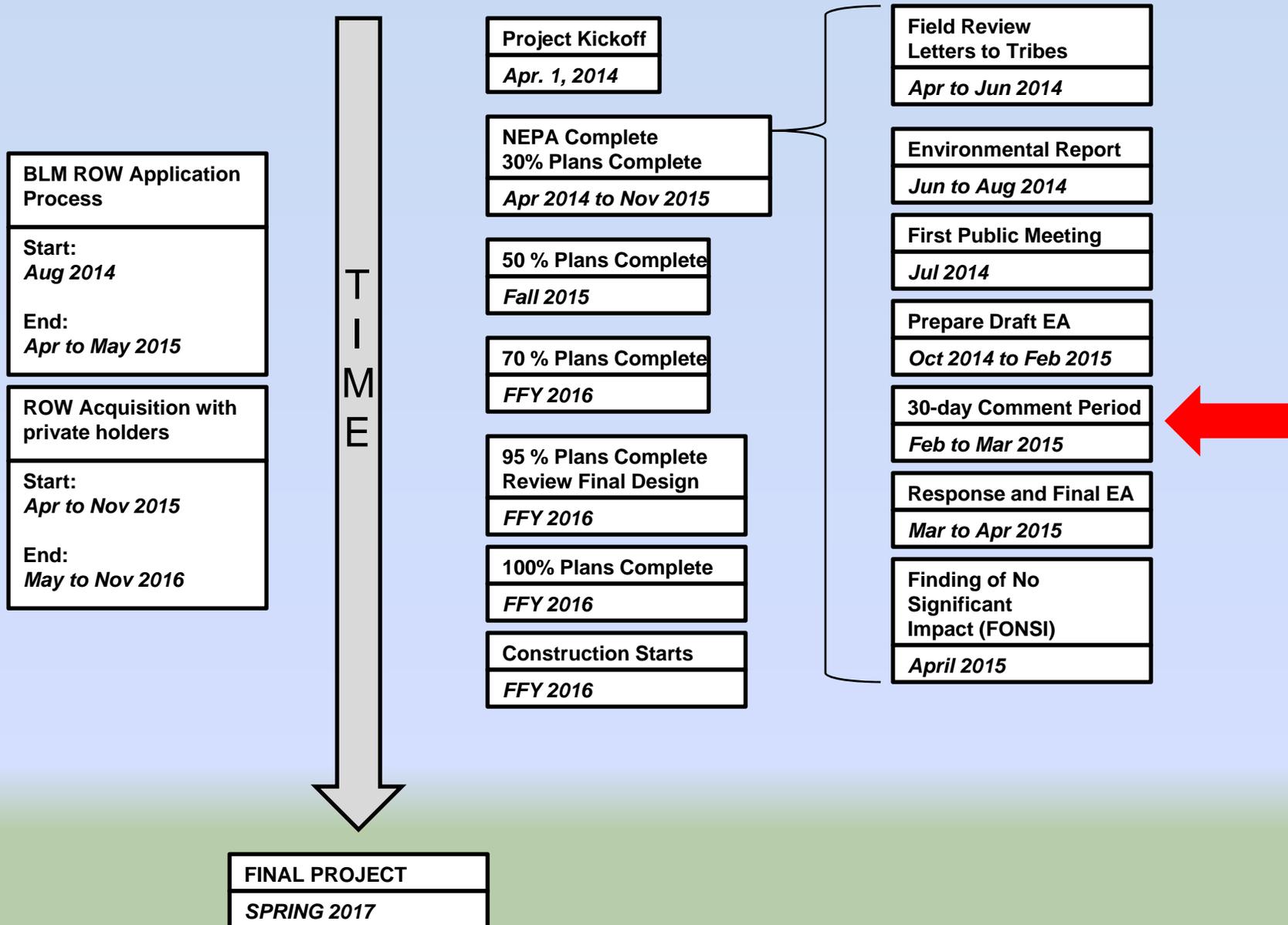
Summary of Impacts from the EA–Section 4(f) of the DOT Act

- Section 4(f) of the DOT Act protects recreation/wildlife management areas from being converted to transportation use
- Projects with minor impacts can be determined to be “*de minimis*” impacts
- This project uses less than 1/5th of 1 percent of Juniper Dunes
- WFLHD has determined, and BLM concurred, that this project is a “*de minimis*” impact
- A “*de minimis*” determination requires opportunity for public input (today’s public meeting and the 30-day public comment period)

Summary of Impacts from the EA – Other impacts

- Mostly benefits to transportation
 - Some alternatives have impacts
 - Alt. 1A would run by the existing parking area which is close to private property
 - Alt. 1C impacts recreation in Smith Canyon
- No impacts to federal Threatened & Endangered (T&E) species
- Some impacts to wildlife habitat and non-T&E species
- No impacts to wetlands
- Low risk of impacts to cultural and historic resources
- Some temporary construction impacts
 - Noise, dust and exhaust
- Minimal other impacts

Juniper Dunes Access Road – Planned Timeline





Source: Juniper Dunes Biological Resources Report



Source: <http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/files/brochures/brochure-juniper.pdf>



Source: http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/site_info.php?siteid=270



Source: <http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/sheriff/offroad.shtml>