



AGENDA CONSENT CALENDAR MEMO

Memorandum Date: August 27, 2025

Order Date: September 9, 2025

TO: Board of County Commissioners

DEPARTMENT: Lane County Public Works, Parks Division

PRESENTED BY: Brett Henry, Parks Division Manager

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: ORDER/ In the Matter of Approving a Permit to Lane County Parks to Conduct Prescribed Burns in Howard Buford Recreation Area

I. MOTION

Move to approve Lane County Parks to conduct prescribed burns in Howard Buford Recreation Area between September 15, 2025 and June 30th, 2026.

II. AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

The Lane County Parks Division is requesting that the Board permit implementation of prescribed burns in Howard Buford Recreation Area between September 15, 2025 and June 30, 2026. The permit is needed to comply with the requirements of ORS 476.380.

III. BACKGROUND/IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION

A. Board Action and Other History

In 2018, the Board adopted the Howard Buford Recreation Area (HBRA) Habitat Management Plan (HMP) as a refinement to the Lane County Rural Comprehensive Plan. Goal 6 of the HMP is to “achieve significant restoration of prairie, savanna, oak woodland, and wet prairie habitats in HBRA”. Strategy 6.1 is to “continue ongoing collaboration with Oregon Dept. of Forestry (ODF) Eastern Lane District, Rivers to Ridges partnership, and other qualified fire management entities to design and implement ecological burns on an average of 50 -250 acres annually”. Additional background information on the use of prescribed fire to improve habitat conditions and reduce fuel loads is included in Chapter 8 of the HMP.

Prescribed or ecological burns are a means of safely using fire within defined boundaries and under conditions where fire can be safely used as a management tool. Following the adoption of the HMP in 2018, Lane County Parks and partners

have successfully conducted prescribed burns in the park in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. This is the continuation of a program of regular prescribed burning in the park that was initiated in 1999. A map showing the locations of proposed prescribed burn units in 2025 attached.

On July 1, 2025, Lane County's contract with the ODF for fire protection for HBRA, Armitage Park and Hendricks Bridge Park expired, and ODF has declined to continue to provide fire protection to Lane County properties (outside district boundaries) under contract. As an interim measure, ODF and Lane County have agreed to enter into a mutual aid agreement for wildfire response.

B. Policy Issues

Howard Buford Recreation Area lies outside the boundaries of any Oregon Dept. of Forestry (ODF) Forest Protection District. Because of this, Lane County Parks has contracted with ODF for fire protection in HBRA. HBRA also lies outside the boundary of any rural fire protection district.

Oregon Revised Statutes require that for any lands outside of a rural fire protection district or a forest protection district, a permit to conduct prescribed burns must be secured from the county court or board of county commissioners. This requirement is found in ORS 476.380.

In compliance with Oregon law, Lane County Parks is now working to correct an inadvertent oversight by asking the Board to permit prescribed burning in HBRA between September 15, 2025, and June 30, 2026. However, prescribed burning at HBRA will not commence until a mutual aid or other fire protection or agreement between ODF and Lane County is in place.

C. Board Goals

Lane County Parks' implementation of the Howard Buford Recreation Area Habitat Management Plan, and specifically prescribed burning, aligns with the 2025-2027 Lane County Strategic Plan under Goal 2: Vibrant Communities. "Support programs and systems that foster a healthy environment and enhance community well-being."

D. Financial and/or Resource Considerations

Staff believes that the financial implications to Lane County of the Board permitting prescribed burning in HBRA are minimal. The cost of the planned prescribed burns in 2025 is being covered entirely by grants (primarily a Community Assistance grant from the Bureau of Land Management) and in-kind contributions from Rivers to Ridges prescribed burn program partners and local fire protection agencies.

E. Health Implications

Complete Howard Buford Recreation Area provides a variety of health benefits to the citizens of Lane County. The park is an inexpensive venue for citizens to recreate and exercise. Prescribed burning improves the quality of habitats within HBRA, and access to a diversity of native animals and plants for park visitors. Prescribed burning reduced fuel loads, and thus reduces the risk of a high intensity wildfire. Prescribed burns are only allowed when weather and atmospheric conditions are such that fire can be contained within the boundaries of the planned burn units, and the smoke that is generated is directed by prevailing winds away from densely populated areas, rises well up into the atmosphere.

Analysis

As noted under Section A, the Board providing a permit to Lane County Parks to conduct prescribed burns in HBRA is necessary to comply with the requirements of ORS 476.380.

It should also be mentioned that additional permits for prescribed burning have been or will be obtained from the Lane Regional Air Pollution Agency, and the Oregon Dept. of Forestry, South Cascade District. These permits give requirements for weather conditions, resource requirements, and other factors necessary to safely implement prescribed burns.

Alternatives/Options

1. Approve the Board Order to permit Lane County Parks to conduct prescribed burns in Howard Buford Recreation Area between September 15, 2025 and June 30, 2026.
2. Do not approve the Board Order to permit Lane County Parks to conduct prescribed burns.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Parks Division recommends Option #1 - Approving the Board Order to permit Lane County Parks to conduct prescribed burns in Hoard Buford Recreation Area between September 15, 2025 and June 30, 2026.

TIMING/IMPLEMENTATION

If the Board Order is approved, parks staff will work with ODF and other partners to implement planned prescribed burns in Howard Buford Recreation Area between September 15, 2025 and June 30, 2026. As noted above, prescribed burning at HBRA will not commence until a mutual aid or other fire protection or agreement between ODF and Lane County is in place.

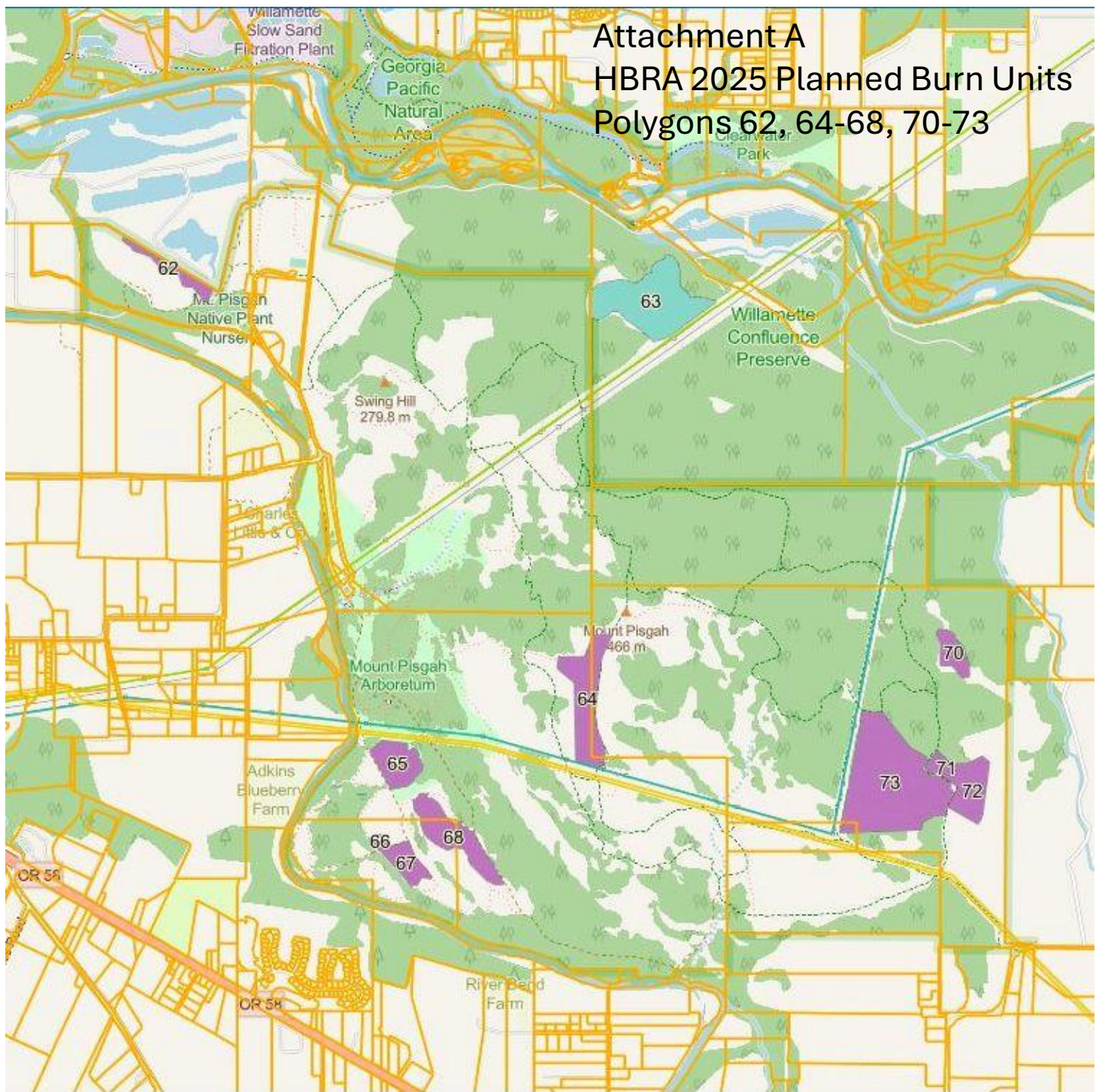
V. ATTACHMENTS

- A. Map of planned prescribed burn units in HBRA.

Attachment A

HBRA 2025 Planned Burn Units

Polygons 62, 64-68, 70-73



BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF LANE COUNTY, OREGON

ORDER NO: 25-09-09-XX

In the Matter of Approving a Permit
to Lane County Parks to Conduct
Prescribed Burns in Howard Buford
Recreation Area

WHEREAS, In 2018 the Board of Commissioners adopted the Howard Buford Recreation Area Habitat Management Plan as a refinement to the Rural Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, Goals and Strategies of the Habitat Management Plan identify prescribed burning as an important management tool to achieve plan goals; and

WHEREAS, Howard Buford Recreation Area lies outside the boundaries of any fire protection district or forest protection district; and

WHEREAS, ORS 476.380 requires that for any lands outside of a rural fire protection district or a forest protection district, a permit to conduct prescribed burns must be secured from the county court or board of county commissioners.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of County Commissioners of Lane County **ORDERS** as follows:

1. Lane County Parks be permitted to conduct prescribed burns in Howard Buford Recreation Area between September 15, 2025 and June 30th, 2026. Prescribed burning in Howard Buford Recreation Area will not commence until a mutual aid or other fire protection agreement between Lane County and the Oregon Dept. of Forestry is in place.

ADOPTED this 9th day of September, 2025.

David Loveall, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners