

Restore

Operation will get rid of some young trees

Continued from C1

So Stringer and his company, Integrated Resource Management, devised a 160-page plan for the preserve to restore the forest's natural diversity and protect its wildlife.

Because the trees had all been chopped in the last century, determining the forest's historic conditions was relatively easy.

"The stumps are still here," he said, pointing to the ground.

Stringer said the preserve was once a ponderosa pine forest, with short grasses and shrubs filling the open spaces between trees of various ages.

Now, the land is filled with dense thickets of young ponderosa pines and white firs. In some places, shrubs like manzanita and snow brush have grown almost as tall as some trees.

The operation that is now in progress will get rid of some of

the thin trees and brush, to leave more sunlight and nutrients for the remaining trees. This will enable the remaining trees to grow faster, and it will prevent wildfire from easily spreading through the crowns of trees, Egertson said.

But the land trust is not about to rip out all the firs just because they weren't found here 100 years ago. "We're not just knee-jerking back to historical conditions," Stringer said.

Since the fir trees have grown here, they have attracted wildlife like the Northern goshawk, a bird that some say is on the decline.

So the forest plan calls for a "mosaic" of dense thickets and open spaces that can accommodate a variety of wildlife.

"We have this luxury, as a private landowner, to manage this land strictly for the old growth ... and wildlife," Egertson said. "We don't have to be driven by the finances of logging."

Which is a good thing, she added, because the market for small-diameter wood took a dive just before the thinning

project began. By selling some of the trees cut for thinning, the Land Trust still expects to just about break even on the first phase of the project, which covers about 10 acres.

Egertson said the organization will then assess the plan and determine how to implement it over the rest of the preserve.

Surrounded by Forest Service land, the preserve is open to the public during daylight hours.

For more information, contact the Deschutes Basin Land Trust at 541-330-0017 or visit www.deschuteslandtrust.org.

The land trust is also hosting tours of the 10-acre demonstration site today, beginning at 9 a.m., 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. in the preserve.

To get there, head west on Highway 20 from Sisters for about 10 miles. Turn right onto Forest Service Road 2064. After about half a mile, take another right onto Forest Service Road 200.

Lily Raff can be reached at 541-617-7836 or lruff@bendbulletin.com.