

TREE FALLING FOR TIMBER CRUISES

Environmental Assessment

Klamath Falls Resource Area
EA # OR014-00-01

April 10, 2000

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau Of Land Management

Klamath Falls Resource Area
2795 Anderson Ave. Bldg. 25
Klamath Falls, Oregon 97603

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**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
KLAMATH FALLS RESOURCE AREA OFFICE
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. OR-014-EA-00-01
TREE FALLING FOR TIMBER CRUISES**

I. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION

The Klamath Falls Resource Area cruises forest stands to evaluate the timber available for proposed projects including timber sales and land exchanges. Cruising involves ocular measurement of the standing timber volume and condition by non-destructive sampling of the stand. In conjunction with the cruise, a sample of trees may be felled to directly measure the timber volume and condition. This direct measurement is used to ensure the accuracy of the indirect measure of timber volume and condition. For many projects, “3-P” sampling may be used, in which the probability of selecting any tree in the stand is proportional to a predicted volume of timber (“probability is proportional to prediction” or “3-P”). For some projects, including silvicultural thinning in relatively homogeneous stands, trees may be felled to construct a volume table in which the timber volume of sample trees is related to the tree diameter.

BLM Manual Supplement Handbook H- 5310-1 provides direction to conduct consistent timber cruises that meet quality standards including accuracy within 10% of the net volume of timber in the sale. Accurate timber cruises facilitate the preparation of timber sales by which the BLM contributes to the financial stability of the community. Accurate timber cruises also ensure that the public receives fair value for the timber sold. The purpose of this action is to ensure the accuracy of timber cruises.

This environmental assessment (EA) is an analysis of the environmental consequences of tree falling for timber cruises versus taking no action and conforms to the standards and guidelines contained in the following documents:

“Klamath Falls Resource Area Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan,” June 1995 (RMP ROD).

“Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl,” April 1994 (NSO ROD).

The above referenced documents are available for review at the Klamath Falls Resource Area Office.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A - Proposed Action

A small sample of the trees would be felled in conjunction with timber cruises for proposed projects including timber sales. The number of trees felled would be dependent on site and stand conditions and the expected amount of defect in the timber. In homogeneous stands of young timber with little defect, few if any trees would be felled. Small stands may be entirely sampled (i.e., every merchantable tree would be directly measured, by ocular methods), and no trees would be felled. In large, heterogeneous stands, with a high percent of timber defect, 25 or more trees may be felled within the sale area. Trees felled would be scattered widely and randomly in harvest units, generally at a density of less than one tree per acre. Trees with obvious signs of wildlife use (e.g., trees with nests or cavities) would not be felled or the area around them disturbed. Felled trees would be cut into lengths for direct measurement of volume and direct evaluation of timber condition. The removal or retention of the felled trees would be addressed in a project-specific EA or Decision Rationale and would be dependent upon the existing fuel loads and need for additional large woody debris.

Tree falling would occur throughout the Klamath Falls Resource Area in proposed sale areas primarily within the Matrix land allocation. No falling would occur on withdrawn or reserved allocated lands including Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Riparian Reserves. All current management guidelines would be followed, including surveys for required survey and manage species, threatened and endangered species, and botanical and cultural resources prior to felling of trees. Project design criteria for seasonal restrictions of activity would be followed to keep from disturbing threatened and endangered species.

Alternative B - No Action

In the No Action Alternative, timber cruises would continue in preparation for proposed projects, but no trees would be felled to check the accuracy of the cruise. Cruising methods using indirect measurement and ocular estimation of timber quantity and quality would be used in determining timber volumes and values.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The resources that would be affected by the alternatives have been analyzed in Chapter 3 of the Klamath Falls Resource Area RMP/Environmental Impact Statement (February 1994). The following resources would not be affected by the alternatives: air quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, cultural resources, prime or unique farm lands, flood plains, Native American religious concerns, solid or hazardous wastes, visual resources, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness.

Alternative A would result in the direct mortality of individual trees scattered over proposed project areas. In the implementation of a project such as a timber sale, these trees would either be removed as part of the timber harvest or reserved as large woody debris; the environmental consequence of either removal or retention of felled trees would be addressed in a project-specific EA. The falling

of trees could result in direct damage to adjacent vegetation and direct disturbance of the surface litter layer in the immediate vicinity of the tree felled. These impacts and the disturbance of falling operations could temporarily disturb wildlife in the immediate location of the tree being felled.

The BLM biologist has made a “no effect” determination on the proposed action. Impacts of the proposed action would not effect habitat for threatened and endangered species. Therefore, no consultation is necessary. Impacts to special status species would be minimal to none because areas containing these species have already been designated as part of the reserve area where felling is not allowed. The falling of trees could have an indirect effect of creating a small canopy gap. Any cumulative effects on vegetation, wildlife, soils, or water resources would be negligible because of the minor nature of the direct and indirect effects and the highly dispersed distribution of the tree falling. The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects would be largely indistinguishable from the effect of natural, individual tree-falls and subsequent formation of small canopy gaps.

Alternative B (No Action) would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on physical or biological resources, including air, soil, water, vegetation, wildlife, or fish. Trees that would have been felled in Alternative A in conjunction with the timber cruise would not be felled in Alternative B until implementation of a project, such as a timber sale. The falling of these trees in a project would be addressed by a project-specific EA. Alternative B would likely result in lower accuracy in timber cruises, which could reduce the confidence of timber purchasers in the BLM appraisal of timber value and result in lower bids for timber offered for sale. Less accurate timber cruises could also have a long-term effect of impairing the ability of BLM to plan the production of a sustainable supply of timber.

IV. COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION

The following interdisciplinary group of KFRA staff specialists were consulted in the preparation of this environmental assessment:

Mike Bechdolt	Timber Manager
Patty Buettner	Wildlife Biologist
Joe Foran	Fire and Fuels
Stephen Hayner	Wildlife Technician
Charles Hicks	Environmental Coordinator
Bill Johnson	Silviculturist
Kathy Kirkham	Cruiser/Appraiser
Matt Kritzer	Archaeologist
David Lebo	Ecologist
Tim Salmon	Assistant Cruiser/Appraiser
Gayle Sitter	Wildlife Biologist
Lou Whiteaker	Botanist

V. SUMMARY OF PROJECT DESIGN FEATURES:

- Trees felled would be scattered widely and randomly in harvest units, generally at a density of less than one tree per acre.
- Trees with obvious signs of wildlife use (e.g., trees with nests or cavities) would not be felled or the area around them disturbed.
- Felled trees would be cut into lengths for direct measurement of volume and direct evaluation of timber condition. The removal or retention of the felled trees would be addressed in a project-specific EA or Decision Rationale. Only those trees already designated for cutting as part of the timber sale would be felled.
- Tree falling would occur throughout the Klamath Falls Resource area in proposed sale areas primarily within the Matrix land use allocation. No falling would occur on any withdrawn or reserve allocated lands including Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Riparian Reserves.
- All current management guidelines would be followed, including surveys for required survey and manage species, threatened and endangered species, and botanical and cultural resources prior to felling of trees.
- Project design criteria for seasonal restrictions of activity would be followed to keep from disturbing threatened and endangered species.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
for the
Tree Falling for Timber Cruises
EA No. OR014-00-01

The Bureau of Land Management, Lakeview District, Klamath Falls Resource Area, has analyzed the Tree Falling for Timber Cruises Environmental Assessment. On the basis of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and discussions conducted by the Interdisciplinary Team, it is my determination that the proposed action and/or the alternative selected below, when implemented with the Project Design Features and selected mitigating measures, does not constitute a significant impact affecting the quality of the human environment greater than those impacts previously addressed in the:

- Final - Klamath Falls Resource Area Management Plan and EIS (FEIS) (Sept. 1994), and its Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (June 2, 1995) (KFRA ROD/RMP).
- Klamath Falls Resource Area Fire Management EA#OR-014-94-09 (June 10, 1994)
- Final Environmental Impact Statement, Vegetation Treatment On BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (1991).
- Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project / Eastside Draft Environmental Impact Statement / May 1997 (ICBEMP).

The Klamath Falls Resource Area recently completed their “Fiscal Year 1998 Annual Program Summary and Monitoring Report for the Klamath Falls Resource Area” (Feb. 1999). Results from the first three years indicates that impacts are within those analyzed in the Klamath Falls Resource Area Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Impacts to the environment would be similar to or less than those disclosed in the above mentioned documents. Therefore, it is my decision that an Environmental Impact Statement is unnecessary and will not be prepared.

Signed /s./ Teresa A. Raml
Manager, Klamath Falls Resource Area

Date 4/10/2000