

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for

GLENDALE ROAD DECOMMISSIONING, RENOVATION AND ROAD CLOSURE  
PROJECTS

EA# OR-118-02-011

April 2002

This environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Glendale Road Decommissioning, Renovation and Road Closure Projects was prepared utilizing a systematic interdisciplinary approach integrating the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts with planning and decision making.

Public notice of the availability of this EA is being provided through the BLM Medford District's web site at [www.or.blm.gov/Medford/planning](http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford/planning) and advertisement in the *Grants Pass Courier* and *Umpqua Free Press*.



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
MEDFORD DISTRICT  
GLENDALE FIELD OFFICE

**EA#OR-118-02-11**  
**COVER SHEET**

Proposed action: The Glendale Resource Area is proposing to maintain, block and /or decommission roads in four project areas to restore forest health and hydrologic function by reducing the number of miles of roads in forested areas.

Type of statement: Environmental Assessment (EA)

Lead agency: USDI Bureau of Land Management

Cooperating agencies:

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**ABSTRACT:**

The Glendale Resource Area proposes to reduce the miles of roads requiring routine maintenance; this would minimize disturbance to wildlife and reduce the cost of maintenance, reduce stream sedimentation and partially restore hydrologic function. These roads have been identified as systems that will not be needed for access to private lands, recreation or by the BLM for administrative access at this time. Roads that are in poor condition that are needed for forest management, would be maintained for public health and safety.

A total of 4.65 miles of roads would be blocked and decommissioned, 0.38 miles of roads would be blocked, and 1.58 miles of road would be maintained by blading the road for a smooth surface and brushing encroaching vegetation for safety. Road decommissioning would include: barricading, ripping, pulling existing culverts, installing water-bars, mulching or seeding. Roads involved in the projects are BLM Roads # 34-6-3.4, # 33-5-10.1, # 33-5-11.1, # 33-4-15.7, # 33-4-15.8, # 33-4-15.9, # 33-4-15.11, and # 33-4-15.12.

*EA #OR-118-02-011*

## CONTENTS

Chapter 1 - Purpose and Need	<a href="#">1</a>
1.0 Purpose and Need for Aciton	<a href="#">1</a>
1.1 Project Objectives	<a href="#">1</a>
1.2 Plan Conformance	<a href="#">1</a>
1.3 Decisions to be made on this Analysis	<a href="#">1</a>
Chapter 2 - Alternatives	<a href="#">2</a>
2.0 Introduction	<a href="#">2</a>
2.1 Alternative 1: No Action	<a href="#">2</a>
2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action	<a href="#">2</a>
2.2.1 Project Design Features	<a href="#">3</a>
2.3 Alternative 3 - Barricade	<a href="#">4</a>
2.3.1 Project Design Features	<a href="#">4</a>
2.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Consideration	<a href="#">5</a>
Chapter 3 - Affected Environment	<a href="#">6</a>
3.0 Introduction	<a href="#">6</a>
3.1 Location	<a href="#">6</a>
3.2 Description	<a href="#">6</a>
3.3 Other Actions In or Near the Project Areas	<a href="#">6</a>
Chapter 4 - Environmental Consequences	<a href="#">8</a>
4.0 Environmental Consequences	<a href="#">8</a>
Table 4-1 Critical Elements for Alternatives	<a href="#">8</a>
4.1 Water Quality	<a href="#">8</a>
4.1.1 Alternative 1 - No Action	<a href="#">8</a>
4.1.2 Alternative 2 - Decommissioning	<a href="#">9</a>
4.1.3 Alternative 3 - Barricading	<a href="#">9</a>
4.2 Threatened or Endangered Species	<a href="#">9</a>
4.2.1 Alternative 1 - No Action	<a href="#">9</a>
4.2.2 Alternative 2 - Decommissioning (Proposed Action)	<a href="#">10</a>
4.2.3 Alternative 3 - Barricading	<a href="#">10</a>
Chapter 5 - Consultation	<a href="#">11</a>
5.0 Introduction	<a href="#">11</a>
5.1 Persons and Agencies Consulted	<a href="#">11</a>

5.2 List of Preparers ..... [11](#)  
References ..... [12](#)

## **Chapter 1 - Purpose and Need**

### **1.0 Purpose and Need for Action**

The Road System within the Glendale Resource Area has had roads identified that will not be needed for access to private lands, recreation or by the BLM for administrative access at this time. Other portions of the Road System have been identified as needing maintenance for management activities and access to private lands. The Glendale Field Office is proposing to maintain, block and /or decommission roads in four project areas listed below. These projects would reduce the miles of roads needing maintenance and comply with the best management practices identified in Appendix D of the Medford District Resource Management Plan which identify the objectives of reducing soil compaction, minimizing or reducing stream sedimentation, and improving site productivity (RMP pg 165)

### **1.1 Project Objectives**

The Glendale Resource Area proposes to reduce the miles of roads requiring routine maintenance; this would minimize disturbance to wildlife and reduce the cost of maintenance, reduce stream sedimentation and partially restore hydrologic function. Roads that are in poor condition that are needed for forest management, would be maintained for public health and safety. The primary objective of this proposal is to restore forest health and hydrologic function by reducing the number of miles of roads in forested areas. Other objectives are to maintain safe conditions on roads, minimize disturbance to wildlife, prevent illegal dumping, and reduce maintenance costs.

### **1.2 Plan Conformance**

This proposal is in conformance with the Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP) which notes specific direction for road management including: “closing and stabilizing, or obliterating and stabilizing roads based on the ongoing and potential effects to Aquatic Conservation Strategy and riparian reserve objectives and considering short-term and long term transportation needs” (RMP pg 28).

### **1.3 Decisions to be made on this Analysis**

The decisions to be made are directly connected to the scope of the actions and alternatives. The Glendale Resource Area Field Manager will:

- 1) Select the Proposed Action or an alternative.
- 2) Determine whether the selected alternative is consistent with the Resource Management Plan.
- 3) Determine whether the selected alternative would have significant effects or not, and whether or not to prepare an environmental impact statement. If the impacts are determined to be insignificant, then a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) can be issued and a decision can be implemented.

## Chapter 2 - Alternatives

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the alternatives under consideration. Descriptions focus on potential actions, outputs, and any related mitigation.

### 2.1 Alternative 1: No Action

No decommissioning or road closure projects would be implemented. Routine maintenance activities by the BLM Road Maintenance staff would continue to occur including grading, cleaning of ditch lines and existing culverts would be maintained.

### 2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The Glendale Resource Area is proposing to close or control access to reduce stream sedimentation, restore hydrological processes, or enhance habitat by blocking and/or decommissioning roads in the Grave Creek 5<sup>th</sup> field watershed. The listed projects includes restricting access to reduce disturbance to wildlife and reduce erosion. The work would be completed within the next 3 to 5 years.

The Glendale Resource Area proposes to reduce the number of miles of maintained forest roads. A total of 4.65 miles of roads would be blocked and decommissioned, 0.38 miles of roads would be blocked, and 1.58 miles of road would be maintained by blading the road for a smooth surface and brushing encroaching vegetation for safety. Road decommissioning would include: barricading, ripping, pulling existing culverts, installing water-bars, mulching or seeding. Each road treatment would be implemented based on conditions that exist at that site. Roads or portions of roads, in the project area not being blocked, or decommissioned would be maintained. Barricading would be by an earth berm.

The project areas are listed below:

1. BLM Road # 33-5-10.1; Decommission the upper 1.42 miles of this road. We would pull the existing pipes, rip the road surface, barricade, and mulch areas of newly exposed soils. The lower portion 1.58 miles of road that access private and public lands would be maintained for safety. This project is located in Sec. 11; Township 34 South, Range 5 West W.M.
2. BLM Road # 33-5-11.1; Decommission 0.18 miles. We would pull the existing draw pipe, rip the road surface, barricade, and mulch. This project is located in the NW 1/4 of Sec. 11; Township 34 South, Range 5 West, W.M.
3. BLM Roads # 33-4-15.7, # 33-4-15.8, # 33-4-15.9, # 33-4-15.11, and # 33-4-15.12; these roads are currently accessed by a low water crossing. Decommission 2.05 miles natural surface roads. These roads located in the NW 1/4 of Section 15, Township 33 South, Range 4 West, W.M. are on the east side of Grave Creek. Due to the high density of roads in this area and no need for them at this time we would pull the existing culverts and lightly rip around

existing vegetation and in the existing mining location. Newly exposed soils would be mulched and barricades constructed.

4. BLM Road # 34-6-3.4; Block this natural surface, outsloped road with a barricade at the beginning to prevent the dumping of household garbage and enhance habitat for wildlife. Road is 0.38 miles long and is located in the SW 1/4 of Section 3, Township 34 South, Range 6 West, W.M.

### **2.2.1 Project Design Features**

The following Project Design Features (PDFs) would be evaluated and modified as they are used under varying environmental conditions to ensure that they are effective at meeting objectives.

- When removing a culvert and not replacing it, slopes would be pulled back to a 1:1 slope (more when erosive soils and/or existing contours permit) to minimize sloughing and erosion.
- Bare soil areas would be mulched with weed-free straw, bark chips, etc and native grass seed or other approved seed mix during the fall to discourage invasion of noxious plant species and to retard soil erosion.
- The contractor would be notified that he is responsible for meeting all state and federal requirements for maintaining water quality.
- Heavy equipment would be cleaned before moving onto the project site in order to remove oil and grease, noxious weeds and excessive soil.
- Hydraulic fluid and fuel lines on heavy mechanized equipment would be in proper working condition in order to minimize leakage into streams.
- Waste diesel, oil, hydraulic fluid and other hazardous materials and contaminated soil near the stream would be removed from the site and disposed of in accordance with DEQ regulations.
- Equipment refueling would be conducted within a confined, secured area outside the stream channel such that there is minimal chance that toxic materials could enter a stream.
- Equipment would not be stored in a stream channel.
- Work would be temporarily suspended if rainstorms saturate soils to the extent that there is potential for run off.
- Cutting vegetation on road fill slopes would be minimized in order to maintain slope stability.

- Use of power equipment within 1/4 mile of any northern spotted owl nest would be limited to the period between June 16 and February 28 or until a Glendale Resource Area biologist were to determine that young were sufficiently dispersed. This same seasonal restriction would apply to blasting within one mile of an active nest.
- Any proposed changes to this action during project construction would be fully analyzed, per NEPA, by the interdisciplinary team and submitted to the Field Manager for a decision prior to such activity being approved.

### **2.3 Alternative 3 - Barricade**

Under this alternative the four project roads would be barricaded only. This proposal would not include culverts being pulled, road surface would not be ripped, or bladed, and no seeding or mulching would occur.

#### **2.3.1 Project Design Features**

- The in-stream work period would occur between June 15 and September 15 to conform with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) requirements. Waivers would be approved only on a site specific basis with involvement of ODFW and the resource area fish biologist and/or hydrologist. These dates apply to intermittent and perennial streams, as defined by the Northwest Forest Plan (Intermittent: has a defined channel and shows annual signs of scour; Perennial: typically has water year-round).
- Bare soil areas would be mulched with weed-free straw, bark chips, etc and native grass seed or other approved seed mix during the fall to discourage invasion of noxious plant species and to retard soil erosion.
- The contractor would be notified that he is responsible for meeting all state and federal requirements for maintaining water quality.
- Heavy equipment would be cleaned before moving onto the project site in order to remove oil and grease, noxious weeds and excessive soil.
- Hydraulic fluid and fuel lines on heavy mechanized equipment would be in proper working condition in order to minimize leakage into streams.
- Waste diesel, oil, hydraulic fluid and other hazardous materials and contaminated soil near the stream would be removed from the site and disposed of in accordance with DEQ regulations.

- Work would be temporarily suspended if rainstorms saturate soils to the extent that there is potential for run off.
- Use of power equipment within 1/4 mile of any northern spotted owl nest would be limited to the period between June 16 and February 28 or until a Glendale Resource Area biologist were to determine that young were sufficiently dispersed. This same seasonal restriction would apply to blasting within one mile of an active nest.
- Any proposed changes to this action during project construction would be fully analyzed, per NEPA, by the interdisciplinary team and submitted to the Field Manager for a decision prior to such activity being approved.

#### **2.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Consideration**

Several other roads were considered for decommissioning but dropped from the proposed action because they were identified as still being needed for projects or being included in existing Right-of-Way agreements.

## Chapter 3 - Affected Environment

### 3.0 Introduction

This section describes relevant resource components of the existing (baseline) environment.

### 3.1 Location

The location of the proposed action is:

Analytical watersheds (fifth field): Grave Creek

Project area (sixth field watershed): Upper Grave, Placer, and Upper Wolf Creek

County: Josephine

See Chapter 2 for detailed legal description.

See general location map.

### 3.2 Description

Streams in the project area provide habitat for Southern Oregon/ Northern California (SO/NC) coho salmon, a fish species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), coastal cutthroat and steelhead trout, as well as other native fish, amphibians, and aquatic invertebrates.

Projects would not be located within any Critical Habitat Units for the federally threatened Northern Spotted Owl. There are no known Northern Spotted Owl sites within 1/4 mile. The projects would be located outside critical habitat and survey areas A and B for the federally threatened marbled murrelet. Projects would not occur within late-successional reserves. There are no known great gray owl sites in the Glendale Resource Area, surveys in potential habitat have detected none, and no negative impacts are expected. No suitable habitat disturbance is expected for the only survey and manage mollusk (Oregon shoulderband) likely to occur in the watershed. No red tree vole nests are likely to occur within the disturbance areas.

### 3.3 Other Actions In or Near the Project Areas

The following actions have either occurred relatively recently or are anticipated within the foreseeable future. They help set the stage to identify cumulative effects in an area and to direct restoration activities to promote continued improvement of hydrologic characteristics and health at the watershed scale:

- Serpents Grave timber sale - sold not awarded.
- Poor Angora timber sale - partially logged in 2001
- Poor Angora timber sale road improvements including armored waterdips and upgraded culverts and resurfacing
- Improve drainage and reduce erosion on approximately 60 miles of road (1995-2001)

- Regeneration timber harvest and road use on private lands
- Removal of Upper Last Chance Creek Culvert and decommissioning of roads.
- Replacement of 2 Last Chance Creek culverts in 2000
- Renovation of Shanks Creek Road, armored waterdips and additional culverts with spot rocking in 2001
- ODFW/Boise Corporation stream habitat improvement project 2001
- Proposed road improvements for McCoy Creek and Eastman Gulch
- Grave Creek Culvert Replacement 2002 (numerous culverts identified for removal and or replacement within the next five years)

## Chapter 4 - Environmental Consequences

### 4.0 Environmental Consequences

This chapter provides the scientific and analytic basis for the comparisons of the alternatives. This section also describes the probable consequences of each alternative on selected environmental issues.

**Table 4-1 Critical Elements for Alternatives**

Critical Element	Alternatives Affected (Y or N)*			Critical Element	Alternatives Affected (Y or N)*		
	1	2	3		1	2	3
Air Quality	N	N	N	Threatened & Endangered Species	Y	Y	Y
ACEC	N	N	N	Wastes, Hazardous / Solid	N	N	N
Cultural	N	N	N	Water Quality	Y	Y	Y
Farmlands, Prime/Unique	N	N	N	Wetlands, Riparian Zones	N	N	N
Flood plains	N	N	N	Wild & Scenic Rivers	N	N	N
Native American Religious Concerns	N	N	N	Wilderness	N	N	N
				Energy	N	N	N
Invasive Species	N	N	N	Environmental Justice	N	N	N
Survey and Manage**	N	N	N				

\* y=yes, n=no    \*\* non-critical element

### 4.1 Water Quality

#### 4.1.1 Alternative 1 - No Action

**Direct Effects:**

No effects would be anticipated

**Indirect Effects:**

Roads would continue to contribute sediment to streams. No long term beneficial from decommissioning and barricading would occur. Road densities would stay at the current level, affecting hydrologic processes, runoff, and aquatic organisms. Vehicular access would not be curtailed, so that erosion and sediment production on unsurfaced roads and at stream crossings would continue.

**Cumulative Effects:**

No cumulative impacts are anticipated.

#### **4.1.2 Alternative 2 - Decommissioning**

##### **Direct Effects:**

Removal of cross drains and culverts during the decommissioning of the roadway, plus installation of water bars, ripping and barricading would result in sediment movement downslope and potentially downstream of disturbance. The sediment pulse would be expected to be of short duration and small in magnitude. There would be temporary interference of respiration and feeding ability of aquatic organisms for a short distance downstream of the activity if culvert removal was in a flowing stream.

##### **Indirect Effects:**

The long term effects would result in stabilization of road beds, restoration of hydrologic integrity (reduction of drainage network by less miles of ditch line, improved infiltration and percolation through soils, and elimination of continual disturbance resulting from maintenance activities). The reduction of road miles accomplished through decommissioning would have beneficial effects locally by reducing road density in small drainages. At the watershed level (HUC 5), the effects created by this proposed action would be insignificant and not detectable. Revegetation of the running surface of decommissioned roads would lend even more stability over time due to binding of the soil particles to roots. In the longer term, an organic layer would form under the vegetation resulting in greater buffering and filtering abilities.

Removal of the in stream culverts would eliminate potential for them to wash out, subsequent stream sedimentation and loss of habitat for aquatic organisms in the long term.

##### **Cumulative Effects:**

No cumulative effects at the watershed scale are expected because of the small magnitude of this project.

#### **4.1.3 Alternative 3 - Barricading**

##### **Direct Effects:**

No direct effects are anticipated.

##### **Indirect Effects:**

Roads would continue to contribute sediment to streams but at a lesser rate than under the No Action Alternative.

##### **Cumulative Effects:**

No cumulative impacts are anticipated.

#### **4.2 Threatened or Endangered Species**

##### **4.2.1 Alternative 1 - No Action**

##### **Direct Effects:**

No direct effects would be anticipated from the No Action Alternative.

**Indirect Effects:**

The net effect would be to allow the present levels of erosion and sedimentation to continue and, most likely to increase over time; resulting in adverse effects on aquatic habitat and species including Southern Oregon / Northern California coho salmon. The effects, however, would not be significant.

**Cumulative Effects:**

Cumulative impacts to coho salmon would be anticipated to be minimal and not significant.

**4.2.2 Alternative 2 - Decommissioning (Proposed Action)**

**Direct Effects and Indirect Effects:**

Noise disturbance to spotted owls in unsurveyed habitat adjacent to projects could occur, disturbing dispersing owls, or changing nesting, roosting, or foraging habitats of undetected resident owls. The possibility and amount of such disturbance however, would be very low and not significant. The pulse of sediment generated by decommissioning activities could reach coho habitat but adverse effects would be minimal and short term. Habitat conditions would be expected to improve over current conditions in the long term.

**Cumulative Effects:**

Cumulative effects to the Northern Spotted Owl would not be anticipated. Cumulative effects to the coho salmon would be minimal and not significant.

**4.2.3 Alternative 3 - Barricading**

**Direct Effects:**

No direct effects would be anticipated.

**Indirect Effects:**

Effects would be similar to those under the no action alternative. Although preventing vehicles from driving on these roads would decrease erosion and stream sedimentation somewhat, its likely that culverts and roads would be inspected and maintained less often than they currently are. The possibility of road failure and subsequent damage to habitat for coho salmon would increase over time.

**Cumulative Effects:**

Cumulative effects would be similar to those under Alternative 2.

## Chapter 5 - Consultation

### 5.0 Introduction

This section identifies the agencies and individuals who participated in the development of this action and the environmental assessment.

### 5.1 Persons and Agencies Consulted

A legal notice will be placed in local newspapers to announce to the public that the Glendale Resource Area is requesting public comments on the proposed management action. In addition, notification of this proposal will be sent to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Dept. of Forestry, county commissioners for the affected county, several environmental groups, and representatives of the timber industry to request their comments. These announcements will be made following completion of this environmental assessment and before a decision is made. The Field Manager will consider all input before reaching a finding or making a decision concerning this proposal.

### 5.2 List of Preparers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Primary Responsibility</u>
Bob Bessey	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries/Riparian
Rose Hanrahan	Hydro Tech	Fisheries/Riparian
Loren Wittenberg	Hydrologist	Soils/Air/Water
Marlin Pose	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife
Sherwood Tubman	Ecosystem Planner	NEPA
Deston Russell	Engineer Tech	Engineering/Hazmat
Sondra Nolan	ROW Specialist	Rights-of-way

The Proposed Action has been screened for compliance with the Endangered Species Act, The American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Historic Preservation Act, Bureau of Land Management policies related to the ecosystem objectives and concepts in the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan. Furthermore, this action has been screened from a landscape perspective and there are no effects anticipated from this action that would foreclose future management options in relation to the watershed management objectives identified through the Ecosystem Analysis.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ecosystem Planner  
Reviewed for format and consistency

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## References

USDI-BLM. 1995. Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan. Medford, Oregon

USDA-FS, USDI-BLM. 1994. Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. Pacific Northwest

USDA-FS, USDI-BLM. 2001. Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines. Portland, Oregon

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