

DECISION RECORD/RATIONALE/FONSI
3+3 FOREST MANAGEMENT PROJECT

I. DECISION: Implement Alternative 2 as described in the 3+3 Forest Management Project, Environmental Assessment (EA# 110-98-19). Specific actions of Alternative 2 are listed on Tables 1 & 2 of the environmental assessment. Implementation of this decision should include all project design features as described in the environmental assessment.

Implementation of this decision should also include the proposed mitigating measures #1 and #6, as described in the environmental assessment. *** **Mitigation #6 is modified to read: “except in areas where under burning is to occur”.**

MONITORING REQUIREMENTS - The following monitoring actions should be implemented as part of this project: Post harvest surveys should be completed in the 3rd year following completion of the project (all project activity) to determine the presence of Red Tree Voles. The objective is to see if the harvest prescriptions, coupled with all the buffering for Threatened/Endangered, Survey and Manage, Special Status Species, and riparian zones was adequate for maintaining red tree vole populations within the stands treated for this project.

II. RATIONALE: Implementing the proposed action will provide for and promote a wide variety of values and desired ecosystem condition objectives identified in the Medford District Resource Management Plan and the NW Forest Plan. It will also help meet the demand for wood products, reduce fuel loadings and support the local and regional economy. This action incorporates several project design features which minimize short and long term adverse effects of the actions to be implemented. Although some short term adverse environmental effects have been identified, post treatment forest stand conditions will increase the potential of long term healthy forest conditions and provide improved habitats for late successional associated species. Existing watershed conditions are also expected to be improved through implementation of the road restoration and riparian parts of this project. Implementing this decision in certain riparian areas will also help meet the long term objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy identified in the NW Forest Plan by restoring vegetation conditions that will be more resistant to catastrophic fire and insect events and improving long term coarse woody conditions within the streams. There were no effects identified that would prevent attainment of the Northwest Forest Plan, provincial/regional landscape objectives or primary land allocation objectives of the Medford District Resource Management Plan.

The No Action Alternative was rejected because it does not meet the timber resources objectives identified in the Medford District Resource Management Plan related to matrix lands. In particular, objectives related to a sustainable supply of forest products, promoting tree survival and growth, reducing risk of stand loss from fires, animals, insects and diseases would be unmet.

Alternative number 3 is rejected primarily because the East and West Fork watersheds are both above the 40% threshold for voles. In addition the larger trees normally used by Red Tree Voles for habitat in the proposed harvest units are being left under the prescriptions being applied. In addition riparian buffers and additional clumps of trees that are being buffered within the stands for protection of survey and manage species and for protection of botanical resources can serve as Red Tree Vole Habitat. The silvicultural prescriptions being applied are expected to produce better quality vole habitat in the long term. After the EA was written, surveys were conducted that indicated that the presence of Red Tree Voles are not as prevalent as originally thought. Therefore, the effects discussed in the environmental assessment can be considered less than portrayed. The required monitoring under this decision will help biologists better understand the habitat affects of treating these kinds of stands, under the applied prescriptions. The primary question addressed with monitoring should be: can small isolated populations of Red Tree Voles maintain their presence in stands that have been treated with these types of prescriptions and complimented with the additional clumps of leave trees for protection of other plant and animal species.

Mitigation measure # 2 was rejected as a means to balance staffing workloads and funding so that those habitats and species requiring surveys receive highest priority. Present Great Grey Owl survey protocol is not required for management in stands at elevation levels of this project. However, biologist are encouraged to monitor these units if time and budget permits.

Mitigation #3,4 was rejected because this was done in part prior to preparation of this decision.

Mitigation #5, in part, is rejected because this could be interpreted to include existing skid trails. This would cause the development of new skid trails and prevent existing skid trails from being used. It is preferred to keep activities on existing skid trails to minimize additional compaction, erosion, and reduction of areas that will retard future tree growing opportunities. It is unlikely that plant populations that are at risk are growing in the current road or that the road provides the necessary habitat for those plants.. THEREFORE, THIS MITIGATION SHOULD REFER TO ONLY EXISTING MEADOWS. There are no effects identified that construction of a gate would mitigate. The construction of a gate is already part of the PDFs.

All Public input was evaluated as part of the decision process. Public EA review comments did not provide new information, specific data gaps or new analysis or substantial effects that would lead the decision maker to conclude that a Finding of No Significant Impact was not appropriate. Public comments received also did not identify significant new data which would alter the effects described in the environmental assessment.

This decision is consistent with the Medford District Resource Management Plan and the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. This decision is also consistent with the Endangered Species Act, The Native American Religious Freedom Act and cultural resource management laws and regulations.

III. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: On the basis of the information contained in the environmental assessment for the subject project, it is my determination that the decision stated above does not constitute significant effects to the quality of the human environment. In addition this project does not exceed the range of effects discussed in the EIS documents to which the project EA is tiered. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulations (43 CFR 5003.2(a&b)), the effective date of the decision as it relates to an advertised timber sale(s), will be when the first Notice of Sale appears in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located. This establishes the date of decision for those components of this decision record that would appear in a timber sale prospectus. This also establishes the date for the initiation of a protest period in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.3.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulation 43 CFR 5003.2 (a&c), the effective date of the decision, as it pertains to actions which are not part of an advertised timber sale, will be the date of publication of the Notice of Decision and FONSI in The Grants Pass Daily Courier. This establishes the date for initiation of the protest period in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.3. A notice may appear in other newspapers. However, the date of publication in the Grants Pass Daily Courier will prevail as it relates to establishing the beginning of a protest period.

Those contesting this decision document should state specifically which part of this decision is being protested or appealed and cite the appropriate CFR regulations.

/s/Robert C. Korfhage

7/6/99

Robert C. Korfhage
Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

Date