

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for

Pete Watson
Road Use Permit Application and Road Construction

China Basin Road System

EA# OR-110-02-02

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT

EA COVER SHEET

RESOURCE AREA: Grants Pass

EA Number OR-110-02-02

ACTION/TITLE: Pete Watson Road Use Permit Application and Road Construction

LOCATION: T.38 S., R. 5 W., Section 33, NWNW1/4, Willamette Meridian (Josephine Co.)

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Grants Pass Resource Area
Environmental Assessment

Pete Watson Road Use Permit Application
For Road Construction and Timber Haul

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Chapter 1

Purpose and Need for Action and Alternatives

A. Introduction

This environmental assessment (EA) tiers to the following documents: a) the Record of Decision for the Medford District Resource Management Plan/EIS dated April, 1995 and b) the EIS and the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl dated April, 1994 and the Standard and Guidelines for Late-Successional and Old Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and c) the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines dated January 2001. These documents are available for review in the Medford District Office.

The project area for the current proposal is within the project area of the Scattered Apples Forest Management Project. While a decision on the Scattered Apples is pending, this EA tiers to the analysis documented in the Scattered Apples Forest Management Project EA (March 1999)

The purpose of this EA is to assist in the decision making process by assessing the environmental and human effects resulting from implementing the proposed action. The EA will also assist in determining if an EIS needs to be prepared or if a finding of no significant impact beyond those addressed in the above noted EISs/RODs is appropriate.

B. Need for the Proposal

Mr. Pete Watson has requested a permit to construct a road across BLM administered land to access private land haul and to use the road and other using existing BLM roads to haul forest products. Issuance of the permit would allow Mr. Watson to access his land. He has requested the access so that he might manage his land and to conduct various forest management projects on his property. (See location map - Attachment A).

Mr. Watson previously (July 1992) acquired a right-of-way grant from the BLM (OR 48127) for long term non-commercial use of BLM road #38-5-33.1. That ROW authorizes Mr. Watson to rock and to maintain the road to his private lands. If Mr. Watson desires to utilize the new road included in the current application for long term non-commercial access to his private lands following the proposed commercial timber hauling, he will need to amend his existing ROW to allow such use. The amended ROW would allow Mr. Watson to continue to maintain the road in the future.

C. Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

1. Alternative 1: No Action

The no action alternative is to deny the permit application thereby denying Pete Watson permission to

construct and to use certain BLM roads to haul timber from his lands.

2. Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The proposed action is to grant the requested permit. The permit would allow Pete Watson to:

- a) construct approximately 200 feet of road across BLM lands as shown on Map 1 and,
- b) use the following BLM roads for the purpose of hauling forest products:

<u>Road #</u>	<u>Surface Type</u>	<u>Length</u>
38-5-33A	BST	0.56
38-5-33B	ASC	0.49
38-5-33.1	ASC	0.03

3. Project Design Features

Project design features (PDFs) are included for the purpose of reducing anticipated adverse environmental impacts which might stem from the implementation of the proposed action. The following PDF's are included as a part of this alternative:

- Construction and/or hauling activities would be seasonally and weather restricted. Construction and hauling would be prohibited during the wet season and permitted only when weather, soil moisture and road surface conditions permit. This is to preclude wet season hauling when road damage and erosion / sedimentation would potentially occur. The BLM's Authorized Officer will make the final determination on appropriate weather conditions.
- The road will be outsloped and standard BLM cross dips with protected outlet would be installed.
- Slash material resulting from clearing the right-of-way prior to construction will be disposed of by piling and burning. Material shall be kept within the road clearing limits and shall be disposed of prior to road construction, during vegetation removal.
- The road would be constructed to minimal standards: 12' running surface, 5' clearing limits on each side of the road, and a rocked surface with a minimum thickness of 6 inches of 1.5 inch minus rock. (The new construction is behind an exiting gate located at the junction of Road 38-5-33 with Road 38-5-33.1).

Chapter 2

Environmental Consequences

A. Introduction

Only substantive site specific environmental changes caused by implementing the proposed action or alternatives are discussed in this chapter. If an ecological component is not discussed, it should be assumed that the resource specialist has considered affects to that component and found the proposed action or alternatives would have minimal or no effects. In addition, unless addressed specifically the following were found not to be affected by the proposed action or alternatives: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC), cultural, historical resources, Native American religious sites, prime or unique farmlands, floodplains, endangered, threatened or sensitive plant, animal or fish species, water quality, wetlands/riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers and wilderness areas.

General affects from "typical" actions of this nature have been previously described in the Medford District Resources Management Plan or the Final Supplemental EIS on the Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl.

B. Site Specific and Cumulative Beneficial or Adverse Effects of the Alternatives

1. Alternative 1: No Action

Denial of the permit application would result in the applicant finding an alternate access route. No adverse impacts would occur to the public lands involved in the present proposal.

2. Alternative 2: Proposed Action

a. Resource: Fisheries

The proposed road construction is located outside of riparian reserves. The closest streams are intermittent, and do not support fish. These streams are outside of the project area and flow more than 2 miles before reaching coho or coho critical habitat in Williams Creek and West Fork Williams Creek. Hauling permitted under this proposed action will take place on BLM roads that are paved and have existing stream crossings.

No effects to fisheries or aquatic resources are anticipated from the proposed action. This determination includes short and long term, direct and indirect, and cumulative effects. Impacts have been considered temporally on the short term and long term scales, and spatially at the project/site and watershed scales. There is no effect to coho salmon or coho critical habitat from the proposed action. The proposed action does not hinder the attainment of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives of the Northwest Forest Plan. The proposed action is within the project area for the Scattered Apples Forest Management Project. The proposed action is consistent with the scope of projects considered

for cumulative effects analysis in the Scattered Apples Environmental Assessment of March 1999.

b. Resource: Soils

1) Alternative 2

The proposed road length is 200 feet and would be located on granitic Holland sandy loam. Natural slopes are moderate at less than 35%. The proposed road slope will be **10-12%** and less. Road cuts should be small at two feet and less. The granitic Holland soil is susceptible to erosion because of low cohesion. Also seasonal construction and hauling will substantially reduce chances for concentrated runoff to carry sediment downslope from the road. However, there is a slight possibility that a heavy local storm could generate rapid runoff during the dry season.

c. Resource: Wildlife

1. Survey and Manage Species

The project area was surveyed for S&M mollusk in compliance with the Survey Protocol for Terrestrial Mollusk Species from the Northwest Forest Plan, Draft Version 2.0, Oct. 29, 1997 transmitted via Instruction Memorandum OR 98-097. No S&M mollusk were located in the proposed right-of-way. The nearest population was located approximately 1000 feet from the project area near the top of the ridge. Survey forms and maps of the sites are available for review at the Medford BLM, Grants Pass Resource Area.

Red Tree voles (*Arborimus longicaudus*) surveys were conducted by the BLM on 8/13/97. No Red Tree voles were located in the project area.

2. Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E)

Suitable roosting and foraging habitat for the Northern Spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) is located in the project area. The project will remove approximately 0.10 acres of unsurveyed habitat on BLM land, 0.51 acres total. The nearest known spotted owl (China Basin) is located approximately one mile to the northeast. The action will reduce the amount of suitable habitat in the China Basin site by 0.10 acres (1,424 acres) and thus may affect Northern Spotted owls. However, the site will remain above the threshold of 1,340 acres and will not result in the "taking" of an owl site. The project has been consulted under Biological Opinion#1-7-98-F-321.

d. Resource: Cultural

The proposed right-of-way is within the Scattered Apples Forest Management project area and was surveyed on 8/25/98 as part of Scattered Apples project. Transects crossed the area where the ROW permit application exists. There were no cultural sites found in the vicinity of the proposed right-of-way.

e. Resource: Botany

Vegetation in the project area consists of Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine mixed with madrone and black oak. The understory is sparse with some tanoak and poison oak.

The project area was surveyed for special status and survey and manage vascular and non-vascular plants under the Scattered Apples Forest Management project. No special status or survey and manage species were found. Since road construction is only affecting approximately 200 feet of forest, impacts to the native vegetation in the vicinity would be negligible.

f. Resource: Fire and Fuels

The area for this proposed project is considered a high hazard, high risk, and high values-at-risk. The actions proposed in this Environmental Assessment will further increase the fire risk. Fire risk is defined as the source of ignition. Human actions greatly influence the pattern of fire occurrence and the number of fires on the landscape. With the new access and increased activity, the risk of fire will increase. Within the Scattered Apples Forest Management Project, fuel reduction activities are proposed for the area of this proposed action that will reduce the hazard, but not impact the overall risk.

Chapter 3

Agencies and Persons Consulted

A. Public Involvement / Comment Opportunity

The completed EA will be made available for a 15 day public comment period.