

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE
GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA

Decision Memorandum on Action and for Application of:
Categorical Exclusion 1.13

**BISCUIT FIRE EMERGENCY STABILIZATION AND REHABILITATION PLAN CE
SOURGRASS CREEK LOG PLACEMENT
CE # OR 117-04-25**

I. Purpose and Need for the Action

A. Proposed Action Title / Type: Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) on the Biscuit Fire.

B. Location: BLM land in the North Fork Silver Creek Watershed specifically in Sourgrass Creek on the Grants Pass Resource Area, Medford District BLM.

Township/Range/Section: T35S-R9W-Section 9.

Land Use Allocation: Riparian Reserve within an LSR

C. Need / Rationale for the Proposed Action:

The Biscuit Fire burned a portion of the BLM land within the North Fork Silver Creek watershed, in the summer of 2002. The fire burned about 50% of the BLM North Fork Silver Creek watershed at high and moderate severity levels. An Emergency, Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan (ESRP) was written by a BLM team which identified two areas of emphasis: watershed concerns and damage to forested stands. The ESRP recommended felling trees and placing logs instream where these can help store sediment and collect small debris. Several drainages including Sourgrass Creek were identified to have the potential to be negatively affected due to the burn severity and the steepness of the burned area. The team identified the potential for a damaging sediment flow in the event of a winter storm. Peak stream flows will likely increase and overall water yield should increase as a result of the fire. The North Fork Silver Creek drainage is an area of very high precipitation, at high risk of rain-on-snow events, and dominated by steep slopes with colluvial soils. The increased extent of open areas due to the fire will serve to exacerbate the rain-on-snow effect of multiplying surface runoff rates, thus increasing erosion and peak stream flows. Sediment inputs which cannot be processed adequately by stream systems can degrade local resident fish habitat and downstream anadromous fish habitat. The expected range of large wood is 25-80 pieces of large wood per mile in the Siskiyou Mountains (LSR assessment). The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) recommend 48 large logs per mile. There are less than 20 large logs in the section of Sourgrass Creek proposed for wood placement. Sourgrass Creek supports rainbow and cutthroat trout. The current condition of Sourgrass Creek is below ODFW recommended levels of large wood for salmonid habitat.

Adding large wood into the stream will aid in capturing and storing sediment, reducing downstream sedimentation and dissipating high stream flows. The logs will catch smaller woody debris and create pockets for sediment deposition. The log jams slow the water which leads to fine sediment depositing. The log jams also encourage flow into side channels and on the flood plain. By spreading the flow out, especially during high flow, the energy is dissipated therefore stream banks remain stable. In addition, the large wood will improve fish habitat. Juvenile and adult salmonids depend on large wood and log jams for summer and winter habitat needs. Large wood and log jams create pools, provide cover, promote secondary channels, and capture spawning gravel. These habitat features are important for juvenile and adult salmonids to complete their lifecycle.

D. Description of the Proposed Action:

A fire line was constructed around the northern portion of the North Fork Silver Creek Watershed. Trees were felled during construction and the logs were decked on a landing along Forest Service road 2411 in T34S-R9W-34. The BLM sold the BLM portion of the log deck and a purchaser removed the merchantable logs in 2003. The purchaser left the unwanted cull logs. Approximately 10-15 of the BLM logs will be placed by helicopter into the first 0.65 miles of Sourgrass Creek in T35S-R9W-9. The landing is located approximately 2.0 miles from the placement sites in Sourgrass Creek. The logs are 20-40' in length and 12-20" diameter. Eight sites were identified by BLM fisheries biologists and hydrologist for log placement. The logs will be placed with approximately 1/3 of the length in the channel and 2/3 on the bank and will not be cabled in. Sites were chosen in areas with wide floodplains and the potential for secondary channels to develop. In some cases, secondary channels were present. The logs will help maintain and protect the secondary channels. These sites were chosen as potential areas for sediment to be deposited.

Following log placement by helicopter BLM fisheries biologists and hydrologists will assess the stream reach for further wood placement needs. If it is determined more wood is needed, alders will be felled in conjunction with the placed logs. Approximately 2-3 alders will be felled 5-10 feet upstream from the log. The felled alders will increase the complexity and aid in the creation of a log jam. Complex log jams are more capable of trapping and storing sediment and creating fish habitat. This stream reach has a high density of 8-10" DBH alders. The minimal amount of alders to be felled will therefore not decrease the amount of shade in Sourgrass Creek or negatively effect bank stability. Creating log jams will dissipate stream energy and actually aid in maintaining bank stability.

II. Plan Conformance

The proposed action is in conformance with the following plans:

Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl 1994. United States Department of Interior and Agriculture.

- **Fire/Fuels Management Standards and Guidelines page. C-35**
Immediately establish an emergency team to develop a rehabilitation treatment plan needed to attain Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives whenever Riparian Reserves are significantly damaged by wildfire.

Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. 1994. United States Department of Interior and Agriculture.

- **Late Successional Reserves – Habitat Improvement Projects. Pg. 67**

Projects designed to improve conditions for fish, wildlife or watersheds should be considered if they provide late-succession habitat benefits of their effect on late-successional associated species is negligible.

Record of Decision Amending Resource Management Plans for Seven Bureau of Land Management Districts and Land and Resource Management Plans for Nineteen National Forests Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. 2004. United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management and United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.

- This decision was meant to clarify the provisions relating to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy. The decision was to emphasize the original intent of the ACS to “maintain existing conditions or implement actions to restore conditions at the fifth-field watershed scale, over the long term.”

Record of Decision and Management Plan, 1995. United States Department of Interior, Medford District Bureau of Land Management.

- **Management Action/Direction - Fire Management - page 30 & 90**

Immediately establish an emergency team to develop a rehabilitation treatment plan needed to attain Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives whenever Riparian Reserves are significantly damaged by wildfire.

- **Management Actions/Direction – Habitat Improvement Projects in an LSR. Pg. 34.**

Design projects to improve conditions for fish...and watersheds if they provide late-successional habitat benefits or if their adverse effect on late-successional associated species is negligible.

- **Management Actions/Direction – Watershed and Habitat Restoration in Riparian Reserves. Pg. 31.**

Design and implement watershed restoration projects in a manner that promotes long-term ecological integrity of ecosystems...and attains Aquatic Conservation Strategy and riparian reserve objectives.

- **Management Actions/Direction – Fish and Wildlife Management. Pg. 31.**

Design and implement fish and wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement activities in a manner that contributes to attainment of Aquatic Conservation Strategy and riparian reserve objectives.

- **Aquatic Conservation Strategy – Key Watersheds Pg. 23**

North Fork Silver Creek is located in a Key Watershed, the RMP provides direction to “Give highest priority to watershed restoration in key watersheds.”

- **Aquatic Conservation Strategy – Watershed Restoration Pg. 23**

“Restore watershed processes to recover degraded habitat.”

Late Successional Reserve Assessment. 1995. Department of Agriculture-Siskiyou National Forest and Department of the Interior-Medford District Bureau of Land Management.

- Large woody material lacking in streams and on the ground. Maintain and design needs for large wood material. Recommends placing large wood in streams, focusing in streams with native fish.

Silver Creek Watershed Analysis. 2003. Department of the Interior-Medford District Bureau of Land Management. Pg. 93.

- Where appropriate based on local site conditions, improve instream complexity by adding key pieces of wood.

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan. 2002. United States Department of Interior, Medford District Bureau of Land Management. Pg. 28-30.

- The ESRP was prepared in accordance with the Interagency Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Handbook and Bureau of Land Management Supplemental ESR Draft Guidance (20 May 2002). The ESRP recommends “using a combination of boulder placement, felling trees, placing logs, and lining whole trees with rootwads to position large woody debris with boulders instream where these can help store sediment and collect small debris”. The lack of roads near the site prohibits boulder placement, but logs will be placed and trees felled.

III. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act

The proposed action qualifies as a categorically excluded action under the following BLM categorical exclusions (Department Manual 516 DM 2, Appendix 1):

1.13 Post-fire rehabilitation activities not to exceed 4,200 acres (such as tree planting, fence replacement, habitat restoration, heritage site restoration, repair of roads and trails, and repair of damage to minor facilities such as campgrounds) to repair or improve lands unlikely to recover to a management approved condition from wildland fire damage, or to repair or replace minor facilities damaged by fire. Such activities: Shall be conducted consistent with agency and Departmental procedures and applicable land and resource management plans; Shall not include the use of herbicides or pesticides or the construction on new permanent roads or other new permanent infrastructure; and Shall be completed within three years following a wildland fire.

The application of this categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment.

The proposed action has been reviewed to determine if any of the exceptions to CEs apply (516 DM 2, Appendix 2). None apply.

IV. Persons and Agencies Consulted

In developing the ESRP, eleven resource specialists were brought together from the Grants Pass Resource Area to form an Interdisciplinary Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Team. The team’s task was to conduct an analysis of fire damages on the BLM Lands affected by the fire and potentially affected areas down stream. ESRP activities required the

District Manager, State Office, and Washington Office approval.

Discussion/coordination with Dave Clayton, USFWS, (consulting biologist for USFS BAER Team for Biscuit Fire) on September 12, 2002. Conclusion: All actions proposed under the ESRP would be unlikely to have an effect on listed species.

No consultations with National Marine Fisheries Service are required since no federally listed fish are affected. No consultations with the US Fish and Wildlife Service are required since no federally listed plants are affected.

A separate planning process and document (FS-2500-8) was completed by a USDA Forest Service Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation Team for all other lands affected by the fire. However, the BLM interdisciplinary team did correspond with the Forest Service when designing the ESRP.

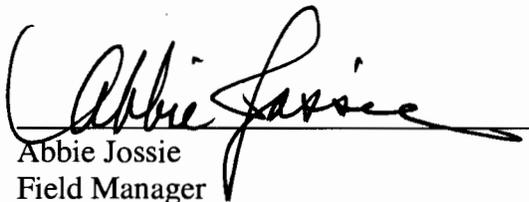
VI. Decision and Rationale on Action

It is my decision to implement the project, as described, with the following mitigation measures:

I have reviewed the plan conformance statement and have determined that the proposed actions in conformance with the approved land use plan and that no further environmental analysis is required.

V. Implementation Date

This project will be implemented on or after June 15, 2004.


Abbie Jossie
Field Manager

Grants Pass Resource Area

4-7-04
Date

VI. Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to anyone who believes they are adversely affected by this Decision. Administrative recourse is available in accordance with BLM regulations and must follow the procedures and requirements described in 43 CFR 5003 - Administrative Remedies.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulation 43 CFR 5003.2 (a&c), the effective date of this decision will be the date of publication of the Notice of Decision in The Grants Pass

Daily Courier. Publication of this notice establishes the date initiating the protest period provided for in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.3.

Any contest of this decision should state specifically which portion or element of the decision is being protested and cite the applicable CFR regulations

VII. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision, contact:

Doug Henry
NEPA Coordinator
Grants Pass Resource Area
Medford District BLM
3040 Biddle Road
Medford OR, 94504
(541) 618-2276

NEPA COMPLIANCE
CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW
CE #OR117-04-25

BISCUIT FIRE EMERGENCY STABILIZATION AND REHABILITATION PLAN
Sourgrass Creek Log Placement

The Department of the Interior Manual 516 2.3A(3) and Appendix 2 requires the review of the following exceptions to categorical exclusion. If it is determined that any of the following exceptions apply to the proposed action, the proposed project is not categorically excluded and environmental documents must be prepared:

- 1) Have significant adverse effects on public health or safety.
Yes No Remarks:

- 2) Have adverse effects such unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation, or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, sole or principle drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, flood plains, or ecologically significant or critical areas, including those listed on the Department's National Register of Natural Landmarks.
Yes No Remarks:

- 3) Have highly controversial environmental effects.
Yes No Remarks:

- 4) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involves unique or unknown environmental risks.
Yes No Remarks:

- 5) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects
Yes No Remarks:

- 6) Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.
Yes No Remarks:

- 7) Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

() Yes (x) No Remarks:

8) Have adverse effects a species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these Species.

() Yes (x) No Remarks: *Follow seasonal restrictions for northern spotted owl. No work between March 1 - June 30. Seasonal restriction may be waived if owls aren't nesting or are located outside of the affected area.*

9) Requires compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.

() Yes (x) No Remarks:

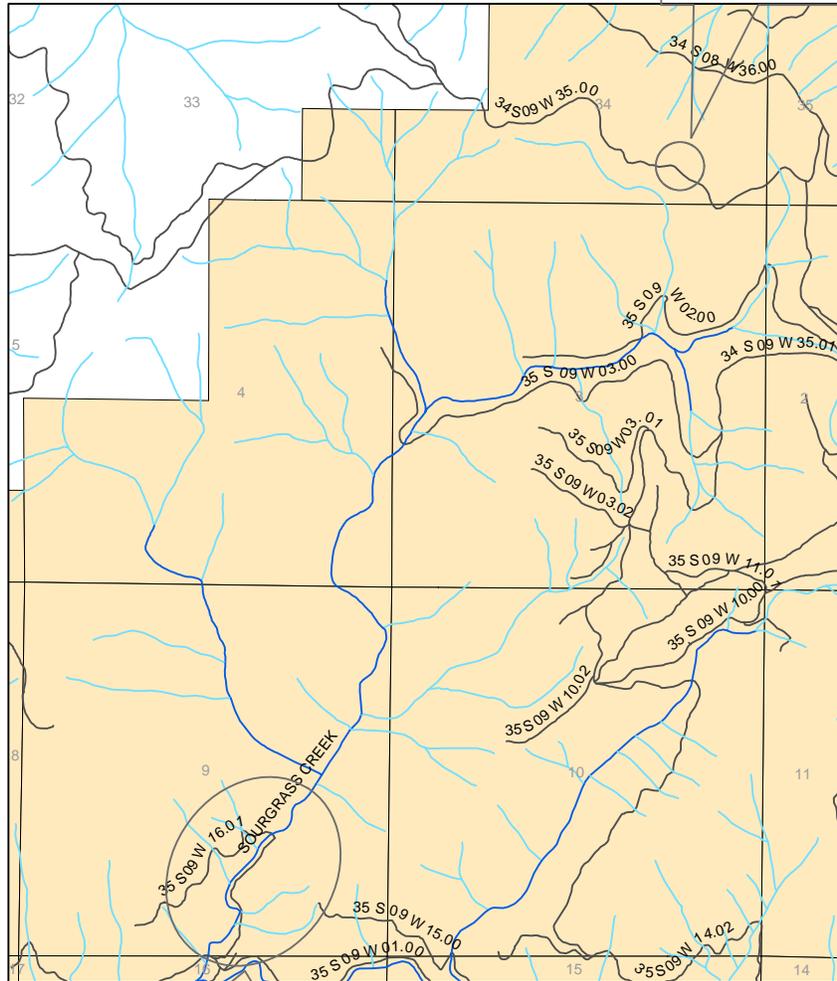
10) Threaten to violate a Federal, State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

() Yes (x) No Remarks:

Reviewer(s): <u><i>Conan [unclear]</i></u>	Date: <u><i>4/6/04</i></u>
Silviculture/ Port Orford Cedar Specialist	
<u><i>And Robin</i></u>	<u><i>4/5/04</i></u>
Botanist	
<u><i>Viva Brennan</i></u>	<u><i>4/5/04</i></u>
Cultural Resources	
<u><i>Stephani Messink</i></u>	<u><i>4/5/04</i></u>
Fisheries Biologist	
<u><i>Mike Sider</i></u>	<u><i>4/6/04</i></u>
Wildlife Biologist	
<u><i>My Mathews</i></u>	<u><i>4/6/04</i></u>
Soils/Hydrology	

Sourgrass Creek log placement in the North Fork Silver Creek Watershed T35S-R9W-S9

logging deck



Legend

- Fish Not Verified
- Fish Presence Verified
- Roads
- BLM

log placement

0.4 0.2 0 0.4 Kilometers

Map created by: Sharon Frazey
Date: 4/5/04