



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE
3040 BIDDLE ROAD
MEDFORD, OREGON 97504

DECISION RECORD/RATIONALE/FONSI *Wildrose Fuel Hazard Reduction* (EA # OR117-04-02)

I. DECISION

The decision is to implement the proposed action for the Wildrose Fuel Hazard Reduction as described in its environmental assessment (EA) with one exception: if lumber paper is not available for covering burn piles, plastic may be used. Implementation of this decision will include all project design features as described in the EA.

II. RATIONALE

This project will reduce fire hazard within close proximity to several residences in a rural interface area. Fuels will be reduced and altered so that if wildfire does occur, its rate of spread and extent will be reduced. Furthermore, fire suppression will be safer and access easier. Finally, habitat diversity and condition will be improved for many species.

This action incorporates project design features that minimize potential short and long term adverse effects of the actions to be implemented. No adverse cumulative effects have been identified.

The No Action alternative was rejected because it does not meet the RMP's objective for reducing wildfire hazard in rural interface areas (RMP pp. 88-89).

In addition to discussions between adjacent landowners and BLM personnel that expressed support for the project, one scoping letter and two comment letters were received, all of which expressed overall support for the project. One commenter encouraged prioritizing fuels reduction around homes, which this project accomplishes. Another supporter expressed concern about future fuel hazard and the possibility that potentially unstable areas had not been adequately identified and that there could be erosion. Concern was also expressed that the prescribed fire would not be "cool" underburns. The EA does note that no unstable areas had been located but, if such areas were located, they would not receive the proposed vegetation treatments (EA p. 5) and thus, would be buffered. The BLM shares the concern about potential damage to the granitic soil due to the use of prescribed fire. As the EA notes, spring burns will be conducted. Higher soil moisture content in the spring reduces the potential for soil damage and loss of soil productivity.

One commenter pointed out that riparian reserves could be required (per the Northwest Forest
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Plan's standards and guides) along "ephemeral streams" if annual scour and deposition was present. The commenter noted the EA's statement (p. 2) that no riparian reserves existed in the project area may not, therefore, be correct. One purpose of the stream surveys is to identify stream reaches that require riparian reserves based on the annual scour and deposition criteria. The surveys did not find any streams that met these criteria, thus no riparian reserves. The EA's language could have been clearer. As implementation of projects proceed, BLM employees informally review site conditions for unstable areas or streams that warrant additional protection per riparian reserve criteria. If they are found, appropriate buffers will be implemented per the RMP.

This decision is consistent with the *Medford District Resource Management Plan*, 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* and the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines*. This decision is also consistent with the Endangered Species Act; the Native American Religious Freedom Act; other cultural resource management laws and regulations; Executive Order 12898 regarding Environmental Justice; and Executive Order 13212 regarding potential adverse impacts to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution.

This project is also consistent with and promotes the goals of the National Fire Plan by reducing fire hazard on public lands and within the rural interface area. The project also advances the Bureau of Land Management's Strategic Plan for FY2000-2005, specifically mission goals 1.4 (reduce threats to public health, safety and property) and 2.2 (restore at-risk resources and maintain functioning systems).

III. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on information contained in the EA, the project's record, and on comments received from the public regarding the project, it is my determination that the proposed action will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. During scoping and the public comment period, those who commented shared their preferences on how to implement the project or proposed additional objectives, but no new impacts were brought to light that would indicate a need for further analysis. This project does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This conclusion is also based on a consideration of both the context and intensity of the impacts of the selected action(s) (40 CFR § 1508.27). **Context** refers to analysis of environmental consequences at various social or geographic scales. For this project, impacts were assessed at both the site-specific and 5th field watershed scales. **Intensity** refers to the severity of impacts. Conclusions regarding intensity are supported by the following findings:

1) Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects. Both adverse and beneficial impacts will result from the project. Both have been considered in concluding that there will be no adverse impacts at the 5th

field watershed scale and inconsequential impacts at the site-specific scale for the following issues (resources not mentioned are expected to have no impacts at any scale): erosion, sedimentation, noxious weed dispersal, air quality and wildlife disturbance.

2) *The degree of the impact on public health or safety.* No adverse effects to public health or safety have been identified. Reduced fuel hazard, especially near residences, greatly benefits public safety.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area.* The project area is contiguous to Cathedral Park however there is no indication that the project will adversely impact it. Nor will it impact wild and scenic rivers, wetlands, ecologically critical areas or cultural or historical features. The 120 acre project area is almost entirely surrounded by private residences, making this site especially suitable for fuel hazard reduction.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.* There is no indication of any highly controversial effects on the quality of the human environment.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* There is no indication that the effects on the human environment are highly uncertain and/or involve unique or unknown risks.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.* The action is not precedent setting. Fuel hazard reduction is a typical activity.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* There is no indication that the actions will appreciably contribute to any cumulative impacts at the site-specific or watershed scale.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect National Historic Register listed or eligible to be listed sites or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.* There is no indication that the action will cause loss or destruction of any scientific, cultural, or historical resources (no sites were found in the project area).

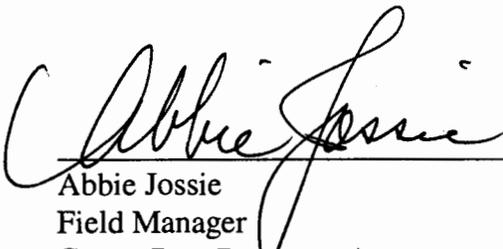
9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.* No ESA listed species or ESA identified critical habitat have been found in the project area.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.* There are no indications that the action will violate any environmental protection law or requirement.

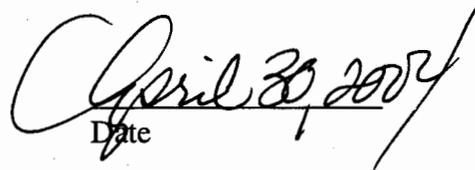
IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

This decision is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Administrative recourse is available in accordance with BLM regulation and must follow the procedures and requirements described in 43 CFR § 5003, Administrative Remedies.

In accordance with BLM Forest Management Regulation 43 CFR § 5003.2 (a&c), the effective date of the decision will be the date of publication of the Notice of Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in the Grants Pass Daily Courier. Publication of this notice will establish the date initiating the protest period provided for in accordance with 43 CFR § 5003.3. Any contest of this decision should state specifically what portion or element of the decision is being protested and cite the applicable CFR regulations.



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Date