

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for the

*Wildrose Fuel Hazard Reduction Project*

EA# OR-117-04-02

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

March 2004

Dear Reader:

We appreciate your interest in the BLM's public land management activities. We also appreciate your taking the time to review this environmental assessment (EA). If you would like to provide us with written comments regarding this project or EA, please send them to Abbie Jossie, Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area at 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504 or email them to [or110mb@or.blm.gov](mailto:or110mb@or.blm.gov).

If you would like to comment confidentially, please be aware that comments, including names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review or may be held in a file available for public inspection and review unless you request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this clearly at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or officials of organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

I look forward to your continued interest in the management of our public lands.

Abbie Jossie  
Field Manager  
Grants Pass Resource Area

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

EA COVER SHEET

RESOURCE AREA: Grants Pass FY & EA # OR-117-04-02

ACTION/TITLE: Wildrose Fuel Hazard Reduction

LOCATION: Wildrose / Cloverlawn Road Area: T37S, R5W, Sec. 5, Wm., Josephine Co.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Abbie Jossie - Field Manager  
Medford District Office, BLM  
3040 Biddle Road  
Medford, Oregon 97504  
(541) 618-2200

Interdisciplinary Preparers	Title	Resource Values	
Tim Gonzales*	Fire Mitigation Specialist	Team Leader/Fuels	
Dennis Glover	GIS Specialist	GIS	
Robin Snider*	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife & Prime/Unique Lands	
Armand Rebischke*	Botanist	T&E Plants	
Stephanie Messerle*	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries	
Paul Podesta*	Engineer	Roads	
Lisa Brennan*	Archeologist	Cultural Resources	
Dave Maurer	Soil Scientist	Soils/Hydrology	
Tom Dierkes	Forester	Vegetation Specialist	
Jeanne Klein	Recreation Planner	Recreation/VRM	

\* Project Planning Core Team Member

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION.....	1
1.2 PROJECT LOCATION .....	1
1.3 LAND USE ALLOCATIONS AND OBJECTIVES.....	2
1.4 COMMONLY USED TERMS.....	2
<b>2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES.....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION .....	3
2.2 ALTERNATIVE 2: PROPOSED ACTION.....	3
<b>3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 SOIL AND WATER.....	8
3.2 BOTANY AND VEGETATION.....	9
3.3 WILDLIFE.....	10
3.4 FIRE AND FUELS.....	13
3.5 RECREATION, VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.....	13
<b>4.0 AGENCIES AND PERSONS CONSULTED.....</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT .....	15
4.2 AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENT AND COMMENT PROCEDURES .....	15
<b>APPENDIX A. MAPS .....</b>	<b>16</b>
MAP 1. WILDROSE URBAN INTERFACE FUELS REDUCTION - VICINITY MAP.....	16
MAP 2. WILDROSE URBAN INTERFACE FUELS REDUCTION – TREATMENT MAP.....	17
<b>APPENDIX B. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>APPENDIX C. FUEL REDUCTION TOOLS .....</b>	<b>19</b>

## **1.0 Introduction**

This environmental assessment (EA) will assist in the decision-making process by assessing the environmental and human effects resulting from implementing the proposed project or alternatives. The EA will also assist in determining if an environmental impact statement (EIS) needs to be prepared or if a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is appropriate.

This EA tiers to the following documents:

1. *Final EIS and Record of Decision for the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) (June 1995);*
2. *Final Supplemental EIS on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (February 1994);*
3. *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and its attachment A entitled Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (April 13, 1994).*
4. *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (January 2001).*

### **1.1 Purpose of and Need for Action**

The urban-wildland interface area around Murphy and Grants Pass is identified in the National Fire Plan as a community at risk from wildland fire. The project area is almost completely bordered by private land with private residences. In most cases, the dense vegetation found throughout the project area occurs right up to residential property boundaries, prompting several requests from homeowners for the BLM to address this fuel hazard. Approximately 75 years of flammable vegetation accumulation has resulted in severe wildfire hazard in the project area. The absence of frequent landscape wildfire has led to high tree and brush densities and dense patches of merchantable and non-merchantable size conifers.

The primary purpose of the project is to treat vegetation to alter fire behavior, thus reducing the potential for high severity fire, resource damage or property loss. This will complement fuel hazard reduction work that is being done by adjacent private property owners thereby leveraging the work of all project vicinity landowners.

### **1.2 Project Location**

The 120 acre project area is in T37S, R5W, Sec. 5, west half (see Map 1, Vicinity Map). Existing roads would be used to access the site, primarily through Wildrose Lane which is adjacent to the project area. The BLM has no legal road access to the project area but does have foot/horse trail access from the northwest.

### **1.3 Land Use Allocations and Objectives**

The project area is located in matrix and in the Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA). Objectives for these land allocations are in the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP) and the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP). Stream surveys (September 2003) identified all draws as ephemeral; therefore, there are no riparian reserves in the project area.

### **1.4 Commonly Used Terms**

*Hazard* is defined herein as the existence of a fuel complex that constitutes a threat of wild land fire ignition, unacceptable fire behavior and severity, or suppression difficulty. *Fuels* include dead or down wood and live vegetation. Dead, down fuels are woody materials that can support fire ignition and spread and is usually expressed in tons/acre. Live fuels grow vertically and their densities are usually expressed as crown base height and crown bulk density. *Canopy base height* is the vertical distance from the ground to the bottom of tree crowns. The greater the crown base height, the longer the flame length needed to ignite the crowns. *Crown bulk density* is the amount of crown fuels within a given area and is usually expressed as pounds of foliage per cubic foot. The greater the crown bulk density, the easier it is for crown fires to spread.

## **2.0 Proposed Action and Alternatives**

### **2.1 Alternative 1: No Action**

The no action alternative is defined as not implementing the proposed action. The no action alternative also serves as a baseline for evaluating the environmental effects of the action alternative. Inclusion of this alternative is done without regard to whether or not it is consistent with the Medford District RMP.

The no action alternative is not static: implied is a continuation of current environmental conditions and trends including vegetative succession, habitat changes, erosion, and fuel hazard increases.

### **2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

#### **2.2.1 Objectives**

The following objectives may conform to the stated purpose and need of reducing fuel hazard and the risk of severe wildfire. However, objectives may also be for other purposes but which are not in conflict with and are often enhanced by fuel hazard reduction.

##### **2.2.1.1 Wildlife Habitat Maintenance and Enhancement**

Maintain or enhance woodlands, oak woodlands, and oak savannahs by reducing fuel hazard, stand density and encroaching vegetation (current stand densities are estimated at nearly three times that which would occur under a more natural pattern of frequent disturbance). Enhancing the vigor of hardwood stands improves acorn crops, promotes sprouting, and encourages development of a multi-age stand.

Maintain chaparral habitat.

Retain large diameter hardwoods, vigorous pine and large limbed, open growth Douglas-fir.

Reduce density of small diameter Douglas-fir and shrubs.

Encourage natural grass species diversity and extent.

##### **2.2.1.2 Botanical Habitat Restoration and Enhancement**

Maintain or enhance native species composition, diversity and vigor.

Minimize noxious weed spread and introduction.

### **2.2.1.3 Fuel Hazard Reduction**

Fuel structure and loading would be altered to moderate potential wildfire behavior and reduce fire severity. National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) fuel model changes characterize this objective:

- In brush fields where vegetation is continuous and at least 6' tall (fuel model 4), reduce brush from 13 tons/acre to approximately 4 tons/acre and break up fuel continuity (fuel model 5). This would result in conditions which, given a moderate 5 mph summer wind, flame length would decrease from 19' to 4'.
- In timbered stands, reduce stand density and litter accumulation (fuel model 9 reduced to a fuel model 8). With the same weather conditions as above, ground fire flame length would decrease from 2.6' to 1'.

Over the next five years, maintain reduced fire hazard conditions (see desired fuel loadings and fuel models, above).

### **2.2.1.4 Recreation**

Maintain the visual integrity along the existing trail in the northern part of the project area so that current types and levels of use may continue.

## **2.2.2 Proposed Treatments**

Fuel hazard reduction treatments would involve thinning and/or underburning vegetation on 120 acres of BLM administered land. Vegetation would be thinned using manual techniques. Slash would be piled by hand, covered with lumber paper and then burned. Under burning would also be used to create a mosaic pattern of treated and untreated areas. Some material may be removed from the site in the form of poles or firewood. Trees cut would be  $\leq 7''$  DBH. Conifers, hardwoods, and brush  $\leq 7''$  DBH may be left standing in order to achieve spacing between leave trees of 14-30'. Project implementation would initially take approximately six weeks and may be spread out for several months during the fall, winter or spring.

Follow up maintenance treatments would occur over the next 5 years. Light underburning within the next five years would maintain the reduced fire hazard. Resprouted hardwoods and shrubs ( $\leq 3''$  diameter) would be cut and left in place as fuel for under burning.

For detailed descriptions of treatment tools or methods, see Appendix C, Tools.

Down wood resulting from project implementation that is not burned would be available to surrounding private landowners as poles or fuel wood. .

### **2.2.2.1 Woodlands**

Douglas-fir  $\leq 7''$  DBH would be cut from interior woodlands, except in areas without pine or cedar  $> 7''$  DBH. Manzanita and ceanothus would also be cut.

Suppressed hardwoods  $\leq 7''$  DBH and with crown ratios  $\leq 20\%$  would be cut.

Trees with live crown ratios  $\geq 30\%$  would be retained at a density of 16-35 trees/acre. Priority species are oak, madrone, pine and cedar followed by Douglas-fir. Some cedar and oak seedlings and saplings would also be retained.

Suppressed and intermediate crown class sprouting tree species  $\leq 7''$  DBH would be cut to stimulate sprouting.

Tall, old manzanita that produce large berry crops would be retained at a density of  $\leq 6$ /acre. Retain shrub clumps up to 10' in diameter, spaced 25-35' apart.

Trees  $\leq 7''$  DBH may be left standing in order to achieve spacing between leave trees of 14-30'.

All snags  $> 7''$  DBH would be protected unless they need to be removed in order to build fireline. If snags present safety hazards, rather than felling them, there would be no fuel reduction treatment within one tree height of the snag. To protect snags and ensure worker safety, all hand piles would be placed beyond one tree height of snags. During future prescribed under burning, any large relict snags ( $> 20''$  DBH) would be protected from fire by pulling back vegetation from their bases and building a fire line around them unless they present a safety hazard.

Leave 15-20% of each treatment area untreated in the form of  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre or larger areas that are well distributed throughout the project area and are at least 100' apart.

Existing down wood  $\geq 16''$  diameter would be retained and protected from burning as much as possible.

#### **2.2.2.2 Brush Fields**

In the 30 acre continuous brush field in the southern portion of the project area, at least two "islands" per acre of brush would be left untreated. Islands would be approximately 25' x 25' to 35' x 35' in size and would be spaced approximately 20-45' apart measured from the outer perimeter. In addition to islands, moister microsites (often found on north aspects or in land form depressions) would also remain untreated. These moist sites historically would have had less frequent fire compared to surrounding areas and would likely have contain larger, more mature shrubs. During prescribed burning, acceptable loss of these islands would be  $< 20\%$ .

### **2.2.3 Project Design Features**

#### **2.2.3.1 Soils and Hydrology**

No areas of known or potential soil instability have been located in the project area. If they are later found, however, they would remain untreated.

Neither under burning ignition nor hand pile burning would occur within 10' of ephemeral draw bottoms. However, the fire would be allowed to creep into draw bottoms.

Due to fragile granitic soils, prescribed under burns would be cool, spring burns.

Motorized vehicles (e.g., trucks, ATVs, etc) would not be used in the project area.

### **2.2.3.2 Wildlife**

All snags would be maintained except those that present an unavoidable safety hazard or that need to be removed to build fire line. Felled snags would be left on site.

Habitat islands would be protected from under burning by pulling back cut vegetation from these areas. Burning would be conducted under cooler and more favorable conditions, which would minimize the loss of these habitat islands from burning.

Nesting migratory bird disturbance would be avoided or reduced by minimizing project activities, between April 15 and July 15.

If raptors are found nesting in the project area, seasonal operating restrictions, which would vary by species, would minimize potential impacts to reproductive success.

### **2.2.3.3 Botany (including special status species and noxious weeds)**

Native grasses and/or sterile wheatgrass would be seeded on burn pile scars to reduce erosion and invasion of non-native species.

### **2.2.3.4 Fuel Hazard Reduction - Burning**

A prescribed fire plan would address burning objectives and operational issues. The plan would include acceptable fuel moisture and weather parameters. Burning would be conducted under weather conditions that would help achieve burn objectives, including safety and controllability. Availability of adequate fire suppression resources would also be considered before burning. Prescribed fire plans include design features to reduce potential fire escape from control lines and include: weather and fuel moisture conditions that promote fire behavior that can be readily controlled by direct attack; numbers of people and equipment required as holding forces; and escape contingency requirements such as the availability of local and regional backup forces.

Prescribed burning would comply with the Oregon Department of Forestry's Smoke Management Program and the Department of Environmental Quality's Air Quality and Visibility Protection Program. Additional measures to reduce smoke emissions would include: mopping up as soon as practical after the fire; burning with lower fuel moisture in the smaller fuels to facilitate quick and complete combustion; burning with higher fuel moisture in the larger fuels to minimize consumption and burn out time; and covering hand piles to permit burning during the rainy season where there is a stronger possibility of atmospheric mixing and smoke dispersal.

During the future maintenance underburning, fire line construction and fire ignition would be performed manually. Fire lines would be built around burn units and other features designated for protection (large snags, etc.) Patrol and mop up would help prevent reburn and fire escape. A helicopter with water bucket may be used during mop up to help extinguish larger burning fuels and prevent reburn through the mosaic of remaining vegetation.

#### **2.2.3.5 Recreation**

Islands of untreated vegetation would be left along the trail. Edges of openings would be irregular where they cross the trail, so that there is not an abrupt edge perpendicular to the trail from untreated to treated.

Manzanita >6"DBH that is within 25' of the trail would remain untreated.

Trails would be signed to prevent off-trail use where fuels treatments create easily accessible openings.

#### **2.2.3.6 Cultural Resources**

If any cultural sites are found during project implementation, activities around the site would halt until a BLM archaeologist reviewed the site and determined appropriate protection measures.

### **3.0 Environmental Consequences**

Only substantive site-specific environmental changes that would result from 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 specialists have considered effects to that component and found the proposed action or alternatives would have minimal or no effects. Similarly, unless addressed specifically, the following were found to be unaffected by the proposed action or alternatives: air quality; areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC); cultural or 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. In addition, hazardous waste or materials are not directly involved in the proposed action or alternatives.

#### **3.1 Soil and Water**

##### **3.1.1 Affected Environment**

The northern section of the project is located in the Rogue River–Grants Pass 5<sup>th</sup> field watershed and within the Lower Rogue River–Grants Pass 6<sup>th</sup> field watershed. A small portion is located in the Murphy 5<sup>th</sup> field watershed and the Applegate-Murphy 6<sup>th</sup> field watershed.

The project area elevation range is 1,400-1,760'. Ephemeral draws are located within the project area. The area receives 36-38" of annual precipitation, predominately falling as rain. No streams within the 7<sup>th</sup> field watershed or the project area are listed as Water Quality Limited (303(d)).

Soils in the project area are mapped in the Soil Survey of Josephine County as primarily Siskiyou gravelly sandy loam. Siskiyou gravelly sandy loam is moderately deep and somewhat excessively drained. This is formed in colluvium derived primarily from granitic rock. Siskiyou soils usually have thin surface duff layers that help protect the mineral soil; however, because the duff and litter layer are usually less than an inch deep, these soils are vulnerable to concentrated flow erosion. Under bare soil conditions the hazard of water erosion is high. Furthermore, the top soil is thin and can be easily lost, resulting in minimal soil fertility with a poor ability to support vegetation regrowth.

The Timber Production Capability Classification (TPCC) for this area is withdrawn because it was considered a non-commercial low site. Soil type was not a factor in the TPCC classification.

##### **3.1.2 Environmental Consequences**

###### **3.1.2.1 Alternative 1: No Action**

Under the no action alternative, soil and water conditions would remain the same. However, a high intensity wildfire could adversely impact soils and water including:

- Increased erosion and sedimentation. Revegetation would occur slowly. Within ten years, sediment and erosion should return to pre-fire levels.
- Reduced soil productivity due to loss of the nutrient rich duff/litter layer and reduced soil organic matter.
- Increased soil compaction due to road development and heavy equipment use for fire suppression.
- Increased peak flows and water yield due to reduced vegetative cover.

### 3.1.2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Table 1 summarizes the short and long term effects of the proposed action.

Duration	Indicator	Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)
Short term (1-5 yrs)	Disturbance / Erosion	No change	Minimal negative
	Compaction		
	Organic matter		
Long term (5-20 yrs)	Disturbance / Erosion	Slight negative (assumes occurrence of a moderate to high intensity fire)	No change
	Compaction		
	Organic matter		

Maintenance under burning may occur after the initial treatment. Due to low fuel loadings and spring burning, the fire would be of low intensity. Large woody debris would not be consumed and the duff layer would be maintained, thus reducing the risk of erosion. .

Overall, adverse effects at the 7<sup>th</sup> field watershed level would be minimal and of short duration. A short term, minimal reduction of vegetative cover may result which could lead to a short term, negligible/non-measurable increase in water yield. In the event of a wildfire following fuel hazard reduction treatment, fire intensity would be less than without treatment. No short or long term increase in stream temperature is anticipated. No long term adverse effects are expected.

Cumulative hydrologic effects at the 7<sup>th</sup> field level would be negligible. Estimated compaction of the 7<sup>th</sup> field watershed is low to moderate and minimal additional compaction is expected.

## 3.2 Botany and Vegetation

### 3.2.1 Affected Environment

The project area contains a mixture of madrone, black oak, white oak, Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine on north slopes and draws, with patches of dense shrubbery on west, south and east slopes. No federally listed endangered, threatened or Bureau special status plant species (vascular, lichens or bryophytes) or noxious weeds were found in recent botanical surveys.

## **3.2.2 Environmental Consequences**

### **3.2.2.1 Alternative 1: No Action**

Hazardous fuels and the potential for severe wildfire would increase over time. Furthermore, increased competition from encroaching shrubs and trees could render existing large conifers susceptible to disease and insects.

### **3.2.2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

The project is located within the range of the federally endangered *Fritillaria gentneri* (FRGE). Although suitable habitat exists, no occurrences were found during surveys. Since no FRGE or any other federally or state listed endangered, threatened or bureau special status plant species were found, no effect to any of these species is anticipated.

The proposed action would have the following effects on vegetation:

- Tree and shrub cover would be reduced, which would invigorate understory herbaceous and other ground cover species.
- The potential for high intensity fire and vegetation loss would be reduced.
- Treated madrones would be likely to resprout vigorously. Manzanita and buckbrush would regenerate primarily from seed, as opposed to resprouting.
- Vegetation mosaics that result after treatment would provide for habitat diversity.
- The relatively cool burns that would be used during follow-up fuel maintenance treatments would be unlikely to adversely impact seed sources that develop in areas that are seeded immediately following initial fuel treatments (burn pile scars).

## **3.3 Wildlife**

### **3.3.1 Affected Environment**

Three plant associations occur in the project area: Douglas-fir-Ponderosa Pine/Poison Oak, Douglas-fir/Dry Shrub, and White Oak-Douglas-fir/Poison Oak. Habitat is diverse and includes a mosaic of white oak woodland and hardwood stands dominated by madrone and a few large diameter ponderosa pines. The primary tree species in the project area are ponderosa pine, sugar pine, Douglas-fir, madrone, white oak and manzanita. The majority of the project area is chaparral habitat, consisting of shrub species such as manzanita and wedge-leaf ceanothus. Dense thickets of decadent manzanita taller than 4' occur in the chaparral portions of the project area.

In general, conifers are in the mature age class and there are few relict trees. There are very few large diameter snags. Coarse wood is distributed throughout the area. There are a few small isolated conifer stands within the project area.

### **Special Status Species:**

**Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species:** The project area is not considered suitable nesting, roosting, or foraging habitat for northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*). The nearest known site is more than four miles away, so no seasonal restrictions are necessary. There is no suitable nesting bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) habitat in the project area or known sites adjacent to the project area; therefore, seasonal restrictions are not needed.

**BLM Sensitive Species:** The project area provides potential habitat for a number of BLM designated sensitive species including birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals.

### **Survey and Manage (S&M) Species:**

The project area is not considered suitable great gray owl (*Strix nebulosa*) habitat. The small pockets of conifer stands in the project area do not provide suitable nesting habitat for great gray owls, and the adjacent lands do not provide suitable foraging habitat.

There is no suitable red tree vole (RTV) (*Arborimus longicaudus*) habitat within the project area. In general, none of the project area meets the definition of suitable RTV habitat as described in the species' survey protocol (version 2.1). While 14-16" DBH Douglas-fir trees are present, there are inadequate numbers of large conifers to meet minimum RTV protocol triggers. Additionally, the small conifer stands in the project area are too small and isolated to provide suitable RTV habitat for a viable population.

The area contains suitable habitat for S&M terrestrial mollusks. Mollusk surveys were completed in the spring of 2002 using protocol in effect at that time, *Survey Protocol for Terrestrial Mollusk Species from the Northwest Forest Plan, Version 2.0*. No S&M mollusks were detected.

The project area provides potential habitat for five S&M bat species in the form of green trees and snags which could be used as roosts. Typically, foraging bats are strongly associated with bodies of water. Although the project area has no year round pools, it is still considered suitable foraging habitat.

### **Neotropical Migratory Land Birds:**

The project area provides habitat for migratory birds on the Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern list, such as Lewis' woodpecker, rufous hummingbird and the flammulated owl. The project area provides potential suitable nesting habitat for Lewis' woodpecker and the flammulated owl; however, based on the lack of mature conifers and large snags, this habitat is considered marginal. The project area provides potential suitable nesting habitat for the rufous hummingbird.

## **Other Wildlife:**

There are 16 acres of designated deer winter range in the southern portion of the project area. Deer are likely in the project area year round. However, forage is declining in the project area due to dense and decadent manzanita. The project area is isolated from public access for any but adjacent homeowners.

### **3.3.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### **3.3.2.1 Alternative 1: No Action**

Under the no action alternative, shrubs and small trees would continue to encroach upon mature hardwood and conifer forests, competing for resources and causing stress to the larger, dominant trees. Big game forage would decline and become more decadent. The increased density of decadent wedgeleaf would limit travel for wildlife species. Fuel hazard would continue to build, putting suitable special status species habitat at risk if a large stand replacing fire were to occur.

#### **3.3.2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

The primary impacts associated with the project would be changes in the horizontal and vertical structure of shrubs and small trees resulting in more open canopies and reduced hiding cover. As a result, some loss of nesting habitat for neotropical birds would be expected in the project area. However, habitat islands would be retained in a mosaic pattern throughout the project area. Untreated woodland and brush islands would provide escape, hiding, thermal, foraging and nesting cover for a wide range of animals (e.g., big game, neotropical birds). Retention of the large diameter snags would maintain nesting, roosting and foraging habitat for primary and secondary cavity excavators, and species dependent on cavity excavators such as the flammulated owl. Snag retention would also maintain any S&M bat habitat. If snags need to be felled for safety reasons, they would be left on site as coarse woody material that is used by reptiles and amphibians.

Species that benefit from greater tree and shrub densities may be impacted. However, many more wildlife species would benefit in the long term as vegetation density is reduced and habitat diversity is increased. Big game forage would improve due to increased nutrient content of herbaceous species and resprouted shrubs.

Disturbance due to project implementation activities (thinning, burning, etc.) would be of short duration (approximately six weeks) and would occur during the fall, winter or spring. Implementation disturbance could cause temporary displacement and modified behavior of wildlife for the duration of project activities. Nesting migratory bird disturbance would be minimized by refraining from project implementation, when and where feasible, between April 15 and July 15.

Because of the small size of the project area and the diversity of habitats that would exist after the proposed treatment, there is no evidence that the proposed action would adversely affect

special status or S&M species at the watershed level. The proposed action would not lead to the need to list any special status species as T&E species.

### **3.4 Fire and Fuels**

#### **3.4.1 Affected Environment**

The last fire known to occur in the vicinity was in 1959 and burned approximately 15 acres in the southeast portion of the project area. Currently, approximately 25% of the project area (mostly in the southern portion) is characterized by continuous brush fields at least 6' high (fuel model 4). The rest of the project area is primarily a conifer-hardwood mix (fuel model 9). High fuel densities could contribute to active crown fires and significant tree mortality in the event of a wildfire during high to extreme fire weather conditions.

#### **3.4.2 Environmental Consequences**

##### **3.4.2.1 Alternative 1: No Action**

Fire hazard would continue to increase as fuels increase. Therefore, the risk of severe, extensive, stand replacing fire would also increase due to difficulty of suppression and would likely result in loss of or damage to resources and property.

##### **3.4.2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

Fuel reduction treatments would alter approximately 70% of the live and dead fuel profile, thus reducing crown bulk density, fuel continuity, and crown fire risk. Canopy base height (the vertical distance from the ground to burnable vegetation) would increase, requiring greater flame lengths to ignite remaining vegetation. This fuel profile would slow wildfire spread and enable fire suppression personnel to more safely and efficiently control fires.

Following fuel hazard reduction treatments, fire hazard typically rebuilds more quickly in shrub lands due to vegetation resprouting than in forested areas. In as few as five years following treatment, shrub lands can present a considerable fire hazard. In forested areas, fire hazard can rebuild as quickly as 10 years. However, planned fuel maintenance treatments would slow this fuel buildup.

### **3.5 Recreation, Visual Resource Management**

#### **3.5.1 Affected Environment**

Cathedral Hills Park (T36S, R5W, Sections 31 and 29) includes a popular recreational trail system which runs through the project area. The park includes more than five miles of non-motorized trails for hiking, horse back riding and mountain bicycling. Because the park is just outside Grants Pass, the trails are heavily used. The northern part of the project area is scheduled for trail expansion in spring 2004 (Map 2). The new trail will branch off an existing trail in section 31, cross Josephine County land and enter the north half of section 5 (T37S, R5W). The

new trail will open to hiking, horseback riding and mountain bicycling and closed to motorized vehicles.

The RMP designates the entire project area as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class III. The characteristic landscape has vegetation that is uniform, with vertical conifers over a continuous low canopy. Houses are visible from below the project area.

### **3.5.2 Environmental Consequences**

#### **3.5.2.1 Alternative 1: No Action**

Current dispersed recreation trends would continue until the trail is built, after which use would increase. The vegetation surrounding the trail would remain dense and, combined with greater recreational use, would result in increased potential for fire ignition and spread. VRM Class 3 objectives would continue to be met, as there would be no change in the vegetation form, line, color and texture.

#### **3.5.2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

Current dispersed recreation trends would continue until the trail is built, after which use would increase. Treating vegetation adjacent to the trail would reduce the potential for fire spread. However, less vegetation around the trail could increase off-trail use. Signs instructing visitors to stay on official trails would help prevent unofficial trail development and erosion in openings created by fuels treatment.

Irregularly shaped islands of untreated vegetation along the trail would retain a canopy and visual irregularity which allows for a variety of experiences while traveling on the trail. Leaving large manzanita would also preserve visual integrity and provide additional shade. VRM Class 3 objectives would continue to be met, as there would be only moderate change in the vegetation form, line, color and texture. Islands of well distributed untreated vegetation would “partially retain the existing character of the landscape”. Management activities may attract attention but would not dominate the view of the casual observer.” This would be consistent with BLM VRM Class 3 standards for permissible levels of change. (BLM Manual H8410-1, 1986.)

### **3.6 Cultural Resources**

A cultural resource survey of the project area was performed on January 6, 2003 and September 4, 2003. An inventory strategy based on physiographic and cultural features was used to assign probability of locating cultural sites within the project area. Approximately half of the 120-acre project area was surveyed (63.2 acres) which consisted of 100% coverage of high probability lands, 20% of medium, and 5% of low. No cultural resources were discovered; therefore, no environmental effects are anticipated.

## **4.0 Agencies and Persons Consulted**

### **4.1 Public Involvement**

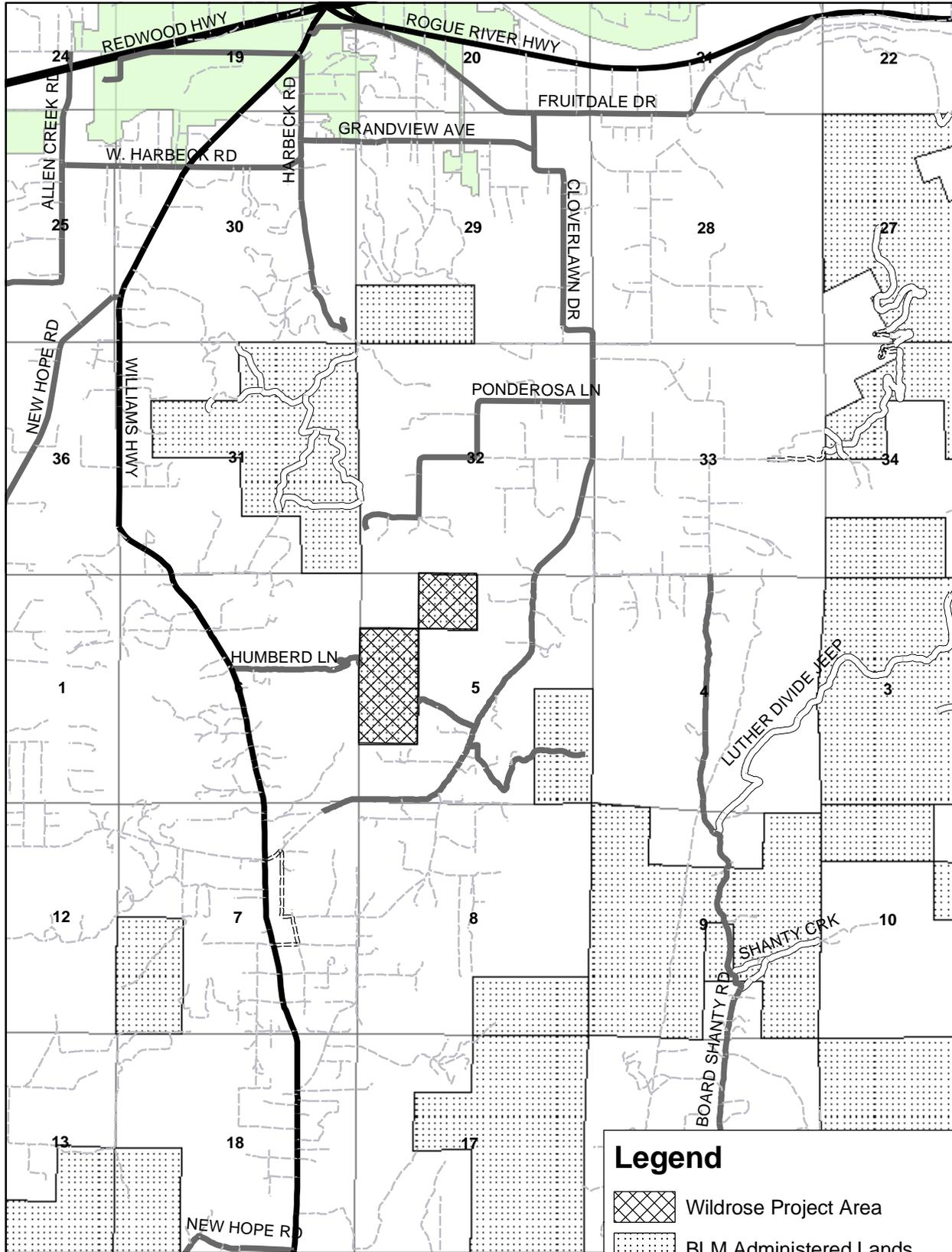
During scoping, 30 letters describing the proposal were sent to interested individuals, local and state governments, organizations and neighboring land owners. Adjacent landowners were contacted to discuss the project. Two presentations for interested communities occurred in October 2003. In October 2003, a power point presentation and discussion regarding fuel hazard reduction in general and specifics of this project were conducted for the Wildrose Homeowners Association and residents on Wallace Road. Extensive discussions about the Resource Area's prescribed burning program have been held with Josephine County and Oregon State Department of Forestry.

### **4.2 Availability of Document and Comment Procedures**

Copies of the EA will be available for public review in the BLM Medford District Office and online at [www.or.blm.gov/Medford/planning](http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford/planning). A formal 30 day public comment period will be held following an announcement in the Grants Pass Daily Courier.

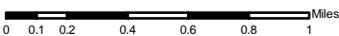
Written comments should be addressed to Abbie Jossie, Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area, at 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504. E-mailed comments may be sent to [or110mb@or.blm.gov](mailto:or110mb@or.blm.gov).

# Map 1 - Wildrose Urban Interface Fuels Reduction Vicinity Map



T37S-R5W

1:40,000



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.

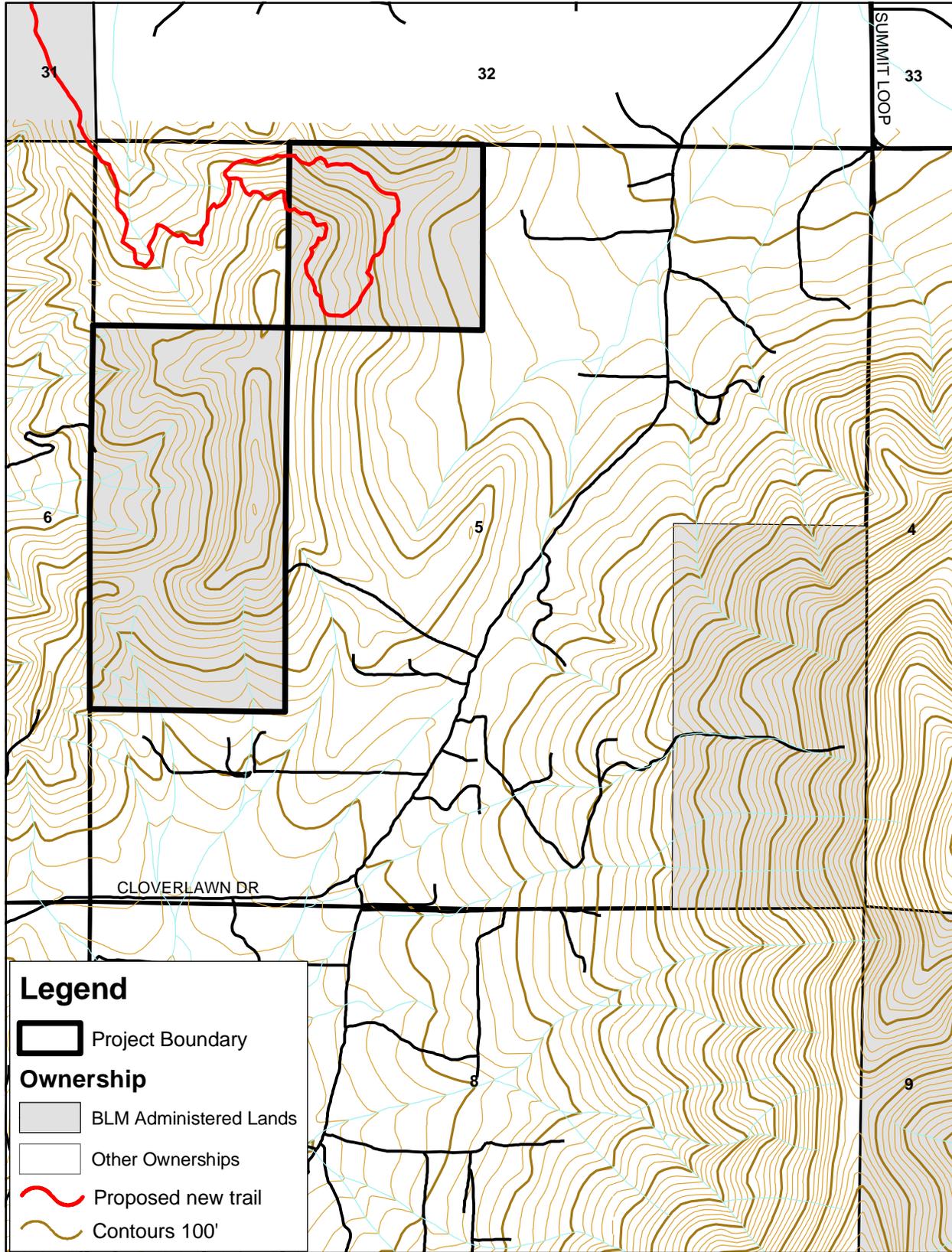
## Legend

-  Wildrose Project Area
-  BLM Administered Lands
-  Grants Pass Urban Growth Boundary



Mxd: D:\home\dglover\ahoe\WildRoseLoc.mxd  
 Prepared by: dglover  
 Creation Date: 9/22/2003 10:19:06 AM  
 Last Modified: 3/12/2004 9:35:37 AM  
 Machine: ORMD4583  
 Layers:  
 @home\dglover\misc\new\_gplli - polygon  
 @home\dglover\misc\gp\_ahs - arc  
 @ormd02\gis\ahs\distri\mod\_1\cov\cities - polygon  
 @home\dglover\misc\new\_gplli - polygon  
 D:\home\dglover\misc\action\_nxs

# Map 2 - Wildrose Urban Interface Fuels Reduction Treatment Map



T37S-R5W  
1:12,000

Mxd: D:\home\dglover\adhoc\WildRose.mxd  
 Prepared by: dglover  
 Creation Date: 9/15/2003 12:08:07 PM  
 Last Modified: 3/12/2004 9:23:49 AM  
 Machine: ORMD4583  
 Layers:  
 d:\home\dglover\trails\ch\_new\_gps - arc  
 d:\home\dglover\misc\new\_gplli - polygon  
 d:\home\dglover\misc\gp\_stms - arc  
 d:\home\dglover\misc\gp\_rds - arc  
 d:\home\dglover\misc\new\_gp\_con - arc  
 d:\home\dglover\misc\gp\_con20 - arc  
 d:\home\dglover\misc\new\_gplli - polygon  
 d:\home\dglover\misc\new\_gp\_pls - polygon  
 D:\home\dglover\misc\section - ndx



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.



## **Appendix B. Alternatives Considered But Not Analyzed**

### **Slashbuster use**

Most slopes in the project area are too steep for the effective use of the slashbuster, so use of that machine was not analyzed.

### **Burning only; no cutting of vegetation**

Fuel hazard reduction objectives would likely be unmet if underburning burning (during periods when the risk of fire escape and danger to fire fighters is minimal) were the only fuel hazard reduction treatment used. Furthermore, extensive burning in the project area would likely not comply with the Oregon Smoke Management Plan (Operational Guidance for the Oregon Smoke Management Program. Directive 1-4-1-601, P.N. 845, October, 1992).

### **Public Fuel Wood and/or Pole Gathering Opportunities**

Fire wood or poles that may become available as a result of project implementation would not be easily accessed by the public (other than adjacent landowners) due to the fact that the project area is completely encompassed by private land and there is no legal public access. Therefore, making wood products available to the general public was not analyzed.

## **Appendix C. Fuel Reduction Tools**

The following descriptions of vegetation treatments are generic and are designed to present a general overview of the treatments. They describe how the tool could be used in a variety of situations. For specific details on how they would be used for this project, refer to section 2.0, Proposed Actions.

### **Understory Burning**

Under burning is low intensity prescribed fire over a majority of the burn area and typically results in a mosaic of burned and unburned vegetation. Under burning reduces ground litter, down woody material and ladder fuels. It also stimulates growth of some plant species. Underburning would be conducted at any time throughout the year when fuel and weather conditions ensure safe and successful operations. Typically, burning occurs in the fall through late spring. Summer or early fall burning is less common, but may be used as conditions permit.

### **Hand Piling and Burning**

This treatment reduces residual slash created by vegetation treatments such as thinning, brushing and slashing and can be used where underburning is not feasible. Fuels 1-6" in diameter and greater than 2' in length are stacked in piles by hand, covered to maintain a dry ignition point and then burned in the fall or winter after the project area has received more than an inch of precipitation. Hand pile burning is designed to remove approximately 75-90% of constructed hand piles. Burning piles during wet periods reduces the potential for fire spread, the need for aggressive mop-up, and the potential for scorch and mortality to the remaining trees and shrubs.

### **Selective Slashing**

Chainsaws are used to cut small diameter material (living and dead) near ground level, including brush. Live vegetation treated would be <6" DBH and remaining stump heights <6". Conifer spacing would range from 14' to 30'. The range for hardwoods and shrubs would be 20' to 30'. The number of leave trees and shrubs would be determined by the spacing designated (e.g., 14' x 14' spacing equals 220 trees/acre). Criteria for leave vegetation may include size, vigor, form, number of stems in multi-stem hardwoods, and species. The resulting down material may be piled and burned or lopped (cut into smaller pieces).