



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE
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***YOUNG STAND MAINTENANCE BRUSHING and Pre-COMMERCIAL THINNING
with
FUEL HAZARD REDUCTION PROJECT***
(EA #OR110-03-11, June 2003)

DECISION RECORD / DECISION RATIONALE & FONSI

I. DECISION

The decision is to implement Alternative 2, the proposed action alternative, for the Young Stand Maintenance Brushing and Precommercial Thinning with Fuel Hazard Reduction. This means that 4,765 acres of young stands will be precommercially thinned and 921 acres will receive maintenance brushing. The decision is also to implementation of all project design features described in the EA. They are an integral part of the proposed action.

II. DECISION RATIONALE

Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative, is rejected because it does not meet the objectives identified in the Medford District Resource Management Plan. It would not address or alter many of the existing resource conditions and trends that are of major concern relative to healthy forest conditions and resource protection. The No Action alternative would perpetuate or promote undesirable resource conditions. With the No Action, these conditions would not be improved or mitigated; certain undesirable ecological trends would continue unchanged and, in some cases, would be exacerbated with the passage of time. For example, high fire hazard conditions would continue and grow and stand vigor and forest health would not be promoted.

Alternative 2 is selected because it implements the Medford District RMP and the Northwest Forest Plan. It will also meet the purpose of and needs for action and the objectives as outlined in the EA. All special status and survey and manage surveys have been completed and located populations will be buffered to properly protect them.

The Decision will also implement activities that promote a number of the goals of the BLM's Strategic Plan for FY2000 to FY2005:

- Goal 1.4: Reduce threats to public health, safety and property.

All of the areas to be thinned include fuel treatment proposals to reduce the fuel hazard levels and, in turn, to provide better protection of public property / resources. The decision also includes a review of fuel loadings / hazard after thinning treatments are completed to insure

optimum hazard reduction treatments and to facilitate prioritizing expenditures for this type of treatment.

- Goal 2.2: Restore at-risk resources and maintain functioning systems

This project will result in reduction in fuel loadings and stand densities moving them closer to levels appropriate to the sites. It will promote survival in the young stands and accelerate growth and the development of older forest and the restoration of older forest habitats in the young stands being treated.

III. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Pursuant with the Endangered Species Act, consultation at a programmatic level has been completed with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz and of the Grande Ronde were notified of this project during the scoping and / or the EA's public comment period. Josephine County Commissioners and the Josephine County forestry department were also contacted. No responses were received.

IV. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A formal public comment period on this project and project EA was provided during June 2003. A single letter of comment was received in response. It stated a general support of the proposed action although it expressed reservations about the potential use of a slashbuster machine, particularly in late-successional reserves.

These views about the use of a slashbuster were considered along with the potential impacts outlined in the EA and the concurrence of the ID team regarding its use. Its use is limited to only 98 acres (including 54 acres in a late-successional reserve) of precommercial thinning.

V. CONCLUSION AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

A. Plan Consistency

Based on the information in the project's EA and in the record, and the letter received from the public about the project, I conclude that the decisions in this Decision Record are 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 (January 2001). They are also consistent with the Endangered Species Act, The Native American Religious Freedom Act and cultural resource management laws and regulations.

This decision will not have any adverse impacts to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution (per Executive Order 13212).

B. Finding of No Significant Impact

On the basis of the information contained in the environmental assessment and the record for this project, it is my determination that the decision stated above will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment beyond the range of impacts and effects considered in the RMP and NFP EIS documents and that were accepted in their respective Records of Decision and to which the present project's EA is tiered. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted and will not be prepared.

This conclusion is based on consideration of the CEQ's criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA and based on my understanding of the project. The analysis of effects has been completed within the context of the Medford District's Resource Management Plan and it is consistent with that plan and the scope of effects anticipated from that plan. The analysis of effects has also occurred in the context of multiple spatial and temporal scales as appropriate for different types of impacts.

I have considered the intensity of the impacts anticipated from this decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested by the CEQ. With regard to each:

1) Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects. The assessment has considered both beneficial and adverse impacts. None of the individual or cumulative effects have been identified as being significant. Impacts are within the scope of the EISs to which the project's EA is tiered.

2) The degree of the impact on public health or safety. No aspects of the project have been identified as having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety. The fuel and fire hazard reduction elements of the project will have a beneficial impact on public health and safety, particularly on those units within the rural interface areas.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area. The analysis has not indicated that the decision will result in any impacts on unique characteristics of the geographic area. Cultural and historic sites will be buffered to preclude any impacts. The young stand treatments on units that might be visible from the Rogue Wild & Scenic River will be consistent with the RMP's management direction regarding VRM and would thus not adversely impact the river's Outstandingly Remarkable Values.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial effects. The effects of the young stand / fuel reduction treatments are similar in nature to those of many other projects that are implemented within the scope of the Northwest Forest Plan and the Resource Management Plan. Neither the analysis nor the public comments identified any significant or unique levels of controversy specific to the effects of the project. It is acknowledged that there is a range of views regarding the desirability of treating young stands when one of the management objectives in the matrix is timber production.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. The analysis does not show that this action would involve any 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 and the decision will not set any precedents for future actions with significant effects. It is one of many similar projects designed to implement the RMP and NFP. This type of management action has been of the BLM's forest management program for decades.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* No significant cumulative impacts have been identified. The project is consistent with the actions and impacts anticipated in the RMP – EIS.

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.* The project area does not include any listed National Historic Register sites or sites known to be eligible. Cultural sites in the project will be protected per the project design features noted above.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.* The project includes project design features that preclude adverse impacts on ESA listed species. Programmatic ESA consultation with NOAA – Fisheries and USFWS has been completed and the proposal is consistent with mandatory terms and conditions set forth by the regulatory agencies.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.* There is no indication that this decision will result in actions that will threaten a violation.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

This decision is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to persons who believe that they will be 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 a Notice of Decision and FONSI in The Grants Pass Daily Courier. Any contest of this decision should state specifically which portion or element of the decision is being protested and cite the applicable CFR regulations.


Abbie Jossie
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Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

7-7-03
Date