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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT EA Number: OR 128-02-14

BLM Coos Bay District Office Lease/Serial/Case file No.: N/A

Proposed Action Title/Type: Request to amend a right-of-way agreement to include existing roads and approval to improve a dirt road with crushed hard rock and ditch relief culverts across BLM managed land.

Location of Proposed Action: Brummet Creek Road and Brewster Ridge, T. 27 S., R .10 W., Section 33, Will. Mer., Coos County, OR.

Applicant (if any): Plum Creek Timberlands LP

Conformance With Applicable Land Use Plan: This proposed action is subject to the *Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan & Environmental Impact Statement* and its Record of Decision (BLM, 1995); which is in conformance with the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late Successional and Old Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* and its Record of Decision (Interagency, 1994). This plan has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plan's terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1601.5.

Remarks: The Proposed Action is in compliance with the *Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan & Environmental Impact Statement* and its Record of Decision (BLM, 1995) RMP; hereby incorporated by reference. The RMP has been determined to be consistent with the standards and guidelines for healthy lands at the land use plan scale and associated time lines.

I. Purpose and Need for Proposed Action: The applicant has requested access to their land by utilizing existing roads across government land to facilitate the harvest and transportation of private timber to market.

II. Description of Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action:

No Action: Should the government deny the request, the applicant has stated they will modify their harvest plan and proceed as follows: They will utilize their rights under Right-Of-Way and Road Use Agreement C-344 (RWA), and use the China Creek Road system. Roads No. 28-10-5.0A, 28-10-5.1A, and 28-10-5.2 will be used to access the Coos Bay Wagon Road. The timber unit will then be logged by helicopter.

Proposed Action: The proposed action is to facilitate the applicant in logging approximately 54 acres of their land using best management harvest methods. The applicant has requested the use of BLM controlled Roads No. 28-10-10.2 (5.9 miles, BST surface), 27-10-20.0B (3.4 miles, graveled surface, predominately ridge top), and Port Blakely controlled Road No. 27-10-20.0C (0.74 miles, natural surface, predominately ridge top) where the present road crosses through the SE¼ of Section 33, T.27S., R.10W. In addition, they have requested permission to improve Port Blakely's road on BLM land with an 8 inch lift of crushed hard rock and the installation of ditch relief culverts. Improvements will not require cutting any trees on BLM lands greater than 16" dbh. Under this plan, the applicant will be constructing a roadside landing on Port Blakely lands to facilitate the harvest of their timber.

The permittee has also volunteered to not start the road improvement work until after the 6th of August and to adhere to daily timing restrictions (work will occur between 2 hours after sunrise and 2 hours before sunset) until the 15th of September. The road will remain open after the completion of harvest activities for future management actions. The age class of the timber to be harvested is a mixture of 50 year old conifers and scattered hardwoods. The harvest is planned to be accomplished with a skyline system capable of at least one-end suspension.

The following design features would be implemented under the Proposed Action:

- The applicant shall wash all logging equipment and vehicles prior to initial entry to help prevent the spread of noxious weeds and Port Orford Cedar root rot disease.

- The applicant has volunteered to limit construction work until after the 6th of August and to **adhere to daily timing restrictions (work will occur between 2 hours after sunrise and 2 hours before sunset) until the 15th of September**. Harvest and the transportation of timber will be between 1 October and 28 February, which is outside the murrelet and spotted owl nesting seasons of 1 March-30 September.

III. Environmental Consequences:

Environmental Impacts to Critical Elements of the Human Environment for the No Action alternative:

Critical Elements	Affected Yes	Affected No	Critical Elements	Affected Yes	Affected No
Air Quality	__	X	T & E Species	X (P)	__
ACECs	__	X	S & M Botany	__	X
Cultural Resources	__	X	S & M Mollusk	__	X
Environmental Justice Concerns	__	X	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid	__	X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique		X	Water Quality	__	X
Floodplains	__	X	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	X (P)	__
Native American Religious Concerns	__	X	Wild & Scenic Rivers	__	X
Noxious Weed Management		X	Wilderness	__	X
Port Orford Cedar Management		X	Energy Development	__	X

P = Private Land
F = Federal Land

Description of additional impacts under the No Action alternative:

Soils:
The No Action alternative will not correct the surface runoff and drainage problem that is occurring along Road No. 27-10-20.0C. Future use of this road by hunters in the late fall will continue causing sediment delivery to the streams below. The permittee has indicated that they might helicopter harvest their timber should use of the existing roads be denied. Not allowing the use of the exiting roads would go against government policy of providing reasonable access.

Hydrology/Water Quality:
The No Action alternative will not correct the surface runoff and drainage problem that is occurring along Road No. 27-10-20.0C.

Wildlife, Including T & E and S&M Species:
The anticipated affects on wildlife from the private harvest of timber will be the same under the no action and the proposed action; see description under Proposed Action.

Aquatic Habitat/Fisheries /Riparian Zones Including T & E Species:
The anticipated affects on fisheries from the private harvest of timber will be nearly the same under the no action and the proposed action; see description under Proposed Action.

Vegetation, Including T & E and S & M Species:
No affect.

Port-Orford Cedar and Noxious Weed Species:
As there is no Port Orford cedar in the China Creek drainage no affect is anticipated under this alternative..

Cultural Resources:
Because all of the private land has been harvested in the past, no impacts to cultural resources are likely to occur on private land.

Hazardous Materials / Solid Wastes:
No affect.

Environmental Impacts to Critical Elements of the Human Environment for the Proposed Action alternative:

Critical Elements	Affected Yes	Affected No	Critical Elements	Affected Yes	Affected No
Air Quality	__	X	T & E Species	__	X
ACECs	__	X	S & M Botany	__	X
Cultural Resources	__	X	S & M Mollusk	__	X
Environmental Justice Concerns	__	X	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid	__	X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique		X	Water Quality	__	X
Floodplains	__	X	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	__	X
Native American Religious Concerns	__	X	Wild & Scenic Rivers	__	X
Noxious Weed Management		X	Wilderness	__	X
Port Orford Cedar Management		X	Energy Development	__	X

P = Private Land
F = Federal Land

Description of additional impacts under the Proposed Action alternative:

Soils:

Actions on Federal Land

The stated intent for use of Road No. 27-10-20.0C is winter access for timber haul. This road would need to be heavily bladed and re-shaped prior to placement of gravel. Incorporating the outside berm into the sub-grade would greatly enhance both the flow condition and overhanging materials on this road. The permittee has stated that additional culverts will be installed.

Overall the reconstruction of this road would be a benefit to the stream water quality of the area. There are deep ruts on the road and it appears the road gets used every winter during hunting season. This disturbs the surface just prior to the winter rains and sediment delivery is occurring each year. The proposed improvement will eliminate this condition. Due to the possibility of snow accumulation, the applicant should install enough ditch relief culverts to accommodate a snowmelt..

Actions on Private Land

The landing reconstruction needs to be evaluated carefully because it looks like there are two old landings in place, one lower than the other. Some tension cracks are showing around the edges between the sword fern and alders on the north. This is to be an 80 X 80 landing according to the flagging found and reconstruction could produce unstable materials over the edges. Digging down to the suggested landing size with an excavator would be better than pushing materials off the side with a dozer.

Hydrology/Water Quality:

Actions on Federal Land

The haul route would use existing paved and graveled roads that are well away from Brummit Creek or on ridge top locations. The terminal end of the route; specifically Road no. 27-10-20.0C (0.74 miles of natural surface), is currently eroding. This road segment would benefit from ditch relief culverts as well as surface rock. Improvement of this road segment would prevent sediment delivery to ephemeral tributaries to China Creek.

The applicant intends to winter haul along 10.04 miles of forest roads; mostly on BLM. About half of the route is above 1800 feet elevation and within the transient snow accumulation zone. Road use during high precipitation periods or when snowmelt is occurring could deliver sediment to ditchlines and several first order streams from the non-paved segments..

Actions on Private Land

The effects to private land are the same under the proposed action or the no action.

Interrelated/Interdependent:

The project area on private is 54 acres of 50 year old timber. The applicant has indicated that the unit would be regeneration harvested by cable yarding. Burning the unit at the completion of harvest is anticipated. There are two first order and one second order intermittent channels in the unit and a short segment of third order stream near the bottom.

These are tributaries to China Creek. No information is given on riparian buffers, so the assumption is that none are planned. Oregon Forest Practices are to be followed.

Based on information given by the applicant, the project will have some direct and indirect short term effects on sediment delivery to China Creek tributaries. This would pertain to site preparation by burning. Because of the project design given by the applicant, it appears the project will not cause a cumulative effect on water quantity/quality in terms of temperature, flow or sediment.

See also Cumulative Effects under the Aquatic Habitat section below.

Wildlife, Including T & E and S&M Species:
No mitigation is needed or recommended beyond the design features described in the Proposed Action.

Aquatic Habitat/Fisheries /Riparian Zones Including T & E and S&M Species:
Direct and Indirect Effects (Federal land)
Haul Route
Any hauling activities that take place during the wet season would be carried out utilizing standard sediment prevention measures at each of the defined stream crossings. Additionally, the nearest coho salmon habitat is located more than 6 miles downstream from graveled portions of this haul route. BLM controlled Road No. 28-10-10.2 (5.9 miles) is a mid-slope road with an asphaltic surface.

Road Improvement
No Effect - Road improvement (1,800 feet) will occur during summer months when stream channels along the gravel-surfaced portion of the haul route will likely be dry. Sediment is not expected to be transmitted to stream channels from the proposed activity, since it will occur during summer dry months.

Indirect Effects from Interrelated and Interdependent Actions (Private Land):
Interrelated/Interdependent Actions (Private Actions) – Harvest (felling and yarding) and haul of timber from 54 acres of privately owned land.

May Affect, Likely to Adversely Affect – Hauling activities along the proposed route would result in no effects on coho salmon. However, harvest activities in China Creek include the removal of riparian trees along several intermittent and perennial non-fish bearing streams. These 1st and 2nd order channels have historically provided a source of large woody material to fish bearing waters downstream, often delivered during debris flow events. The removal of these trees will result in a lack of large wood available for future recruitment to the aquatic ecosystem of China Creek. In addition, the ground disturbance created by the logging activity, coupled with the lack of riparian vegetation along the smaller stream channels in the unit, would likely result in sediment delivery to downstream areas. This activity would take place during the Fall and Winter months, increasing the likelihood of sediment delivery to the associated stream channels at a time when coho salmon adults (and/or eggs in the gravel) would be present within China Creek.

Cumulative Effects
Cumulative effects are impacts on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions (Federal or non-Federal). Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. In general, the historic condition of aquatic habitats within the East Fork Coquille watershed has been documented as having abundant large wood in streams, and abundant beaver activity (EF Coquille WA, 2000). The effects of human activities on aquatic and riparian habitat are primarily from timber harvest, splash dams and log drives, and the construction of extensive riparian road networks. These activities have resulted in reduced large wood and shading, reduced instream complexity, and an increase in sediment and aquatic passage barriers, as a result of culverts along roads (EF Coquille WA, 2000).

Presently, the aquatic and riparian condition of the China Creek watershed (6th field) has improved (culvert replacement projects and from natural processes such as succession) since these habitat modifications have occurred. However, the aquatic and riparian condition has not been restored to historic conditions (see EF Coquille WA, 2000 for a description of current conditions).

Projects that may occur within the foreseeable future include the proposed action (as described above). Additionally, the BLM may issue a permit (C-599) to Menasha Corporation, which would permit the applicant to construct approximately 2380 feet of new road across BLM managed land in the SW¼ of Section 33, T.27S., R.10W, in order to harvest 120 acres of private timberland. Under this plan, the applicant will be constructing an additional 1300 feet of new road on their lands.

This project would occur approximately one mile above anadromous fish habitat. Cumulatively, the actions occurring on federal land, would not have significant impacts on the aquatic and riparian habitat within the China Creek drainage.

However, the interrelated and interdependent portions of these actions could impact the China Creek drainage. Granting the permits, would provide access to applicants and would result in the harvest of 174 acres (total) within the China Creek drainage along multiple fish bearing and headwater streams. Although the interrelated and interdependent portions of these actions may impact the aquatic and riparian habitat within China Creek, both applicants have alternate routes to access these lands, and so the action could occur without the federal permit. If the permit were denied, the alternative would be detrimental to the fisheries and aquatic resource (see No Action). Additionally, these alternate routes would have far more significant impact on the aquatic and riparian resource than the proposed route (see No Action descriptions). Therefore, the proposed action would have the least impact.

Conclusion: The effects determination is a No Effect on federal land, and a May Affect, Likely to Adversely Affect on private land.

Endangered Species Act/Magnuson Stevens Act:
The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) requires Federal action agencies to consult with the Secretary of Commerce regarding any action or proposed action authorized, funded, or undertaken by the agency that may adversely affect essential fish habitat (EFH) identified under the MSA. The NMFS has found that the existing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA) environmental review process, including the Interagency Streamlined Consultation Procedure for Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (July, 1999), used by the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for Federal Activities can be used to satisfy the EFH consultation requirements of the MSA.

The immediate action area of the proposed project does not occur within designated EFH habitat for chinook or coho salmon. EFH habitat occurs approximately 6 miles downstream of the project area. The proposed actions on federal land would not effect EFH for coho or chinook salmon.

Vegetation, Including T & E and S & M Species:
"Routine maintenance of improvements and exiting structures is not considered a habitat-disturbing activity according to Survey and Manage (S&M) guidlines (USDA and USDI 2001, Survey and Guidelines page 22) Thus surveys for Bureau Assessment, Bureau Sensitive, and Survey and Manage species is not required.

Port-Orford Cedar:
There is no Port Orford cedar in the area or along the haul route. No affects are anticipated.

Noxious Weeds:
Following the design feature of washing all equipment and vehicles prior to initial entry should eliminate the introduction of noxious weeds.

Cultural Resources:
Existing road, no affects are anticipated.

Hazardous Materials / Solid Wastes:
Provisions for Oil Spill Prevention, Control and Counter measures (SPCC) under Oregon Administrative Rule No. OAR 340-108 apply to the use of any equipment using petroleum. In addition, Oregon Forest Practices Act Section No. OAR 629-57-3600, Petroleum Product Precautions, will be in effect. An oil spill containment kit should be on site during operations, and at least one employee shall be familiar with it's use. Any reportable quantity release (see OAR 340-108) shall also be reported to the BLM representative.

Environmental Justice:
No affect.

Energy Exploration, Development, and transportation:
No affect.

Recommended Mitigation Measures:

1. Schedule road renovation along Road No. 27-10-20.0C during the drier portions of the year, August through September, to reduce the potential for offsite soil movement and sediment delivery to road ditches and ephemeral streams.

2. Contain any offsite movement of sediment from the road or ditchflow near streams with silt fence or sediment entrapping blankets. Such control measures must allow for the free passage of water without detention or plugging. These control structures and applications should receive frequent maintenance, and be removed at the completion of haul.

3. If the ground is already saturated from winter rains and more than 2 inches of precipitation is predicted in the project area over the next 24 hours, then winter haul should be suspended. Operations may resume after the 24 hour suspension, except when another storm (exceeding 2 inches) is forecasted. Currently, precipitation predictions are based on the Quantitative Precipitation Forecast (QPF) maps form the HydroMeterological Predication Center intenet site: http://www.hpc.ncep.noaa.gov/html/fcst2.html A similar predictive model may be used if this site changes or becomes unavailable in the future.

4. Hauling should be suspended during rapid snowmelt runoff conditions. Install enough ditch relief culvert to accommodate snowmelt.

IV. Persons/Agencies Consulted:

United States Fish and Wildlife Service
National Marine Fisheries Service

Preparers	Initials	Date	Speciality
Joel Robb	_____	_____	Myrtlewood Road Manager, Team Lead
Dale Stewart	_____	_____	Soil Scientist
Dan Carpenter	_____	_____	Hydrologist
Scott Lightcap	_____	_____	Fisheries Biologist
Holly Witt	_____	_____	Wildlife Biologist
Nancy Brian	_____	_____	District Botanist
Bob Raper	_____	_____	District Noxious Weed Coordinator
Stephen Samuels	_____	_____	District Archaeologist, American Indian Coordinator, Environmental Justice
Tim Votaw	_____	_____	Hazardous Material Specialist
Jim Kowalick	_____	_____	Port Orford Cedar Coordinator
Tim Barnes	_____	_____	District Geologist

Date: June 15, 2002

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NRSA:_____ Date:_____

Decision Approved by: Myrtlewood Field Manager:_____ Date:_____