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In reply refer to:
EA OR128-02-01

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI) For Lower East Fork Coquille Analysis Area EA No. OR128-02-01

I. Introduction

An interdisciplinary team for the Lower East Fork Coquille EA within the Myrtlewood Field Office, Coos Bay District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has analyzed two alternatives: a No Action alternative and a Proposed Action alternative. Scoping by the Interdisciplinary Team identified two issues to be analyzed in the Lower East Fork Coquille Analysis Area EA. They are (as identified on page 3 of the EA):

1. Timber producing capability of the Matrix Land Use Allocation
2. Riparian Reserve Function

The analysis encompasses all or portions of the Lower East Fork Coquille, Elk Cr., and Brewster Canyon subwatersheds, which lie within the East Fork Coquille Analytical (fifth field) Watershed. The Proposed Action alternative proposes to commercially thin young (30-50 years old), overstocked Douglas-fir stands on approximately 211 acres, construct 0.55 miles of new road, renovate or improve 1.36 miles of existing roads, and decommission 1.82 miles of road. Approximately 73 acres of the proposed treatments are within Riparian Reserves. The No Action alternative would defer action on the forest stands proposed for treatment. The project areas analyzed in the EA are located within the Matrix and Riparian Reserve land use allocation in Sections 1, 3, 9, 11, 16, 21 of T. 28 S., R. 11 W., Willamette Meridian.

II. Background

The Coos Bay District of the BLM is under the direction of the Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and its Record of Decision (ROD)(BLM, 1995). The RMP and its ROD are 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 ROD (Northwest Forest Plan [NFP]) (Interagency, 1994). Through these documents, the BLM, in conjunction with other federal land agencies, is directed to conduct watershed analysis (WA), and to implement restoration projects to aid in the recovery of water quality and aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial habitats.

As stated in the ROD for the NFP, the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) was developed to

maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems on public lands within the range of Pacific Ocean anadromy. Section I of the Analysis File contains an analysis of the consistency of the alternatives with the ACS and is summarized in the Environmental Consequences section of the EA.

All Federal agencies are charged with managing programs to enhance the recovery of Federally listed endangered and threatened species and their habitats (Section 7(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act). Implementing the proposed action is expected to benefit numerous Endangered, Threatened, and Candidate species.

Rationale

The estimated environmental effects of each of the alternatives contained in this EA are based on research, professional judgment and experience of the Interdisciplinary Team. No significant impacts from any alternatives are expected on the following elements of the human environment: (1) Air Quality, (2) Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, (3) Cultural Resource Values, (4) Prime or Unique Farmland, (5) Flood Plains, (6) Native American Religious Concerns and/or Indian trust resources, (7) Hazardous Materials/Solid Waste, (8) Threatened or Endangered Species, (9) Water Quality, (10) Wetlands and Riparian Zones, (11) Wild and Scenic Rivers, (12) Wilderness Values or, (13) Noxious Weeds, (14) Port-Orford-Cedar Management, (15) Environmental Justice, (16) Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives, (17) Energy production, transmission, or conservation, (18) Unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

Alternative I (No Action) is expected to maintain the existing developmental trajectory of Riparian Reserve and upland stands that were identified and recommended for treatment. This action would not have any significant impacts beyond those identified in the RMP, however, deferring silvicultural treatments at this time may reduce the potential of stands to contribute to the ASQ, preclude the attainment of some Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) objectives, and limit the development of desired stand characteristics associated with Riparian Reserves. Implementation of the road decommissioning/closure recommendations would not be completed which would result in the road density and disturbance to wildlife to remain at current levels. This in itself, would not have any significant impacts beyond those already identified in the RMP.

Alternative II (Proposed Action) would incorporate Best Management Practices (BMPs) outlined in the RMP along with design features outlined in the EA. Design features include such measures as snag and down wood creation, no-treatment buffers along streams associated with the treatment units, seasonal restrictions for operations, and one-end suspension of trees yarded in units for removal. Seasonal restrictions for operations would be incorporated to mitigate potential impacts to wildlife, soils, and sap flow. Density management thinning would be at a level to provide room for the remaining trees to maintain or increase in diameter growth without having any significant impacts to wildlife, soils, water quality, hydrology, or fisheries. The proposed treatments, in turn, would meet the objectives outlined in the RMP, ACS objectives, and the EA for the uplands and Riparian Reserves. Incorporating the BMPs and design features for this alternative would reduce any impacts well below the level of significance.

Determination

On the basis of information contained in the Lower East Fork Coquille Analysis Area EA (Section 4.0, pages 15-28), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that none of the alternatives constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared for this analysis area.

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Date