

**DECISION AND RATIONALE  
for the Environmental Assessment for the  
Papa Cow Timber Sale**

**EA Number OR-118-02-020**

**Decision**

It is my decision to implement Alternative 1, the Preferred Alternative, and the Project Design Features proposed in the Papa Cow Timber Sale Environmental Assessment (EA # OR118-02-020). The approved action will result in a timber sale within the Cow Creek drainage.

The Papa Cow Planning Area is located west of the community of Glendale and Interstate 5, north of Cow Creek. The legal description is T32S, R7W, sections 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23 and 27 in Douglas County. The timber sale will be sold within the next year.

My decision is to implement Alternative 1, including all the Project Design Features described in Chapter 2 of the EA. The timber sale will produce approximately 600,000 board feet of timber from timber harvest on 139 acres, in 8 units. A combination of regeneration harvest, commercial thinning, density management and selective harvest will be used, as specified in the EA (Tables 2-1 and 2-2). Following harvest, many of the units will receive site preparation treatments specified in Table 2-1 of the EA. Regeneration harvest units will be reforested using planted nursery stock. Additional treatments, such as shade-carding, mulching, deer browse protection and controlling competing vegetation might be required to ensure adequate seedling establishment. Maintenance treatments will be implemented for up to ten years following harvest or until the canopy has closed enough to reduce brush species growth.

Approximately 10 miles of paved roads will be used for hauling, along with approximately 12 miles of gravel roads (Table 2-3 in the EA). There will be no new road construction and no road decommissioning associated with this timber sale.

Special attention needs to be given to protection of the cultural sites which were identified during clearance surveys (EA p. 15). The EA only specifies that they would be protected to the greatest extent possible, but my intent is to protect them to maintain their value and historical integrity. If this cannot be achieved, the harvest practices or site preparation will be modified or deferred.

This decision does include the two recommended monitoring efforts described in Chapter 4, dealing with road treatments. Any noxious weeds brought into this area when gravel is brought in will be controlled. In addition, the cultural sites will be monitored following treatments to determine if the protection measures were effective. Finally, the wildlife and botany staff will develop a monitoring plan for this action to monitor the effects of harvest and associated activities on Survey and Manage plant and animal species. The monitoring will address the implementation and effectiveness of the protection measures. The more we know about management practices on these species the better we will be able to adapt our future management practices to achieve our objectives.

My decision does not include the possible mitigating measure described in Chapter 4 (EA p. 43) which would extend the restriction on helicopter flights from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from spotted owl nest sites. The need for this extension is not clear and I am not convinced it is necessary. I am not convinced that the potential logistical problems this could cause are outweighed by benefits to the owls.

In addition, 2 units previously analyzed in the Bear Pen Analysis Area Environmental Assessment and selected for implementation in the Bear Pen Timber Sale Decision and Rationale are included under the Papa Cow Timber Sale. Cadastral surveys were not completed prior to sale of Bear Pen but have since been completed. These units (#32-1A and #32-1B) will be regeneration harvested using a helicopter yarding system and produce an additional 315,000 board feet of timber over 24 acres.

## **Rationale**

The decision to implement this proposal meets the purpose and need identified in the EA and furthers the intent established in the Northwest Forest Plan and the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) to manage the Matrix lands with commercial forest products as a major objective.

Alternatives 2 and 3 were not selected based on this analysis largely because they involved timber harvest and road construction into sections 23 and 13. These sections are being considered in the proposed Cottonsnake Timber Sale. The decision on these issues will be made at a later date, based on the Environmental Assessment for that timber sale. I am choosing not to include these actions in the Papa Cow Timber Sale because this sale does not include substantial road construction or road work.

I received one letter with comments from the public regarding the Papa Cow Timber Sale EA. The writer indicated it was from three groups. The main categories of the relevant comments included:

- Objections to logging late-successional habitat and older trees
- Suggestion that an EIS should be prepared

- Concern with road densities and erosion
- Concern with effects on spotted owls and other species associated with late-successional habitat
- Concern with potential effects on soils and streams
- Concern with cumulative effects from past timber harvest and road construction.

I have reviewed the comments and have discussed them with the interdisciplinary team of specialists on my staff. It appears that many of the comments object to issues beyond the scope of this EA. This EA is tiered to the Medford District RMP/EIS which analyzed the effects on many of the issues in the comment letter. The decision to harvest late-successional habitat and older trees was made in the Records of Decision for the Northwest Forest Plan and the RMP. This timber sale will implement those decisions and the EA analyzes site-specific impacts. Merely disagreeing with the past decisions is not a compelling reason to prepare an EIS. The effects on Special Status Species, erosion, soils and streams have been discussed in the EA and I find nothing in the comment letter to cause me to change the proposal or to call for additional analysis. Most of the comments simply disagree with the management direction, but do not provide substantial new information that has not been considered in the EA or the previous EISs to which it is tiered.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is aware of the impacts to the northern spotted owl and to owl habitat of the proposed action. They considered the degree to which habitat will be degraded or removed, the proportion of the existing habitat --critical or not -- that will be affected, the location of affected Critical Habitat Units (CHUs) in relation to Late-Successional Reserves (LSRs) and the potential for connectivity. That agency concluded that the proposed timber harvest will not result in adverse modification to Critical Habitat and that the action will not violate the Endangered Species Act in their Biological Opinion dated October 12, 2001 (#1-7-01-F-032). In summary, I find that the action will be consistent with the *Medford District Resource Management Plan* and amendments, including the Aquatic Conservation Strategy. In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulations (43 CFR 5003.2(1)), the decision for this timber sale will not become effective, or be open to formal protest, until the first Notice of Sale appears in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located.

Roger Schroer

11-27-02

For Lynda L. Boody  
Field Manager, Glendale Resource Area  
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

Date

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**  
**for the Environmental Assessment for the**  
**Papa Cow Timber Sale**  
**EA Number OR-118-02-020**

The proposed actions for the Papa Cow Timber Sale are described in the environmental assessment (EA) and can be obtained at the Medford District or on the Medford BLM internet site:  
<http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford>

The proposed action is located in:       T32S, R7W, sections 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23 and 27, in  
Douglas County.

The following critical elements identified in the BLM handbook will not be adversely affected by this project and have been analyzed in the EA: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern, historical or cultural resources, prime or unique farmlands, floodplains, Native American religious sites, invasive species, energy, threatened or endangered species, known hazardous waste areas, water quality, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness and environmental justice.

Surveys for Survey and Manage plant and animal species have been completed and appropriate protocol buffer measures will be applied. The effects on Threatened and Endangered Species and Special Status Species are described in the EA. *Fritallaria gentneri*, the only federally listed plant species potentially present, was not found within the Planning Area. Formal and informal consultation requirements, as required under the Endangered Species Act, have been met with US Fish and Wildlife Service's Biological Opinion (#1-7-01-F-032). Based on the information in the EA and supporting documentation in the file, and after discussing the proposal with our staff fisheries biologist, I have concluded that the timber sale as proposed will have no effect on any listed fish species or their habitat, so consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is not required. I reached this conclusion because all streams will be buffered from the harvest units and the road work originally proposed was greatly reduced and limited to cleaning culvert inlets where necessary and re-establishing three water dips.

The estimation of impacts was based on research, professional judgment and experience of the interdisciplinary team. This method of estimating effects to the environment reduces the uncertainties to a level which does not involve highly unknown or unique risks.

FONSI DETERMINATION

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment, including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts not previously identified, and I have also reviewed the comments received from the public concerning this proposal. I have determined the Papa Cow Timber Sale will not have any significant impacts on the human environment beyond those already described in the Medford District Resource Management Plan and amendments and that a supplemental EIS is not required.

Roger Schroer

11-27-02

*For* Lynda L. Boody  
Glendale Resource Area Field Manager  
Medford District, BLM

Date