



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

1792 (116)  
A7054(ER:jl)

**MAR 27 2003**

Interested Citizen:

In December, 2002, the Ashland Resource Area completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Bobar Landscape Project. The EA was distributed for public review and comment. Planning for the Bobar project has been ongoing for a number of years. Extensive outreach and dialog with the public has taken place. Numerous letters, articles in local newspapers, community meetings, field trips and discussions with individuals and groups have taken place.

I want to thank those of you who took the time to write letters, attend meetings and become involved in the discussions. From the public outreach and the review of EA comments, it is quite clear that there is a wide range of opinions and ideas about resource management on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands in the project area. There appears to be general consensus in several areas: a) the potential for damaging wildfires is high and that the consequences to the community of such fires could be enormous; b) there is a widespread desire that the wild fire potential be addressed and reduced in a substantive way; c) there is a widespread desire to frame BLM's public land management activities in a way that will promote forest ecosystem restoration. Although there may be consensus on the above values, there is a great diversity of views about what this means, and how best to achieve those goals.

My staff and I review carefully the public comments about our projects. The Bobar project is a comprehensive, watershed based approach to long term forest management for multiple objectives. While we try to plan and design projects to reflect many of the views of the public, the central driver of the project design is the existing Northwest Forest Plan and the Medford District Resource Management Plan. The Bobar project was not designed solely for fuels hazard reduction nor was it designed solely for the production of timber. The project is our best effort at incorporating local ideas and views along with the resource management mandates set forth in the various laws and resource plans that we are required to work with. In designing the Bobar project, we have created what we believe to be the best balance of these goals and objectives.

This letter is to inform interested parties of my first decision regarding the Bobar Project. This first Decision Record authorizes work to begin on some of the non-commercial units in the project area. I have not yet made a decision concerning the remaining non-commercial, commercial, new road construction and decommissioning of roads. My staff and I are still reviewing the details of the remainder of the project. I have also included a Finding of No Significant Impact record in this mailing. This is our legal record stating that the Bobar project as analyzed complies with all existing plans, policies and regulations.

Additional questions about the Bobar project can be addressed to Ed Reilly of the Ashland Resource Area at (541)618-2384.

Sincerely,

  
Richard J. Drehobl  
Field Manager  
Ashland Resource Area

Enclosure (as stated)

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**For**  
**BOBAR LANDSCAPE PROJECT EA No. OR-110-02-27**

**Background**

The Bureau of Land Management's Medford District has analyzed, through the Bobar Landscape Project EA, a proposal to implement a landscape level treatment project with activities including, in part, several commercial timber sales covering approximately 2,600 acres of harvest units. Approximately 2,300 additional acres are proposed for non-commercial management and restoration activities such as thinning of young conifers, woodlands, and shrublands and burning of grasslands. Fuels reduction is an integral part of all treatments and would be accomplished using hand, mechanical and prescribed fire methods. Six miles of new system road construction would facilitate access to the areas proposed for treatment; 7.2 miles of roads are proposed for decommissioning. Maintenance and renovation activities are proposed for 23.8 miles of existing roads. The project is located in the Applegate River-McKee Bridge and Little Applegate Watersheds near Ruch, OR. The proposed action is referred to in the EA as Alternative B.

The proposed action and project design features are further described in the Bobar Landscape Project Environmental Assessment (EA). This FONSI and the EA are tiered to the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (USDI, USDA 2001) and the *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (RMP) (USDI 1995b). These Resource Management Plans incorporate the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and the Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (NFP) (USDA and USDI 1994). These documents are available at the Medford BLM office and the Medford BLM web site at <<http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford/>>.

**Plan Consistency**

Based on the information in the Bobar Landscape Management Project's EA, in the record, and from the letters and comments received from the public about the project, I conclude that the Bobar Landscape Project is 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). It is also consistent with the Endangered Species Act, The Native American Religious Freedom Act and cultural resource management laws and regulations. It is also consistent with Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice). The Bobar landscape Project will not have any adverse impacts to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution (per Executive Order 13212).

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

On the basis of the information contained in the environmental assessment, a consideration of the comments received from the public regarding the Bobar Landscape Project, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that the action described above will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment beyond the range of impacts and effects addressed by the Medford District Resource Management Plan, the Northwest Forest Plan, their EIS documents and their respective Records of Decision. Thus, the Bobar Landscape Project does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment and an environmental impact statement (EIS) (or supplement to the existing EISs) is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) 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, review of the project analysis and review of public comments. As noted above, the analysis of effects has been completed within the context of the Medford District's Resource Management Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan. This conclusion is consistent with those plans and the scope of effects anticipated from those plans. 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 the Bobar Landscape Project 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 attributable to implementing the project have been identified as being significant and outside of 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 are likely to have a beneficial impact on public health and safety, particularly within the rural interface areas. Prescribed burning operations would follow all requirements of the Oregon Smoke Management Plan and the Department of Environmental Quality Air Quality and Visibility Protection Program.

*3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.* As described in the EA, no significant effects to natural or cultural resources were identified for the proposed action. There is no evidence that prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas will be negatively affected. In the long-term, improvements to water quality are expected to occur from maintenance of existing road drainage deficiencies. There will be no major, adverse impacts to wetlands from the implementation of the proposed action.

*4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.* The effects of the Bobar project 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. As evidenced by the public comments received regarding the Bobar project, there is a full range of debate and opinions about the potential effects of land management activities as well as the effects of continued fire exclusion. A number of comments received implied controversy concerning the effectiveness of thinning and fire behavior. On review of these comments, it appears that conclusions were sometimes drawn using partial reports and statements taken out of context. When reviewing the original reports in full, the controversy was limited. Neither the EA analysis nor the public comments identified any areas where there was a significant or unique level of controversy about the effects that would result from the Bobar project. A level of uncertainty exists in assessing the changes that may occur as a result of any land management project. This uncertainty is acknowledged by the EISs to which the Bobar EA is tiered.

*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 outside of those addressed and anticipated in the Medford District Resource Management Plan EIS and the Northwest Forest Plan EIS.

*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 Resource Management Plan and Northwest Forest Plan.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* Analysis was conducted for this project and no significant cumulative impacts have been identified outside of those addressed and anticipated in the Medford District Resource Management Plan EIS and the Northwest Forest Plan EIS. Analysis was performed at multiple scales and included current conditions and foreseeable future actions.

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 has been surveyed for cultural and historic resources. The proposed action will not affect objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nor is it expected to cause destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.* The Bobar project includes project design features that preclude adverse impacts on ESA listed species. ESA consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has been completed with the official determination that the project is not likely to adversely affect listed T&E species. A no effect determination was made by BLM regarding the federally listed plant species *Fritillaria gentneri*.

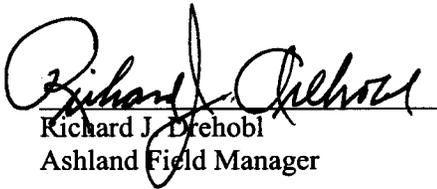
10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.* There is no indication that this decision will result in actions that will threaten a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection laws. Project Design Features are included to ensure compliance with Oregon Department of Environmental Quality water quality objectives.

### Consultation and Coordination

Pursuant with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), consultation was completed with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Biological Assessment dated July 18, 2001; Biological Opinion #1-7-01-F-032 dated October 21, 2001). The Service has determined that the proposed action will not jeopardize the continued existence of the northern spotted owl and has issued an incidental take for the proposed action due to habitat modification.

Pursuant to the ESA, consultation was completed with the National Marine Fisheries Service. In their February 26, 2003 letter of concurrence, the Service concurred with the BLM's determination that the actions proposed in the Bobar Landscape Project EA were "not likely to adversely affect" (NLAA) the SONC coho salmon.

A no effect determination was made by BLM regarding the federally listed plant species *Fritillaria gentneri*.

  
Richard J. Drehobl  
Ashland Field Manager

03-27-03  
Date

**DECISION RECORD # 1**  
**for**  
**BOBAR LANDSCAPE PROJECT EA No. OR-110-02-27**

This Decision Record is the first of two or more Decision Records that will authorize work to begin on actions proposed and analyzed with the Bobar Landscape Project EA No. OR-110-02-27. This Decision Record addresses only a portion of the project area and proposals presented and analyzed in the EA. Decisions regarding the proposed treatments in the remainder of the project area will be made in the future and documented in a separate Decision Record(s).

**DECISION**

It is my decision to begin implementation of the proposed action by authorizing treatment of a portion of the non-commercial units. Units 1-13 and units 18-29 are authorized for treatment with this Decision Record. These units are common to both Action Alternatives B and C. These units are shown on the attached map. I will be making further decisions on the remaining components of the proposed action including non-commercial treatment units, commercial treatment units, road building and road decommissioning in the future.

**RATIONALE**

Separation of the project area in this manner was done to allow a portion of the non commercial fuels work to begin while transportation and access issues undergo further review.

Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, is rejected because it does not meet the resource management 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 vegetative conditions and resource protection. With 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, plant vigor and vegetative health would continue to decline while high fire hazard conditions would continue to increase.

Selecting the action alternative of treating these units, will aid in fuel hazard reduction adjacent to many homes and supplement work that some landowners are performing on private lands. These treatments will enhance vegetative vigor and mitigate some of the effects resulting from long term exclusion of fire. Implementing treatment on these units will begin the landscape level work proposed with the Bobar Landscape Project.

**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 the Decision Record and FONSI in The Medford Mail Tribune. Publication of this notice establishes the date initiating the protest period provided for in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.3. Any contest of this decision should state specifically which portion or element of the decision is being protested and cite the applicable CFR regulations.

  
Richard J. Drehobl  
Ashland Field Manager

03-27-03  
Date

# BOBAR NON COMMERCIAL TREATMENT UNITS DECISION 1

