



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, Oregon 97504
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

1792(116)
Road Use EA
A8178(WHY:jl)

OCT 1 2003

Dear Interested Public:

The *Environmental Assessment* (EA) for the Road Use Project is being advertised in the Medford Mail Tribune for a 30-day public review period. This proposal represents a request from Superior Lumber Company to access their lands in Section 16, T39S,R3W. This action would amend the M-1396 (Right-of-Way and Road Use) agreement between BLM and Superior Lumber Company. This amendment would include: the addition of existing Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Road 38-3-33.1 and a 700 foot extension of BLM Road 38-3-33.1 to the Right-of-Way and Road Use Agreement.

The primary purpose of a public review is to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the BLM's determination that there are no significant impacts associated with the proposed action and, therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary.

This EA is published on the Medford District web site, www.or.blm.gov/Medford/, under "Planning Documents."

We welcome your comments on the content of the EA. We are particularly interested in comments that address one or more of the following: (1) new information that would affect the analysis, (2) information or evidence of flawed or incomplete analysis; and (3) alternatives to the Proposed Action that would respond to purpose and need. Specific comments are the most useful. Comments, including names and addresses, will be available for public review. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name and/or address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

All comments should be made in writing and mailed to Bill Yocum, Ashland Resource Area, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504. Any questions should be directed to Kristi Mastrofini or Bill Yocum at (541) 618-2384.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Drehobl
Field Manager
Ashland Resource Area

Enclosure (as stated)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
ASHLAND RESOURCE AREA

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA #OR116-03-02

FOR

ROAD USE

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ASHLAND RESOURCE AREA

EA COVER SHEET

Project Name/Number: Road Use, EA OR116-03-02

Location: BLM Road 38-3-33.1B1&B2 and SW¹/₄SE¹/₄ of Section 9, T39S, R3W.

List of Preparers	Title	Responsibility
Mike McKee	Forest Engineer	Team Lead, Engineering, and Roads
Mark Steiger	Botanist	T&E Plants and Invasive Weeds
George Arnold	Wildlife Biologist	T&E Animals, Wildlife
Jennifer Smith	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries, Riparian
Ted Hass	Soil Scientist	Soils
Bill Yocum	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	NEPA

Chapter 1

A. NEED FOR PROPOSAL

The Bureau of Land Management received access requests from:

- Superior Lumber Company, during January 2001, to access Superior lands in Section 16, T39S,R3W.

B. CONFORMANCE WITH LAND USE PLANS

The proposed activities are in conformance with and 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* (Amended Northwest Forest Plan) (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* (NWFP) (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/>>.

C. RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND OTHER PLANS

The proposed action is in conformance with the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District by the Oregon and California Lands Act of 1937 (O&C Act) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

E. DECISIONS TO BE MADE ON THIS ANALYSIS

This environmental assessment (EA) is being prepared to determine if the proposed action would have a significant effect on the human environment thus requiring the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) as prescribed in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). It is also being used to inform interested parties of the anticipated impacts and provide them with an opportunity to comment on the various alternatives.

The Ashland Resource Area Field Manager must decide:

- Whether or not the impacts of the proposed action are significant to the human environment beyond those impacts addressed in previous NEPA documents. (If the impacts are determined to be insignificant, then a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) can be issued and a decision can be implemented. If any impacts are determined to be significant to the human environment, then an Environmental Impact Statement must be prepared before the Manager makes a decision.)
- Whether to implement the proposed action alternative or defer to the no action alternative

F. ISSUES OF CONCERN

The following issue was identified during the scoping process. This issue was reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Team and was analyzed in detail.

- Disturbance to a Riparian Reserve.

Chapter 2 ALTERNATIVES

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the proposed action alternative and the no action alternative. This chapter also outlines specific project mitigation features described as Project Design Features (PDFs) which are designed as part of the alternative. PDFs reduce or eliminating anticipated adverse environmental impacts

B. PROPOSED ACTION ALTERNATIVE

To allow access to Superior Lumber Company for forest management activities on their land (Section 16, T39S, R3W). This would amend the M-1396 (Right-of-Way and Road Use Agreement) agreement between BLM and Superior Lumber Company. This amendment would include:

- the addition of existing Road 38-3-33.1 Segments B1&B2, 20 feet each side of centerline.
- the extension of BLM Road 38-3-33.1 (designated Segment C) with right-of-way limits 20 feet each side of the centerline, of which 300 feet is existing and approx. 700 feet is new road construction. This includes a culvert replacement (54" CMP) to replace the undersized culvert that failed in the 1997 flood. This segment is located on BLM land in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 9, T39S, R3W which would then access the adjacent Superior Lumber Company lands (NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 16, T39S, R3W).

Road Construction: Slash from road construction would be windrowed at the base of the fill slope to catch and disturbed sediment. Where feasible, the running surface would be out sloped with rolling water dips. Fill slopes and fill shoulders would be seeded with native mix or other approved seed mix. The fill slopes within 200 feet of the riparian area where the culvert replacement would occur will be mulched as well as seeded. All of the area associated with the culvert replacement would be seeded and mulched with appropriate material in order to minimize erosion adjacent to the seasonal stream.

Construction Restrictions: Road construction usually occurs during the dry season (May 15 to October 15) in order to reduce the potential for soil erosion and degradation of water quality. However, it is sometimes necessary to construct roads during the fall or spring when soil moisture is optimum for compaction. This also helps to prevent fill settlement and cracking. All construction activities would be stopped during a rain event of 0.2 inches or more within a 24-hour period. Measurements would be from the nearest Remote Automated Weather Station or on-site. Construction activities would usually not occur for at least 48 hours after rainfall has stopped or by approval of the Authorized Officer.

The road would be adequately surfaced if use is anticipated beyond the dry season period of between May 15 and October 15.

Dust Abatement: Dust abatement would provide driver safety and protect the road surface by stabilizing and binding the aggregate road surface. Water, lignin, magnesium chloride, road oil, or Bituminous Surface Treatment (BST) would be used.

Road Maintenance: Roads would be maintained on a long term basis. Minor improvements and design changes may be needed to stabilize and correct conditions that are causing erosion or unsafe situations.

Noxious Weeds: The proposed road reconstruction in T39S, R3E, SEC 9 could enhance the spread of noxious weeds. Heavy equipment used in the road reconstruction and culvert replacement would disturb the existing soil condition making the site more suitable for noxious weed establishment. The same equipment can serve as a weed source by transporting weed seeds to a disturbed site. This potential problem will be offset by the stipulation that heavy equipment would be washed prior to road reconstruction.

C. No Action Alternative

The no action alternative would be to deny Superior Lumber legal access across BLM lands to their land.

CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the present conditions within the proposed project area that would be affected by the alternatives. The information in this chapter serves as a general baseline for determining the effects of the alternatives. No attempt has been made to describe every detail of every resource within the proposed project area. Only enough detail has been given to determine if any of the alternatives would cause significant impacts to the environment (additional detail is located in the EA file which is available for review by calling 541-618-2384).

Soils

The soil identified in the area proposed for new construction in the Lime Gulch area is Manita loam, 20 to 35 percent slopes. This deep, well drained soil is on alluvial fans and hillslopes. It formed in alluvium and colluvium derived dominantly from metamorphic rock. Typically, the surface layer is dark brown loam about 8 inches thick. The upper 5 inches of the subsoil is dark reddish brown clay loam. The lower 45 inches is yellowish red clay loam. Weathered bedrock is at a depth of about 58 inches. The depth to bedrock ranges from 40 to 60 inches. In some areas the surface layer is gravelly. Permeability is moderately slow in the Manita soil. Available water capacity is about 8 inches. The effective rooting depth is 40 to 60 inches. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate. Soil disturbance in the proposed construction area has been minimal over the last few years and, as a result, erosion rates are stable and at near natural levels.

BLM roads 37-4-4A and 37-4-4.1A are surfaced roads that are currently open to public use. BLM road 37-4-4.2A,B is a natural surface road that is currently blocked at the junction with BLM road 37-4-4.1A. All roads are in stable condition.

Fish

Proposed activities would include road reconstruction and culvert replacement on this non-fish bearing, perennial tributary to the Applegate River. These activities would be located approximately 1 mile upstream of coho salmon critical habitat.

Fish and Fish Habitat

There is very little data available on this unnamed tributary to the Applegate River. It is a perennial tributary and is not fish bearing but does provide freshwater to the Applegate River. According to the Stream Reach Data (Ashland Hydrology 1996) the riparian area has been previously harvested and there is very little large wood in the stream.

Botany

Vascular Plant Species

The proposed road reconstruction area in T39S, R3W, SEC 9 was surveyed for Bureau Special Status and Survey and Manage vascular plants as well as the federally listed *Fritillaria gentneri* by qualified botany contractors in 2002. No Survey and Manage, Bureau Special Status, or Federally listed plants were found within the boundaries of the proposed project area.

Nonvascular Plant Species

The proposed road reconstruction area in T39S, R3W, SEC 9 was surveyed for Bureau Special Status and Survey and Manage nonvascular plants by qualified botany contractors in 2002. No Survey and Manage or Bureau Special Status nonvascular plants were found within the boundaries of the proposed project area.

Noxious Weeds

The proposed activity area in T39S, R3W, SEC 9 was surveyed for noxious weeds by qualified botany contractors in 2002. No noxious weeds were located within the project area boundary.

Wildlife

The project area is characterized by mixed-conifer forest with inclusions of oak woodlands. These plant communities provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species including black-tailed deer, coyote, mountain and California quail, western fence lizard, and many species of passerine birds. No federally listed or proposed

threatened or endangered species are known to be present in the project area, and the proposed project area is not located in critical habitat for any federally listed threatened or endangered species.

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES & EA AVAILABILITY

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter forms the scientific and analytic basis for comparison of alternatives. Discussions include the environmental impacts of the alternatives and any adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided should the proposal be implemented. The impact analysis addresses direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on all affected resources of the human environment, including critical elements. It also identifies and analyzes mitigation measures, if any, which may avoid or reduce projected impacts.

Only substantive site specific environmental changes that would result from implementing the proposed action or the no action alternative are discussed. If an ecological component is not discussed, it should be assumed that the resource specialists have considered effects to that component and found the proposed action would have minimal or no effects. General or "typical" effects from projects similar in nature to the proposed action alternative are also described in the documents to which this plan is tiered.

Soils - Proposed Action

It is anticipated that the construction of approximately 700 feet of road in the Lime Gulch area would have minimal direct impact on the soil resource with the implementation of the project design features. The replacement of the culvert would have a minimal short-term negative direct effect but long-term effects of the culvert replacement would be positive. There would be a slight increase in erosion rates adjacent to the new construction particularly during the first few rain events following construction. The elevated erosion rates would rapidly decline as vegetation is re-established and should be back to near natural levels within two years. The cumulative effect to the soil resource would be negligible as erosion rates and soil productivity in the drainage area are currently stable.

The use of BLM Roads 37-4-4A, 37-4-4.1A, and 37-4-4.2A,B during the dry season would have negligible effects on the soil resource.

Soils - No Action Alternative

It is anticipated that under the no action alternative that soil disturbance on BLM land would not occur as a result of the proposed road building but most likely the applicant would access their land through a more adverse location. There is a possibility that more soil disturbance would occur on private land. The culvert that failed in the 1997 flood would not be replaced under this proposal leading to the potential of future failure and additional erosion. In summary, the short term negative effects of the road building would not occur but the potential long term positive effects of the culvert replacement would not be realized.

Not allowing the use of BLM Roads 37-4-4A, 37-4-4.1A, and 37-4-4.2A,B have no direct effect on the soil resource but would probably cause the applicant to build new road to access their property increasing the chance of soil disturbance locally.

Fish - Proposed Action

Road reconstruction and culvert replacement in the Lime Gulch area would have a less than negligible effect on fisheries with the implementation of the project design features (PDFs). Since the culvert was blown out in the 1997 Flood, this road crossing has been contributing sediment to the system. The culvert replacement would have a minimal short-term negative effect by increasing sediment however, over the long-term sediment levels would be reduced. Road reconstruction and road improvements may contribute sediment to the systems in the short term but would reduce sediment over the longterm. The cumulative effect to the aquatic resources would be negligible as the action is one mile from observed fish presence and PDFs ensure that sediment from the project would be minimized.

Road and culvert improvements and hauling during the dry season would have negligible effects on the fisheries.

The actions proposed under this alternative are covered under the 8/8/01 Programmatic and Conference Opinion, as amended 5/21/03.

Fish - No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative erosion and sedimentation would be unchanged. Erosion would continue at the site of the blown out culvert and unimproved roads would continue to contribute sediment to the systems. Soil disturbance on BLM land would not occur as a result of the proposed road improvements but it is possible the applicant would access their land through a more adverse location. In summary, the short term negative effects of the road improvements and reconstruction and culvert replacement would not occur but the potential long term positive effects of the culvert replacement would not be realized.

Not allowing the use of BLM Roads 37-4-4A, 37-4-4.1A, and 37-4-4.2A,B would have no direct effect on fisheries but would probably cause the applicant to build new road to access their property increasing the chance of soil disturbance locally.

Botany - Proposed Action Alternative

Vascular Plant Species

The No Action Alternative would have no direct, indirect or cumulative affect on any Bureau Special Status, Survey & Manage, or Federally listed vascular plant species.

Nonvascular Plant Species

The No Action Alternative would have be no direct, indirect or cumulative affect on any Bureau Special Status or Survey & Manage nonvascular plant species.

Botany - No Action Alternative

Vascular Plant Species

The No Action Alternative would have be no direct, indirect or cumulative affect on any Bureau Special Status, Survey & Manage, or Federally listed vascular plant species.

Nonvascular Plant Species

The No Action Alternative would have be no direct, indirect or cumulative affect on any Bureau Special Status or Survey & Manage nonvascular plant species.

Noxious Weeds

The No Action Alternative would have be no affect on the spread of noxious weeds.

Wildlife - Proposed Action

The proposed action would authorize the Swanson Group, Inc. to use approximately 4.5 miles of existing road and to construct approximately 700 feet of road on BLM managed land. The new construction would remove approximately one acre of oak-woodland and small diameter mixed-conifer habitat. The loss of this small amount of habitat would have a negligible impact to the terrestrial wildlife species in the project area. Impacts due to use of the road by Swanson Group personnel would be limited to short-term vehicular disturbance. This also would have a negligible impact to the terrestrial wildlife species in the area. Most of the existing road and all of the proposed extension are behind a locked gate that limits other vehicular access in the area.

Sections of the existing road are adjacent to suitable spotted owl habitat. There are no spotted owls known to be present in this habitat. If a future nest is found proximate to the road (i.e. ≤ 0.25 mile), the terms of the amendment provides for protection of the nest site in relation to road use.

The proposed action would facilitate future timber management activities on approximately 640 acres of Swanson Group land. These activities would change the distribution and relative abundance of wildlife species on this parcel since the timber management activities would modify existing habitat. However, it is expected that species diversity on Swanson Group land and adjacent lands would remain unchanged by the timber management activities.

Wildlife - No Action

Under this alternative, 700 feet of road would not be constructed on BLM managed land, and the associated loss of approximately one acre of habitat would not occur. The short-term vehicular disturbance to wildlife also would not occur. However, it is assumed the timber management activities on Swanson Group land would take place because the company would obtain alternate access to their land. Therefore, the impacts to terrestrial wildlife species on the private parcel would be the same as with the proposed action.

Critical Elements

The following elements of the human environment are subject to requirements specified in statute, regulation, or executive order and must be considered in all Eas.

Critical Element	Affected		Critical Element	Affected	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Air Quality		✓	T & E Species		✓
ACECs		✓	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid		✓
Cultural Resources		✓	Water Quality		✓*
Farmlands, Prime/Unique		✓	Wetlands/Riparian Zones		✓*
Floodplains		✓	Wild & Scenic Rivers		✓
Nat. Amer. Rel. Concerns		✓	Wilderness		✓
Invasive, Nonnative Species		✓	Energy Resources (EO 13212)		✓
			Environmental Justice		✓

*These affected critical elements would be impacted by implementing the Proposed Action. The impacts are being reduced by designing the Proposed Action with project design, Best Management Practices, Management Action/Direction, Standard and Guidelines as outlined in the Environmental Impact Statements (EIS)/Record of Decisions (RMP) (USDI BLM 1995)(USDA FS; USDI BLM 2001) tiered to in Chapter 1. The impacts are not affected beyond those already analyzed by the above-mentioned documents.

Consultation with Others

An interdisciplinary team of resource specialists reviewed the proposal and all pertinent information, and identified relevant issues to be addressed during the environmental analysis.

EA Availability and Distribution List

Upon completion of this EA, a legal notification was placed in the Medford Mail Tribune offering a public review and comment period. For additional information, please contact Bill Yocum at (541) 618-2384.

This EA was distributed to the following agencies, organizations, lease holders, and tribes:

Organizations and Agencies

Association of O&C Counties
 Applegate Partnership; Applegate River Watershed Council
 Jackson County Commissioners
 Northwest Environmental Defense Center
 Oregon Natural Resources Council
 Rogue River National Forest (RRNF)
 Southern Oregon University

Audubon Society
 Headwaters
 Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center
 Oregon Department Forestry
 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
 The Pacific Rivers Council

Federally Recognized Tribes

Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians
 Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
 Confederated Tribes of Siletz
 Klamath Tribe
 Quartz Valley Indian Reservation (Shasta Tribe)
 Shasta Nation

Other Tribes

Confederated Bands [Shasta], Shasta Upper Klamath Indians

Confederated Tribes of the Rogue-Table Rock and Associated Tribes