

**BURMA THINNING  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
South River Resource Area  
EA# OR105-97-10**

Date Prepared: September 10, 1998

**Decision Documentation**

Bureau of Land Management-Roseburg District  
South River Resource Area

**Decision:**

This is a decision on the Burma Thinning portion of Environmental Assessment (EA) # OR105-97-10 which also includes the Signal Tree Thinning analysis. I authorize the harvest of approximately 2,542 MBF (4,464 CCF) of timber in a commercial thinning from approximately 102 acres located in Sections 5 and 7, T. 30 S., R. 8 W., W.M. This decision coincides with Alternative #1 of the EA. The action is located in a Critical Habitat Unit (CHU) for the northern spotted owl, within the Matrix land use allocation. The sale date for Burma Shave (contract name) Thinning is planned for October 20, 1998.

All units will be thinned from below with the objective of maintaining a stand density of 80-110 trees to the acre. Units 7A and 5A (Units 1 and 2 respectively in the contract) will be harvested with ground based equipment, and will be restricted to dry season operations. Unit 5B (Unit 3 in the contract) is designed for cable yarding, and is available as a winter harvest opportunity. There will be approximately 0.27 miles of temporary road construction, which will be fully decommissioned in the same operating season in which it is built and used. There will be approximately 0.54 miles of road renovation, that will include rocking some dirt road, and approximately 0.15 miles of permanent ridge top road construction.

**In addition to the Best Management Practices (BMP) and project design features identified in the EA, and inherent to this project, the following mitigation will be adopted:**

1. No felling, bucking or yarding activities are authorized between April 15 and July 15 in order to protect leave trees from damage during the bark-slip period.
2. The marking prescription will provide for uneven spacing of leave trees, retention of small uncut islands, creation of small openings, and retention of late-seral habitat components such as large old-growth trees, down logs and snags.
3. Measures will be implemented to prevent disturbance of Special Status Plants, including: directional falling of timber, maintaining existing large woody debris, using designated skid trails and leaving uncut buffers around plant sites.

4. Prior to initial move-in, and at any time during the life of the contract that a piece of road construction or logging equipment is removed from the contract area, and then returned, the equipment shall be steam cleaned or pressure washed before being brought into the contract area to remove potentially contaminated soil.
5. Highly compacted landing areas and skid trails will be tilled upon completion of logging operations.

**I have decided not to adopt the following mitigation:** Existing natural surface roads and skid trails not needed for harvest operations and not currently functioning as commercial timberland will not be tilled prior to harvest. The rationale for this decision is that previous tractor entry has created a system of skid trails that will most likely be employed in this thinning operation, and tilled afterwards. There are limited opportunities to implement this mitigation in a practical manner. Tilling of temporary roads and skid trails will restrict site productivity loss to less than 1%.

**Rationale for Decision:**

The decision is based on the following objectives: the harvest applies the ecosystem management approach as outlined in the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (ROD) and meets the objectives for Matrix lands as stated in the Roseburg District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP, p. 33). The sale will contribute to the allowable sale quantity (ASQ) (ROD/RMP, p. 60) for the resource area as originally proposed. The no action alternative would not meet the above objectives.

Mitigation has been formulated into the contract stipulations and was applied during layout and implementation. Application of these mitigation, and Riparian Reserves will minimize impacts to hydrologic and associated systems, including the fisheries resource. The proposed action does not prevent or retard attainment of the ACS. Impacts are within the scope of those analyzed in the RMP/EIS (Vol. 1, pp. 4-7 through 4-99). The harvest is in conformance with the Standards and Guidelines in the ROD.

A Biological Opinion (BO) dated January 23, 1997 was received from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Consultation under Section 7(a)(4) of the Endangered Species Act has not been completed with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the Umpqua River cutthroat trout and Oregon Coast coho salmon. The sale contract will not be awarded until a final biological opinion or letter of concurrence, which includes a non-jeopardy determination, has been received. The sale was designed to follow the guidance of the Resource Management Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan, and to incorporate mitigations identified in the consultations on previously listed salmonids, as appropriate. Therefore, it is our expectation that the biological opinion will not make a jeopardy determination nor prescribe any reasonable and prudent measures or terms and conditions that are not already part of the sale design and mitigation. Because the United States retains the right to

reject any and all bids for any reason, the mere offering of the sale does not make any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources which have the effect of foreclosing the formulation or implementation of any reasonable and prudent alternative measures. If additional reasonable and prudent alternative measures or terms and conditions are prescribed which would require alteration in the terms of the sale contract, the BLM retains the discretion (prior to contract award) to adjust the sale design accordingly and readvertise the sale if necessary.

No issues were identified by other agencies, the public or Native Americans during the scoping process. Comments were received from members of the public and were considered during the development of this decision. None of the comments provided new information or issues which have not been addressed in the EA or EIS. Several comments received, warrant clarification:

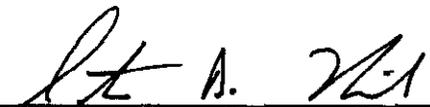
1. Non-merchantable Port-Orford cedar are being removed within 50 feet of roads in non-timber sale activities directed at controlling the spread of *Phytophthora lateralis*.
2. Watershed analysis was not a prerequisite for this project. There are no entries being made into Riparian Reserves for the purpose of timber harvest or road construction, and the project area does not lie within a Key Watershed. A first iteration of watershed analysis for the Middle Fork Coquille was completed by the Coos Bay BLM District in July 1994. The Roseburg District expects to complete a second iteration in the Spring of 1999.
3. Late-successional forests comprise 43% of federally managed lands in the Middle Coquille watershed. The thinning removes no late-successional forest.
4. Although the commercial thinning lies within the range of the marbled murrelet, there is no suitable habitat within 1/4 mile of the sale units, and no surveys are required, as a result.

**Compliance and Monitoring:**

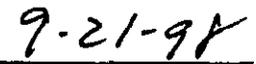
Monitoring will be done in accordance with the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (pp. 84, 190, 191, and 195-198).

**Protest and Appeals Procedures:**

As outlined in 43 CFR Subpart 5003 Administrative Remedies, protests may be filed with the authorized officer within 15 days of the publication date of the decision notice in the News Review.



Steve Niles  
Area Manager  
South River Resource Area

  
Date