

**South River Watershed Restoration
Environmental Assessment
South River Field Office
EA # OR-105-00-05**

**Days Creek In-Stream Structures
Decision Documentation**

Date Prepared: April 23, 2002

Decision:

It is my decision to authorize the placement of 98 log structures, consisting of single or multiple logs and/or trees, in a 2.9 mile stretch of Days Creek in Sections 23 and 27 of T. 29 S., R. 3 W., W.M. To provide the structures, 76 trees will be felled directly into the creek and 2 blown down trees will be repositioned. An additional 29 trees from within the Riparian Reserve will be cut, cable-yarded to the 29-3-33.0 road and moved with an excavator to areas where needed. Stream access for the excavator will be limited to 6 short skid roads, 100-400 feet in length. Five of the roads already exist, and construction of the sixth will be limited to the removal of some brush and a few alder trees. Project implementation will include:

- Pressure washing or steam cleaning of excavation and earth-moving equipment prior to move-in on the project site in order to minimize the risk of introducing soil from outside the project area that may be contaminated with noxious weed seed.
- Restriction of in-stream construction activities to the period between July 1 and September 15, during low summer stream flows, consistent with conditions of the General Authorization of the Oregon Division of State Lands. If stream levels exceed 0.5 feet, as measured at the Days Creek Gaging Station above May Creek, work will be suspended until levels decline.
- Placement of an absorbent boom below the project site prior to the commencement of work to contain potential spillage of any petroleum products.
- Blocking of all access points to vehicular use following project completion.

Rationale for the Decision:

This project was analyzed under Alternative 1, the “proposed” action, of the South River Watershed Restoration EA. Its implementation will meet the objective of restoring habitat complexity to stream reaches utilized by resident and anadromous fish for feeding, spawning and rearing. The large wood used for structures will provide a source of organic material that provides forage for aquatic fauna that fish prey upon, and will increase the numbers and quality of stream pools in which fish feed and rest. The structures will also trap and retain spawning gravels, and promote stream meander that will reduce stream velocities and subsequent scouring of stream beds and banks. Alternative 2, the “no action” alternative, would not meet these objectives and needs.

The placement of in-stream structures will not result in any undue environmental degradation. The project is consistent with Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives contained in the ROD/RMP (pp. 19-20). Specifically, the project will aid in the maintenance and restoration of the natural sediment regime; maintenance and restoration of the physical integrity of the aquatic system; maintenance and restoration of water quality necessary to support healthy riparian, aquatic and wetland ecosystems; and maintenance and restoration of habitat.

Surveys were conducted for Kincaid's lupine (*Lupinus sulphureus* var. *kincaidii*), listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Results were negative. Surveys for Survey and Manage botanical species identified one occurrence of *Hydnum umbilicatum* (a Category B fungi) and nine of *Ramalina thrausta* (a Category A lichen), five of which are outside the project area. Both species are considered rare, and management of all known sites is required. The limited number of trees selected for felling in proximity to the fungi (1) and lichen (2) will not measurably affect micro-climate. The sites are delineated on the ground, and excavator operation will be kept out of the immediate vicinity of the sites.

Surveys for red tree voles were also completed. None of the trees selected for felling, nor any trees in the fall zones were found to contain evidence of vole occupancy and use.

None of the trees to be felled are within ¼-mile of any owl activity center, and project activities would not commence until after July 1. As a consequence, there would be no effect on northern spotted owls associated with disturbance during the nesting season. The project would remove trees that provide foraging and dispersal habitat. The consequences of this removal were informally consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife. Because the action would affect less than one-half percent of the available riparian dispersal habitat in the Days Creek drainage, and would constitute minor modification of habitat, it was judged as "not likely to adversely affect" the northern spotted owl. With the application of recommendations contained on p. 3 of the *FY 2001-2002 Programmatic Assessments for Activities Not Likely to Adversely Affect Listed Species* (1-15-00-I-270), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurs with this determination.

Days Creek provides spawning and rearing habitat for the Oregon Coast coho salmon, listed as a Federally-threatened species. The effects of placement of in-stream structures on the coho salmon and designated critical habitat are primarily derived from sediment generated by stream bank disturbance and in-stream activities associated with the project. These effects are considered "likely to adversely affect" coho and designated critical habitat. Effects on Essential Fish Habitat are considered substantively the same. The BLM consulted this determination with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The NMFS findings are addressed in the August 8, 2001, Programmatic Biological and Conference Opinion for Programmatic Activities Affecting SONC Coho Salmon, OC Coho Salmon, and OC Steelhead. The opinion sets forth Terms and Conditions in conjunction with authorization of Incidental Take. This project is consistent with the terms and conditions of the Programmatic Biological and Conference Opinion.

No issues were identified by other State or Federal agencies, or by any tribal governments. The EA and Finding of No Significant Impact were made available for public review from June 28, 2000, through July 28, 2000. Comments were received from one organization. These comments did not constitute new information or issues not already considered and addressed in the South River Watershed Restoration EA, the ROD/RMP, or the Roseburg District *Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*.

Compliance and Monitoring:

Monitoring will be done in accordance with implementation monitoring objectives and requirements for Riparian Reserves, Water and Soils, Wildlife Habitat, Fish Habitat, and Special Status and SEIS Special Attention Species Habitat resources contained in the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (pp.190-191, and 195-199).

Protest and Appeals Procedures: As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 Administrative Remedies, protests may be filed with the authorized officer within 15 days of the publication date of the Decision Notice in the Roseburg, Oregon, *The News-Review*.

E. Dwight Fielder
Field Manager
South River Field Office

Date