

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

Date Prepared: June 21, 2002

**Russel Creek
Culvert Replacement
Decision Documentation**

Decision:

It is my decision to authorize the replacement of a large stream-crossing culvert on Russel Creek. The culvert is located on BLM Road No. 30-6-35.1 within easements across privately owned lands in T. 31 S., R. 6 W., NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 2, W.M. Field Office and District engineering personnel have identified a need for replacement of this culvert because of the near-term risk of failure. Field Office fishery biologists have identified the culvert as a barrier to upstream and downstream passage by resident and anadromous fish, and other aquatic organisms.

A temporary bypass road will be constructed to provide access to residential properties and private forest lands located above the project site. The bypass road will be removed upon completion of the project.

Culvert design and installation will incorporate Best Management Practices from Appendix D (p. 134-136) of the *Roseburg District Record of Decision/Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP June, 1995). Among the project design features to be implemented:

- Replacement of the existing culvert with an open-arched pipe sized to greater than bank-full width. The arched pipe will allow accumulation of streambed substrates (spawning gravels) and reduce stream flow velocities that could otherwise result in channel downcutting and stream bank erosion, and impede upstream and downstream passage by juvenile resident fish, anadromous fish and other aquatic fauna.
- Design of the culvert to pass a theoretical 100-year flood event.
- Restriction of in-stream construction activities to the period between July 1 and September 15, during low summer stream flows, consistent with Best Management Practices contained in the Roseburg District ROD/RMP.
- Diversion of stream flow during construction activities, and minimization of in-stream equipment operation.
- Prior to commencement of work, placement of absorbent booms downstream of the project site to contain potential spillage of any petroleum products.
- Any resulting waste material will be endhauled to an authorized upland disposal site.
- Revegetation of disturbed areas and stream banks with native grasses and/or trees.

- 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.

Rationale for the Decision:

The replacement of the culvert would not result in any undue environmental degradation. The replacement would restore safe management access to lands above the culvert site, and would restore access by resident and anadromous fish to an estimated 2 miles of habitat. The project is consistent with objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy contained in the ROD/RMP (pp. 20-21), specifically the maintenance and restoration of the natural sediment regime; maintenance and restoration of in-stream flows; maintenance and restoration of spatial and temporal connectivity in the watershed; and maintenance and restoration of habitat.

The action would also meet the objective stated in Appendix D, Best Management Practices “To preclude stream crossings from being a direct source of sediment to streams thus minimizing water quality degradation and provide unobstructed movement for aquatic fauna.”(ROD/RMP, p. 134). This project was analyzed under Alternative 1, the proposed action, of the EA. Its implementation would meet the stated objectives of the alternative. The alternative of no action, Alternative 2, would not meet the identified objective or need.

Because the project site is located on private lands there are no provisions or requirements for pre-disturbance surveys for Survey and Manage species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has identified an array of soil series within a set of geographic quadrangles that represent potentially suitable habitat for Kincaid’s lupine (*Lupinus sulphureus var. kincaidii*), a Federally-threatened species. The project area is within the identified geographic range, but the requisite soil types are absent. As a consequence, the site is not considered to be suitable habitat, the species is not expected to be present and surveys are not required.

The project area is not located within ¼ of a mile of any activity centers for the northern spotted owl. In-stream work is prohibited prior to July 1, so that the potential for disturbance to nesting owls, associated with construction activities and noise, is not present. There is no habitat at the site of the culvert, so the potential for affecting owls by modifying or removing habitat does not exist. As a consequence, this project is considered to have no effect on the northern spotted owl.

Russel Creek provides spawning and rearing habitat for the Federally-threatened Oregon Coast coho salmon, up to the location of the culvert which blocks further passage. The Oregon Coast steelhead trout, a candidate species for listing as threatened, is known to use habitat above the culvert. The potential or actual effects of culvert replacement on Oregon Coast coho salmon and designated critical habitat, and on Oregon Coast steelhead trout are primarily derived from sediment generated by stream bank disturbance and in-stream activities associated with the culvert replacement. These effects were determined to be likely to adversely affect listed fish and designated critical habitat, and were consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). While the exact extent of Essential Fish Habitat are undetermined, project effects on

downstream habitat are considered substantively the same. 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. This project is consistent with the terms and conditions set forth in the opinion in conjunction with authorization of Incidental Take.

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 which did not constitute new information, nor were any issues identified which were 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 Water and Soils, and Fish Habitat resources contained in the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (pp. 189 and 195-198).

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, *News-Review*.

E. Dwight Fielder
Field Manager
South River Field Office

Date