

**South River Commercial Thinning 2003
Environmental Assessment
South River Field Office
EA # OR-105-03-01**

**Shep Boyardee Commercial Thinning
Decision Documentation**
Prepared: September 27, 2004

Decision:

It is my decision to offer Shep Boyardee Commercial Thinning, implementing in part Alternative Three as described on pages 9-10 of the South River Commercial Thinning 2003 EA and completing implementation of the thinning projects proposed in the EA. Differences in the 151 acres authorized by this decision and the 160 acres proposed in the EA are the result of refinements in the location of unit boundaries.

The sale consists of five units located in Section 31, T. 29 S., R. 7 W. and Section 31, T. 29½ S., R. 7 W. Approximately 114 acres to be thinned are allocated as General Forest Management Area within the Matrix. Density management will be applied on approximately 37 acres allocated as Riparian Reserves. Approximately five acres within the General Forest Management Area will be cut for temporary spur road rights-of-way.

Thinning and cutting of rights-of-way in the General Forest Management Area will yield 1,597 MBF of timber chargeable toward the annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for the Roseburg District. The volume of timber to be derived from density management in Riparian Reserves is 498 MBF, which is not chargeable toward the ASQ. It is anticipated that there will be additional volume modified into the sale as a result of the need to cut tailhold, guyline, and corridor trees.

Four temporary spur roads, totaling approximately 0.53 miles in length, will be constructed. Except for the first 100-150 feet of Spur 1, which accesses the southern end of Unit 1 (Unit A in the EA), all spur road construction is located within the interior of the thinning units. Approximately 1.52 miles of natural surface roads will be renovated but will not be surfaced with aggregate. Use of these temporary spurs and natural surface roads will be limited to the dry season. Approximately 0.12 miles of Segment A, Road No. 29-7-31.4 will be renovated and surfaced with aggregate to accommodate limited winter operations on a portion of Unit 1 (Unit A in the EA).

The intent is to renovate unsurfaced roads and construct temporary roads, use and decommission in the same operational season, as described in the EA (p. 8). If these roads cannot be utilized in that time frame because of events such as an extended fire closure, the BLM will require that the roads are winterized to prevent erosion and blocked to vehicular use. The roads would then be reopened, used and decommissioned in the following operational season.

While Port-Orford-cedar is present in the Olalla-Lookingglass watershed, there is none within any of the thinning units and the designated haul route does not pass through any portions of the watershed in which Port-Orford-cedar is present.

To reduce the probability of introducing new infestations of noxious weeds into the project area, pressure washing or steam cleaning of all logging and road building equipment will be required prior to move-in. If, at any time during the life of the timber sale contract, equipment is removed from the sale area, it will be cleaned prior to being returned to the sale area.

The only Bureau Sensitive or Assessment wildlife species identified as potential occupants of the project area were the Oregon shoulderband snail (*Helminthoglypta hertleini*) and the Chace sideband snail (*Monadenia chaceana*). No suitable habitat is present in Units 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Units A through D in the EA). Surveys of approximately three-quarters of an acre of suitable habitat in Unit 5 (Unit E in the EA) did not locate any shoulderband or sideband snails.

Surveys were conducted for Special Status botanical species identified on pages 23 and 24 of the EA, in April and May of 2003. None of these species were located in the project area.

Rationale for the Decision:

Management direction in the Roseburg District *Record of Decision/Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP 1995) specifies “. . . commercial thinning in the matrix where practical and where research indicates increased gains in timber production are likely.” (ROD/RMP, p. 62) Density management in Riparian Reserves is necessary to “. . . help achieve controlled stocking, establishment of desired non-conifer vegetation, and the desired vegetation characteristics needed to attain objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.” (pp. 153-154) Alternative One, the “No Action” alternative would not accomplish these objectives.

As described on page 2 of the EA, timber harvest is needed to attain the District ASQ and the socio-economic objectives of the Roseburg District *Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*. It will also help to meet the requirement of the O&C Act to provide a sustained production of timber from suitable forested lands. Alternatives Two and Three would each meet these needs, while Alternative One, the “No Action” alternative will not. Alternative Three is selected because it affords some opportunity for the scheduling of operations at times other than the summer months.

Comments on the EA were received from three organizations, and considered in the preparation of this decision. No issues or concerns were identified which were not already considered and addressed in the EA, or which constituted new information that would change the conclusions of the analysis. Two comments warrant response, however.

- It was suggested that Unit 4 (D in the EA) includes the “green tree retention area” that was established as a part of Unit 3 of the Old Dillard regeneration timber sale, sold and logged in the mid-1990s. This is not the case. The retention area is outside the thinning unit and remains intact.

- It was suggested that Unit 1 (A in the EA) thins an area that was logged as part of the Old Dillard timber sale designated as “trees marked for cutting in the reserve area.” The area in question is one where a small number of trees were cleared around two selected ponderosa pine seed trees and combined with the sale volume of the Old Dillard sale. It did not constitute regeneration harvest of the area and does not alter the need to thin the remainder of the area.

There is no designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl within any of the thinning units. As described in the EA (p. 36), thinning will only occur in stands that provide dispersal habitat and limited foraging opportunities for the northern spotted owl. No suitable nesting and roosting habitat will be removed or modified. Although thinning will modify and alter habitat utility, within 15 years canopy closure will return to pre-thinning levels and use of the stands by owls for foraging and dispersal will return to pre-thinning levels. As a consequence, the BLM has made a determination of “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” for the spotted owl based on the modification of habitat. In the FY 2003-2008 Programmatic Biological Opinion (Log No. 1-15-03-F-160, pp. 2-3), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurs with this determination.

As described in the EA (p. 36), there will be no disturbance to spotted owls associated with removal or modification of habitat because none of the commercial thinning units are located within ¼-mile of any owl activity centers. This is consistent with the findings contained in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) *Reinitiation of consultation regarding modification of disturbance distances* (1-15-04-F-0301).

Two years of surveys have determined that the project area is not occupied by marbled murrelets. No Daily Operational Restrictions will be required between April 1 and August 5, during murrelet nesting season.

As noted in the EA (p. 20), Oregon Coast coho salmon and Oregon Coast steelhead trout are present in Olalla Creek a half-mile or more below the thinning units. Limits of Essential Fish Habitat are identical to coho distribution limits. The sole potential effect of the thinning on coho salmon, steelhead trout and Essential Fish Habitat is associated with sediment, as described in the EA (p. 38). Given the project design features to be implemented that include “no-harvest” buffers on intermittent streams, and seasonal restriction on yarding to unsurfaced roads and hauling on unsurfaced roads, the BLM has determined that the likelihood for increased sediment levels is less than negligible and that the project is a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” for coho salmon and steelhead trout. The project was determined to have no adverse effect on Essential Fish Habitat. In a letter dated November 5, 2003, NOAA/Fisheries concurred with this finding.

Monitoring:

Monitoring would be done in accordance with the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (pg. 84, 190-191, & 193-199). Specific resources to be monitored would include: Riparian Reserves; Matrix; Water and Soils; Wildlife Habitat; Fish Habitat; and Special Status Species Habitat.

Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 Administrative Remedies at § 5003.3 (a) and (b), protests may be made within 15 days of the publication date of a notice of sale. Publication of such notice in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon, constitutes the decision date from which such protests may be filed. Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.

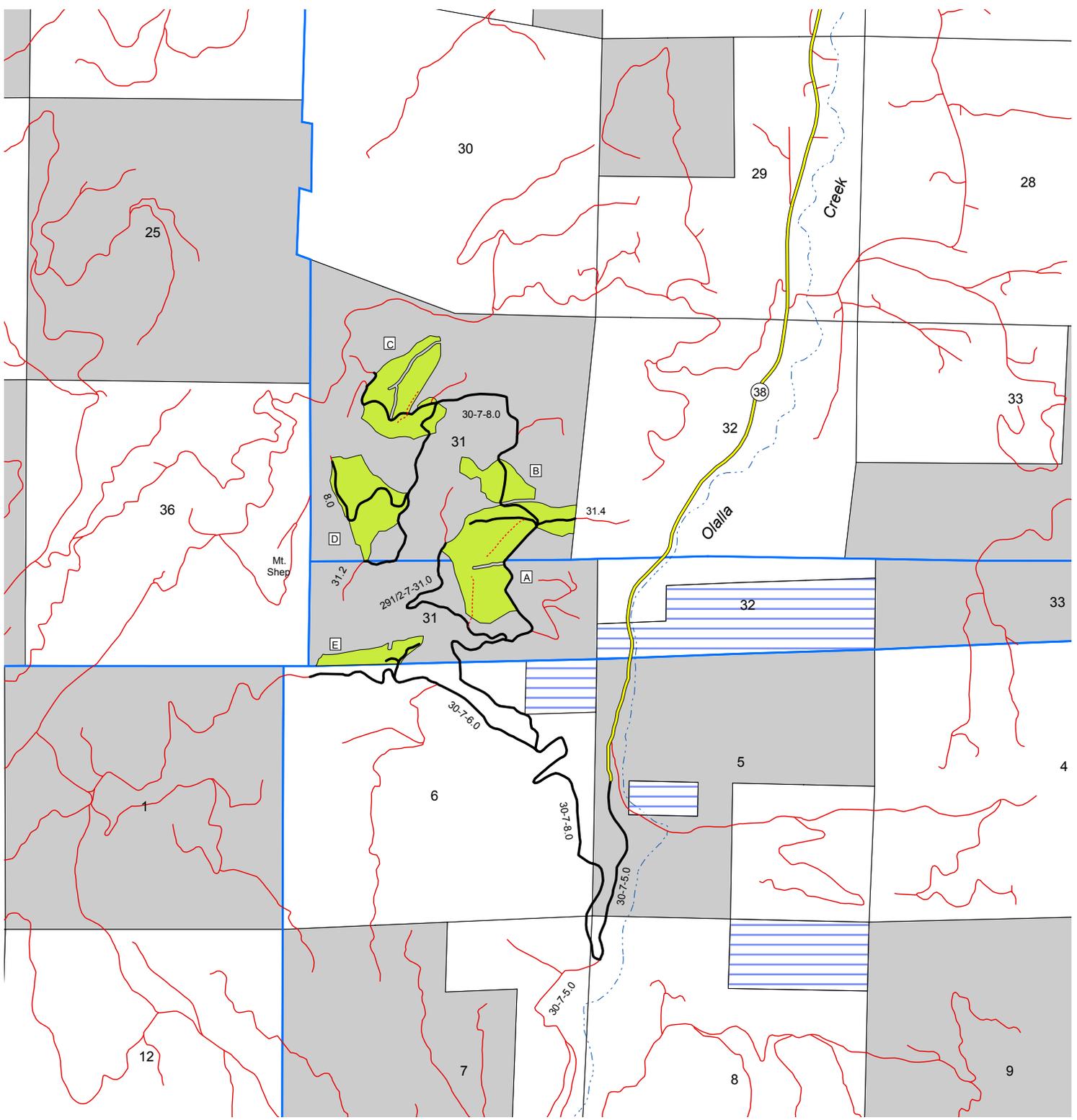
43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (b) states that: “Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.” This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail or facsimile protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Roseburg District Office will be accepted.

William S. Haigh
Field Manager
South River Field Office

Date

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Commercial Thinning



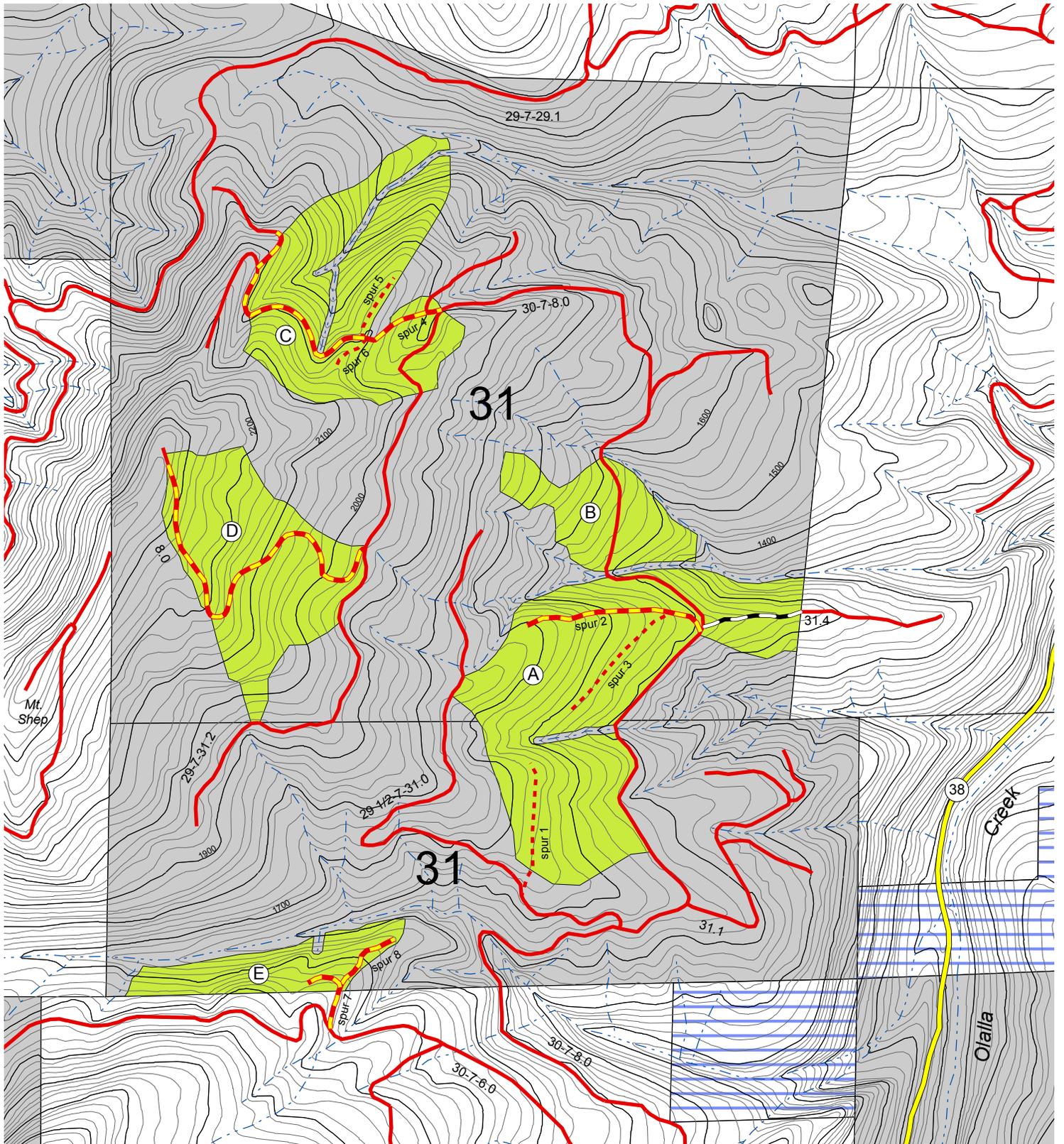
T29,29 1/2S, R7W
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- County Road
- Existing Road
- Haul Route
- Road to be Constructed
- Thinning Area
- BLM (O&C) Land
- BLM (PD) Land
- Non-BLM Land

SHEP BOYARDEE

Commercial Thinning



- County Road
- Existing Road
- Renovate, Rock
- Renovate, Decommission
- Construct, Decommission
- Stream
- 20 ft. Contour
- 100 ft. Contour

- Thinning Area
- BLM (O&C) Land
- BLM (PD) Land
- Non-BLM Land

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