ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA Number: OR-104-98-02

BLM Office: Swiftwater RA, Roseburg District

Proposed Action Title: Smith River Risk Reduction & Restoration

Location of Proposed Action: Select Roads in T.21S., R.7W.; T.21S., R.6W.; and T.20S., R.6W.

Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plan:

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plan:

Name of Plan: Roseburg District Record of Decision and Resources Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved: June 2, 1995.

This plan has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

Need for Proposed Action:

The Smith River is a Tier 1 Key Watershed and has been targeted through the RMP as one of the high priority areas for restoration. Watershed analysis by BLM personnel show that the Upper and Middle Smith River subwatersheds (Smith River WAU) have a road density of more than four miles per square mile. Scientific literature indicates that road densities of greater than two miles per square mile may increase cumulative erosion rates through higher landslide rates, increased erosion and/or sediment delivery to streams. Road networks may also change cumulative stream flows through interception and diversion of the natural flow of water. One of the goals of the RMP is to have no "net increase in road mileage in Key Watersheds," and if funds are available to "[r]educe existing road mileage within Key Watersheds." (RMP, pg.74)

Road decommissioning is one method to help speed restoration and protect resource values. A pilot project for identifying human uses as well as risks roads may pose to aquatic resources was developed for the Upper Smith River subwatershed. This process has helped prioritize roads for decommissioning and risk reduction and thus provide valuable information for establishing Transportation Management Objectives. Roads to be fully decommissioned as an objective were identified through this process. Money is currently available through the Jobs In The Woods (JITW) program for restoration work. Possible funding sources for future road decommissioning may include JITW, timber sales, or other potential restoration grants. The total roads listed in this EA are the final result of negotiating with Right-of-Way permittees who have legal jurisdiction for determining road closures. This list has been agreed upon by the involved parties for full decommissioning.

Definition of Full Decommissioning (hydrologic obliteration): Roads, determined through an interdisciplinary process, to have no future need will be subsoiled (or tilled), seeded, mulched, and planted to reestablish vegetation. Cross drains, fills in stream channels, and potentially unstable fill areas will be removed to restore natural hydrologic flow. The road will be closed with a device similar to an earthen (tank trap) barrier or equivalent. The road will not require future maintenance.

Legal Rights of Right-of-Way (R/W) Permittee:

Government roads under reciprocal R/W agreements cannot be unilaterally decommissioned. Therefore permission to decommission was pursued with the affected parties. Letters giving approval for full decommissioning of the roads listed below were received from Seneca Jones Timber Co. and Lone Rock Timber Co. Verbal approval was received from Giustina Resources Ltd. Partnership, Weyerhaeuser Company (WEYCO), Woolley Enterprises Inc., Roseburg Resources Co., and Western Lane District (Fire Protection Agency). With the signing of a decision related to this EA document, any of the roads listed below could be fully decommissioned legally in the years to come as funds become available.

Background Information: Watershed Cumulative Effects

The other activities planned in the Upper and Middle Smith River subwatersheds include the following. In Middle Smith River subwatershed, Johnson Creek and Foghorn Cleghorn commercial thinnings are planned. In Upper Smith River subwatershed, Happy Summit density management is planned. These other actions are addressed in separate EAs or Categorical Exclusions. No new permanent road construction is planned for all of these timber sales and measures have been developed in the timber sale plans to mitigate for impacts. In 1997, three BLM culverts in Middle Smith River subwatershed and three BLM culverts in Upper Smith River subwatershed were replaced to provide fish passage. There are plans during 1998 and 1999 in Middle Smith River subwatershed to replace five to seven BLM culverts, replace one county culvert, and remove one private (WEYCO) culvert and in Upper Smith River subwatershed to replace six to seven BLM culverts, replace or restore three county culverts, and replace or restore three private (Seneca) culverts to provide fish passage. Other culverts with fish passage concerns may be added to this list as needs are identified.

Description of Proposed Action:

Roads within Gunter Recreation site are included in the list below. This is a recreation site that is currently closed and not in use. Full decommissioning a total of 5.93 miles of road would include the following (see map, Appendix A for further details):

Road No. Segment	Road Surface Type	Miles
20-6-32.3 B	rock	0.48
20-6-33.0 A(portion)	rock	0.82
(portion starting from the junction of the 21-6-3.1 road)		
20-6-33.4 A	rock	0.16
20-6-33.5 A	rock	0.08

20-6-35.0 B(portion)	dirt	0.18
(portion starting from the southern section line of T.20 S., R.6 W., Section 25)		
20-6-36.0 A(portion)	dirt	0.19
(portion starting from the junction of the 20-6-25.1 road)		
21-5-7.7 A	rock	0.89
21-6-3.3 A	rock	0.60
21-6-14.1 D	rock	0.55
21-6-15.1 A	dirt	0.54
21-6-15.2 A	rock	0.07
21-6-16.0 A	dirt	0.49
21-6-16.1 A	dirt	0.14
21-7-1.3 A	dirt	0.36
21-7-13.2 A	rock	0.08
Roads in Gunter Recreation Site		~0.3
TOTAL MILES		5.93

1. The following design features would be part of fully decommissioning all of the above roads:
   - where possible, rock on existing roads would be recovered to be reused at other locations
   - pull culverts and re-contour stream crossings
   - pull back sidecast material with high potential of failure
   - sub-soil roads and revegetate with natives (grass) or trees
   - water bar and/or block roads

2. Contractor will dispose of culverts.

Environmental Impacts of the proposed action:

Critical Elements	Potentially Affected	
	No	Yes
Air Quality	X	
ACECs	X	
Cultural Resources	X	
Farmlands, Prime/Unique	X	
Floodplains	X	
Nat. Amer. Rel. Concerns	X	
T & E Species		X
Waste, Hazardous/Solid		X
Wetlands/Riparian Zones		X
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X	
Wilderness	X	
Environmental Justice	X	

Description of Potential Impacts/Mitigation:

A. T & E Species and Species of Concern.

1. Northern Spotted Owl and **Marbled Murrelet**

The northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet are the only T&E wildlife species known to nest/occupy this watershed. The proposed project will occur with 0.25-0.50 miles of 3 known northern spotted owl nest sites (Peterson Point, Sleezer Creek, and Smith River). Spencer Creek site, in Coos Bay BLM District, is the closest known marbled murrelet site to the proposed project area. Within boundaries of the district and the watershed, we have surveyed for murrelets at numerous locations and found no sites and observed no murrelets along the Smith River.

Mitigation: To mitigate disturbance impacts to the northern spotted owl -- activities within 0.25 miles of a nesting spotted owl should be restricted from March 1st to June 30th, or until surveys have determined that the owls are not nesting or have failed in their nesting attempt. There is no need to mitigate for murrelets, as there is presently no known occupied sites within fifteen miles of the proposed action.

2. Cutthroat Trout

The Smith River drainage, as a designated Key Watershed, is recognized and acknowledged as important habitat for several fish and aquatic species, including the endangered Umpqua River Basin Cutthroat trout as well as species of concern Coho salmon and Steelhead.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NFMS), in the LMRP/RMP Biological Opinion dated March 18, 1997, recognizes that culvert replacements and road decommissioning are Likely to Adversely Affect programmatic actions that "provide long-term benefits to salmonid habitat" (page 29, item no. 2). Furthermore, the NMFS goes on to state that "Road decommissioning is perhaps the most significant and beneficial action for the long-term maintenance and restoration of aquatic habitats" (page 31). Therefore, the NMFS has issued incidental take permits for these actions on a programmatic basis.

There will be short-term increases in the amount of sediment into the stream channels while culverts are removed. No short-term increases are anticipated from road decommissioning due to seasonal work restrictions.

Mitigation: To mitigate disturbance impacts to cutthroat trout, roads will be decommissioned during the dry period between May 1st and October 15th of the same year. All instream work (culvert removals during road decommissioning) will follow ODFW guidelines --- July 1st to September 15th.

B. Hazardous Materials (Potential Accidental Spills of Petroleum Products)

All hazardous materials (particularly petroleum products) would be stored in durable containers and located so that any accidental spill would be contained and not drain into riparian areas.

C. Wetlands/Riparian Zones (Riparian Reserves).

Under the action alternative, there should be a long-term benefit to the aquatic community. As the above listed roads are fully decommissioned, landslide prone areas created by roads will be removed and made stable. Natural drainage patterns will be restored to reduce the peak flows. Culverts will be removed at stream crossings, and stream crossings will be restored to their natural contour. Old roadbeds will be seeded to prevent erosion. These actions may not have an immediate or obvious benefit, but they are expected to restore the watershed over the long-term by preventing future degradation. The NFP ROD states that the most important component of watershed restoration is the control and prevention of road related problems (ROD, p. B-31).

Agencies, Persons, and Permittees Consulted.

US Fish and Wildlife Service
National Marine Fisheries Service
State Historic Preservation Office
Douglas County Commissioners
Western Lane District (Fire Protection Agency)

Seneca Jones Timber Co.	(R/W)
Lone Rock Timber Co.	(R/W)
Giustina Resources Ltd. Partnership	(R/W)
Weyerhaeuser Company	(R/W)
Woolley Enterprises Inc.	(R/W)
Roseburg Resources Co.	(R/W)

Preparers

Dan Couch	_____	Forester/Watershed Coord./EA Preparation
Pete Howe	_____	Engineering
Joe Witt	_____	Wildlife Biologist
Al James	_____	Silviculture
Don Rivard	_____	Fisheries Biologist

CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

The following elements of the human environment are subject to requirements specified in statute, regulation, or executive order. These resources or values are either not present or would not be affected by the proposed actions or alternatives, unless otherwise described in this EA. This negative declaration is documented below by individuals who assisted in the preparation of this analysis.

	Responsible	Initials	Date	Remarks
Air Quality	Fuels Management Specialist			
Areas of Critical	Environmental Specialist			
Cultural Resources	Archeologist			
Environmental Justice	Environmental Specialist			
Farm Lands (prime or	Soil Scientist			
Flood Plains	Hydrologist			
Native American Religious	Environmental Specialist			
Threatened or Endangered	Wildlife Biologist			
Threatened or Endangered	Botanist			
Threatened or Endangered	Fisheries Biologist			
Hazardous/Solid	District Hazardous Materials			
Water Quality	Hydrologist			
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	Hydrologist			
Wild and Scenic Rivers	Recreation Planner			
Wilderness	Recreation Planner			

SMITH RIVER RISK REDUCTION & RESTORATION
SWIFTWATER RESOURCE AREA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

The Swiftwater Resource Area, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management, has analyzed a proposal called the **SMITH RIVER RISK REDUCTION & RESTORATION**. In the proposed action, roads in the Upper Smith River sub-watershed located in T.21S., R.7W., T.21S., R.6W., and T.20S., R.6W, W.M. This proposal is in conformance with the *"Roseburg District Record of Decision and Resources Management Plan"* (RMP), the *"Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl"* (Feb. 1994) and the Record of Decision (ROD) for that plan dated April 13, 1994. Two alternatives were analyzed: the "no action" and the "proposed action" alternatives.

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation measures described below will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the Roseburg District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, June 1995. It is my decision to implement the project with the mitigation measures identified below.

Mitigation

Measures/Remarks_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

_____ _____
Lowell Hayes Date
Swiftwater Resource Area Manager