

**Cow Catcher Timber Sale
Environmental Assessment**
South River Field Office
EA# OR-105-98-05

Date Prepared: August 21, 2003

Finding of No Significant Impact

The South River Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has completed the environmental assessment (EA) for the Cow Catcher Timber Sale, to be located in Sections 5, 7, 9 and 17 of T. 31 S., R. 6 W., W.M. Two alternatives were analyzed (EA, pp. 3-5), consisting of no action (Alternative 1) and the proposed action (Alternative 2).

The following Critical Elements of the Human Environment will not be affected because they are not present: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); wetlands; park lands; prime farmlands; wild and scenic rivers; Wastes, Hazardous or Solid; and wilderness (EA, p. 6). No unique characteristics will be impacted (Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations - 40 CFR § 508.27(b)(3)).

The action is consistent with Executive Order 12898 which addresses Environmental Justice in minority and low-income populations. The BLM has not identified any impacts to low-income or minority populations, internally or through public involvement. Employment associated with the project will involve local contractors who engage in similar types of work throughout Douglas County. Correspondence with local American Indian tribal governments has not identified unique or special resources in the project area of a religious nature, or which provide employment, subsistence or recreational opportunities.

A historic hydraulic mining ditch within a Riparian Reserve in Unit A will not be affected because there will be no entry into the Riparian Reserve. An old wagon road which provided access between the City of Riddle and homesteads in the Middle Creek area passes through Unit E. The BLM determined it was not of historical significance and has received concurrence from the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. As a consequence, there will be no adverse impacts to scientific, cultural, or historical resources (40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(8)).

Field surveys for Special Status and Special Attention botanical species were conducted in the project area. Two Special Attention species were found, consisting of a single Mountain lady's slipper (*Cypripedium montanum*) in Unit A and woodland milk-vetch (*Astragalus umbraticus*) in Unit F (EA, p. 15). The lady's slipper site will be buffered, incorporated into a Riparian Reserve and a Del Norte salamander site, and removed from the unit (EA, p. 26). This will protect microclimate and habitat conditions from effects of timber harvest and site preparation, consistent with management recommendations. The woodland milk-vetch occupies areas free of forest canopy and will not be affected by timber harvest. Site preparation will employ hand pile burning in order to protect the site (EA, p. 26).

Field surveys located Del Norte salamanders in Unit A. The site overlaps a Riparian Reserve and the lady's slipper site described above. A jeep road near the area will be blocked to prevent disturbance and degradation of the habitat from unauthorized vehicle use (EA, p. 23).

Partial red tree vole surveys of the project area identified a single occupied nest tree in Unit A (EA, p. 10). The 2001 Species Review for Survey and Manage removed the requirement for pre-disturbance surveys in the central portion of the vole's range because the range of habitat types, available habitat and the number of vole sites identified were sufficient to remove concerns for species persistence. As described in the EA (p. 10), the nest no longer exists and no habitat management area will be established.

The timber sale will remove 146 acres of suitable northern spotted owl nesting habitat, 60 acres of which is within designated Critical Habitat Unit OR-63 (EA, p. 22). A determination of "may affect, likely to adversely affect" was made for the removal of suitable nesting habitat. The action was determined "not an adverse affect" on critical habitat because Late-Successional Reserves and Riparian Reserves will continue to fulfill the designated biological function of this CHU (FSEIS, Vol. II, Appendix G, Biological Opinion, pp. 20-22). Formal consultation was undertaken with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a Biological Opinion received.

The BLM received a Biological Opinion containing Reasonable and Prudent Measures in conjunction with Terms and Conditions for their implementation for minimizing the likelihood of Incidental Take of northern spotted owls. With the implementation of these measures, the expected effects will be consistent with those analyzed in the Roseburg District *Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* and adopted by the ROD/RMP. There will be no significant adverse impacts to spotted owls (40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(9)).

A determination of "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" Oregon Coast coho salmon was made, which is also considered applicable to Oregon Coast steelhead trout. The action will have "no adverse affect" on Essential Fish Habitat. The determination was based on the following:

- Riparian Reserves will protect riparian habitat and aquatic conditions in the project area, so that timber harvest will not contribute to degradation of aquatic conditions within the project drainages, subwatersheds, and the watershed as a whole (EA, pp. 23-25).
- Activities associated with road construction, renovation, decommissioning and timber haul could have potential direct effects associated with sediment, primarily from the delivery of sediment into streams. Road renovation and improvements will be implemented to disconnect the road drainage system from the stream network. These actions will reduce or eliminate potential sediment associated with timber haul.
- The probability of sedimentation is unlikely with implementation of the Best Management Practices and project design features described in the EA (pp. 23-25). Indirect effects will consist of long-term reductions in road-derived sediments, decreased substrate embeddedness and improvements in aquatic substrate conditions, with corresponding improvements in spawning habitat, and embryo incubation and survival.

The BLM has received concurrence from NOAA Fisheries. As a consequence, there will be no significant adverse impacts to Oregon Coast coho salmon and Oregon Coast steelhead trout, other Bureau Sensitive fish species or Essential Fish Habitat (40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(9)).

Ongoing implementation of the District *Integrated Weed Management Program*, in association with project design features and contract specifications will minimize the risk of introduction or spread of noxious weeds in association with the timber harvest. Weed eradication measures will be implemented. Disturbed areas will be mulched and seeded with native grasses to discourage weed establishment. Logging and road construction equipment will be pressure washed or steam cleaned prior to moving in, as a protection measure against introduction of weeds from outside the project area (EA, p. 16-17). This is consistent with requirements of the Lacey Act; the Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, as amended; and Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species.

Of the twelve points listed under 40 CFR § 1508.27(b), the following were considered and found not to apply to the action: significant beneficial or adverse effects; significant effects on public health or safety; effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial; anticipated cumulatively significant impacts; highly uncertain or unknown risks; and no precedents for future actions with significant effects.

The action conforms to Federal, State, and local laws and regulations (40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(10)). Impacts on the human environment will not exceed those anticipated in the PRMP/EIS.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13212, the BLM must consider the effects of this decision on National Energy Policy. Within the project area there are no known energy resources with commercial potential. There are no pipelines, electrical transmission lines, energy producing or processing facilities. As a consequence, there will be no known adverse effect on National Energy Policy.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the environmental assessment, I have determined that the action will not have any significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and an environmental impact statement is not required. I have determined that the action conforms with the *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP) for the Roseburg District, approved by the Oregon/Washington State Director on June 2, 1995.

E. Dwight Fielder
Field Manager
South River Field Office

Date