

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Molalla Meadows Restoration

Environmental Assessment Number OR080-03-14

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United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Oregon State Office  
Salem District  
Cascades Resource Area  
Clackamas County, Oregon

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Abstract: This Environmental Assessment (EA) discloses the predicted environmental effects of meadow restoration treatment and no action alternative for federal land located in Township 7 South, Range 5 East, Sections 4, 8, 9, & 17 W.M. (Collawash River Watershed). Additional sites and preliminary alternatives were considered. The proposed action includes conifer removal, tree girdling, and native seed propagation. The project is located in the Late-Successional Reserve and Matrix land use allocations.

# FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

## Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Cascades Resource Area has analyzed the potential effects of a project to restore meadow habitat in Township 7 South, Range 5 East, Sections 4, 8, 9, & 17 in the Cascades Range in Clackamas County. The action described in this environmental assessment (EA) is intended to restore meadow habitat perimeter, structure, and species composition to conditions believed to have existed prior to the last 30-50 years of conifer encroachment.

The action would meet the needs for habitat as identified in the *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP, May 1995; see pp. 1 and 2)*. The EA is attached to and incorporated by reference in this FONSI determination.

This FONSI and the EA are being made available for public review prior to making a decision on the action. The public notice of availability for review will be published in the *Molalla Pioneer* (Molalla, Oregon) and through notification of interested individuals, organizations, and state and federal agencies. The document will also be available for review on the internet at: <http://www.or.blm.gov/salem> (under Planning).

## Finding of No Significant Impact Determination

Based on the analysis of information in the attached EA, my determination is that a new environmental impact statement or supplement to the existing *FEIS* is unnecessary and will not be prepared. The proposed action would not result in significant environmental impacts affecting the quality of the human environment greater than those addressed in the existing *FEIS*.

## Finding Rationale

Under the alternatives analyzed, significant impacts on the quality of the human environment would not occur based on the following criteria:

1. The alternatives are in conformance with the following documents that provide the legal framework for management of BLM lands in the Cascades Resource Area:

- *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (January 2001) and the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement For Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (S&M FSEIS, November 2000)*.

- *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP, May 1995)*.

- *Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS, September 1994)*.

- *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (April 1994) and the Final*

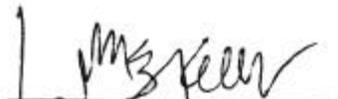
*Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (SEIS, February 1994).

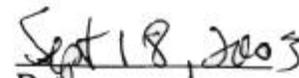
2. The action would be consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives (See Appendix 1, Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives Review Summary).
3. The proposed action and alternatives are in conformance with the *RMP*, which describes the general management objectives, land use allocations, and management actions/direction for BLM-administered lands in the Cascades Resource Area
4. The alternatives are consistent with other federal agency and State of Oregon land use plans and with the Clackamas County land use plans and zoning ordinances. Any permits associated with the implementation of this project would be obtained and requirements would be met.
5. There are no flood plains, or prime or unique farmlands within the project area.
6. No known cultural resources or paleontological resources occur in the project area. No subsurface disturbance is proposed. Cut trees would be left where they are felled or will be lifted (not dragged) off site.
7. The proposed project would not likely affect suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl, and is a “May Affect/Not Likely to Adversely Affect” determination for both of these listed species. Suitable habitat for bald eagle, red tree vole, and Oregon *Megomphix* snail are not present.
8. Due to the distance to streams, low impact of activities, and buffering of live streams, this project will have no effect on local stream habitat and the aquatic environment. Listed fish will not be affected by the proposed action.
9. The proposed action is not within the coastal zone as defined by the Oregon Coastal Management Program.
10. No hazardous materials or solid waste would be created in the project area.
11. The project site do not qualify for potential wilderness nor has it been nominated for an Area of Critical Environmental Concern.
12. Project design features would assure that potential impacts to water quality would be in compliance with the State of Oregon In-stream Water Quality Standards and thus the Clean Water Act.
13. The smoke generated from pile burning would be within the standards set by the Oregon Smoke Management Plan, which considers national air pollution standards and complies with the Clean Air Act.
14. Since this action is proposed for meadow habitat, no stands that are currently late-successional forest would be affected by this action. Therefore, the “15% Analysis” prescribed in the *RMP* does not apply to this action, nor do requirements for snags and coarse woody debris prescribed for coniferous forest (pp. 21-22).

15. The actions are local in nature and potential adverse impacts would be short-term. Impacts were determined based on research, observation, professional training, and experience by the inter-disciplinary team of natural resource specialists. Determining such environmental effects reduces the uncertainties to a level that does not involve highly unknown or unique risks. The design features identified in the EA would assure that no significant site-specific nor cumulative impacts would occur to the human environment other than those already addressed in the S&M FSEIS, FEIS and SEIS.

16. The effects of the project are not likely to be highly controversial. Similar recent projects within the region have not generated highly controversial effects.

17. A project does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. While future management of these and similar sites may be influenced by the results or knowledge gained by this decision, future management actions will undergo separate analyses that include a full range of alternatives.

  
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Cascades Field Manager

  
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Date

Comments regarding this environmental assessment should be received by the Bureau of Land Management, Cascades Resource Area, by October 20, 2003.

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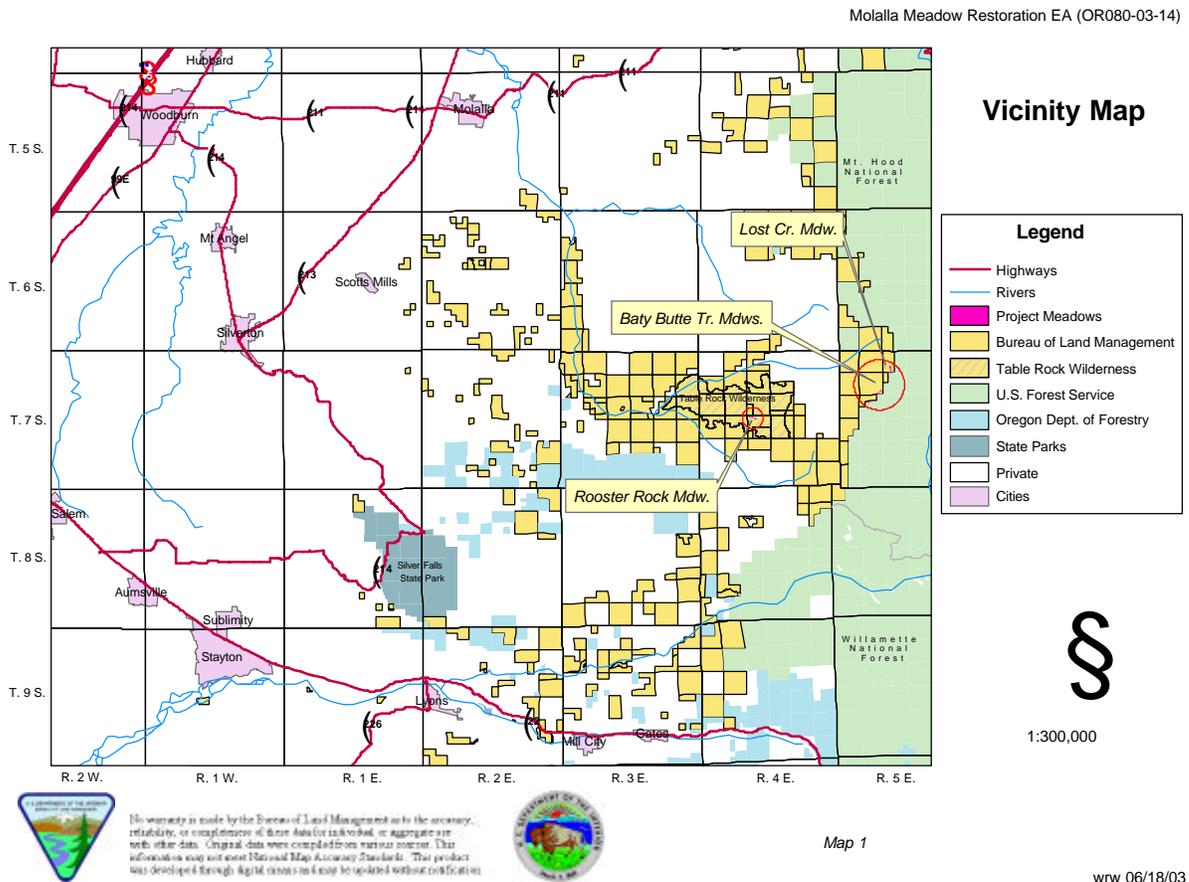
# 1 PROJECT SCOPE

For the reader's convenience, terms in *bold italics* are defined in the Glossary.

## 1.1 Project Location

The proposed project is located approximately 20 miles southeast of the City of Molalla, Oregon (Clackamas County) – Township 7 South, Range 5 East, Sections 4, 8, 9, & 17 W.M. The project site lies within the Collawash River fifth field watershed (Dutch Creek and Skin Creek sixth fields) immediately east of the Upper Molalla River fifth field watershed (Table Rock Fork sixth field) according to 2003 Regional Ecosystem Office watershed boundaries. The project site is located along Baty Butte Trail in *LSR* and Matrix *land use allocations*.<sup>1</sup> Other sites were considered and later dropped from the Proposed Action (see 2.3 Alternatives Dropped From Detailed Study).

Map 1. Project vicinity showing meadow sites considered for restoration



<sup>1</sup> As identified in the May 1995 Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (USDA & USDI, 1994).

## 1.2 Purpose of and Need for Action

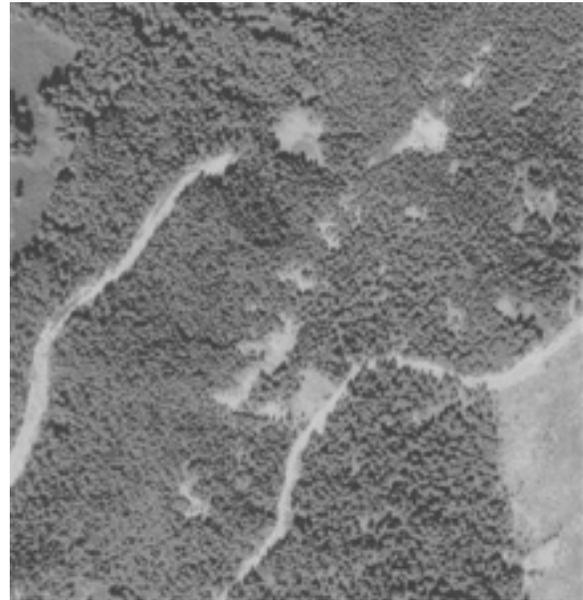
Encroaching conifers have reduced the historic extent and diminished wildlife habitat value of open meadows in the Upper Molalla River and Collawash River Watersheds. If this pattern continues, meadow communities are expected to be replaced by forested communities. Open meadows occur in the forest mosaic as a result of natural disturbance (fire, wind throw, debris torrents, insects, and disease), regional climate trends (seasonal snowpack), and/or geomorphic features (soils and topography). Prior to fire suppression, these meadows were maintained by naturally occurring wildfire and Native Americans' crop proliferation burning. Twentieth century changes in climate patterns, sheep grazing cessation, and fire suppression have decreased the size and altered species composition of many meadows – favoring conifer trees over grasses, shrubs, and forbs (Magee and Antos 1992, Miller and Halpern 1998, Peterson 2003, and Vale 1981). These diminishing special habitats contribute biodiversity (variety of plants, animals, and ecosystems) to the Cascades Range landscape.

Comparing historic to recent aerial photos revealed substantial meadow habitat loss; conifers have established along the edges and interior of the meadows (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Historic vs. Current Baty Butte Trail Meadows



T. 7 S., R. 5 E., Section 8, SE ¼ in 1957



T. 7 S., R. 5 E., Section 8, SE ¼ in 1998

*The purpose of this project is to:*

- Restore approximate extent of meadow perimeter to historic extent (evident by geomorphologic characteristics, forest stand structure, and ground vegetation) by removing conifers that have encroached into meadows in the last 30-50 years;
- Increase the diversity, abundance, and distribution of native grass, forb, and shrub species within meadows; and
- Increase large snag habitat on the perimeter of meadows and other structural diversity components to improve wildlife habitat.

The *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP)* provides guidance for managing special habitats (such as meadows): “identify special habitat areas and determine relevant values for protection or management of a case-by-case basis” and “use management practices, including fire, to obtain desired vegetation conditions in special habitats” (p. 26). Furthermore, the RMP states “enhance and maintain biological diversity and ecosystem health” in wildlife habitat (p. 24).

Similar Northwest Forest Plan guidance states: “use silvicultural prescriptions and prescribed fire to manage special habitats such as... meadows... to prevent encroachment of dense underbrush, shade-tolerant conifers and other species not naturally found in these plant communities under more natural fire conditions” (*Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, Appendix B1 - Revised Preferred Alternative for Western Oregon BLM, USDA & USDI, 1994, p. B-11*).

The *Molalla Watershed Analysis* (1999) recommends, “consider the use of fire to maintain dry meadows” for wildlife habitat (p. 179), and specifically burning Rooster Rock and Baty Butte Trail meadows as potential “Wildlife and Botanical Restoration” (pp. 21-22). Additionally, “management could include prescribed burning of dry meadow habitats that would mimic natural fires and accelerate and improve specialized habitats in the South and Middle Fork Molalla tributary analysis areas” (p. 7).

The *Collawash/Hot Springs Watershed Analysis* (1995) recommends, “protect habitats for unique, rare, and valued species” and “maintain dispersal links across isolated special habitats” (p. 1-4). This watershed analysis mentions, “American Indians used fire to maintain natural openings, particularly huckleberry fields,” and “absence of fire has caused loss of some huckleberry fields” (p. 1-7).

### **1.3 Plan Conformance and Tiering**

The Proposed Action is in conformance with *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*, May 1995 and tiers to the *Salem District Proposed Resource Management*

*Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement, 1994. The project area is within **Late Successional Reserve** and **Matrix** land use allocations.*

The Proposed Action is also in conformance with *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, 1994; Land and Resource Management Plan Mt. Hood National Forest, 1990; Molalla Watershed Analysis, 1999; Collawash/Hot Springs Watershed Analysis, 1995 ; North Willamette LSR Assessment, 1998; Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and Other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (ROD, January, 2001); and the Implementation of 2002 Survey and Manage Annual Species Review IM#OR-2003-050, March 2003.*

### **1.4 Decision to be Made**

The Cascades Field Manager is the official responsible for deciding whether or not to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and whether to approve this project as proposed, not at all, or to some other extent.

### **1.5 Issues**

An issue is a major point of discussion about environmental effects of the Proposed Action. Issues are within the scope of a Proposed Action, which is used to formulate alternatives, develop mitigation measures, or is important in tracking effects.

### **Visual Resources**

Restoration activities such as cutting and/or girdling trees, and related operational activities may change visual characteristics of the meadows. Baty Butte Trail meadows are classified as VRM IV.

### **Recreation**

Recreational visitors to project sites may experience negative reactions to the results of treatments and during operational periods.

## **2 ALTERNATIVES**

**Table 1.** Comparison of Alternatives.

<b>Alternative</b>	<b>Conifer Treatment</b>	<b>Fuels Disposal</b>	<b>Snag Habitat Creation</b>	<b>Vegetation Monitoring</b>
Proposed Action	X	X	X	X
No Action				

## 2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action Alternative entails cutting and removing conifer trees that have encroached upon meadow habitat, girdling tree adjacent to meadows to create *snag* habitat, and planting native forbs and grasses. Site monitoring would determine follow up conifer treatment, fuels disposal, snag habitat creation, and native plant propagation opportunities. Intervals between future treatment activities would be designed so that impacts (recreational, visual, and hazard) for any one action are negligible and cumulatively minimal. Through developing a monitoring plan, treatment activities would be designed for the next ten to twenty years and into subsequent decades.

**Figure 2.** Baty Butte Trail Meadows (see Map 2.) – Recent photographs were digitally enhanced to simulate appearance after restoration activity.



Current conditions



Simulated post-treatment conditions



Current conditions



Simulated post-treatment conditions

**Table 2.** Project Design Features for FY2004 (contingent upon available funds).

Component	Design Features
<i>Conifer Treatment</i>	Cut and remove from the site all scattered small (less than 8" <b>DBH</b> ) trees within the southern most meadow. Cut (at ground level, parallel to the slope) and remove trees within 25-50 feet of the sides and bottom of the remaining meadows. For aesthetic reasons most stumps will be covered with rocks and loose vegetation. See Figure 2.
<i>Fuels Disposal</i>	Pile and burn, scatter, or helicopter removal to designated site for disposal.
<i>Snag Habitat Creation</i>	Girdle selected larger trees (up to 20" DBH, 2-3 trees per 100 feet of perimeter) on all sides of the meadows out to approximately 50 feet from the edge of the existing meadows.
<i>Native Forbs and Grasses Seeding</i>	Gather native seeds from northern meadows. Evaluate potential to seed in southern most meadow.
<i>Monitoring Plan</i>	Effectiveness and validation monitoring will occur in selected locations, using sampling transects and photo points. Vegetation species, height, and percent cover will be collected along sampling transects before and after treatments. Native seeding success will be monitored annually. Wildlife habitat (snags and fallen logs) would be monitored periodically. This information will be used to evaluate treatments, determine additional treatment needs, and to develop future restoration projects.

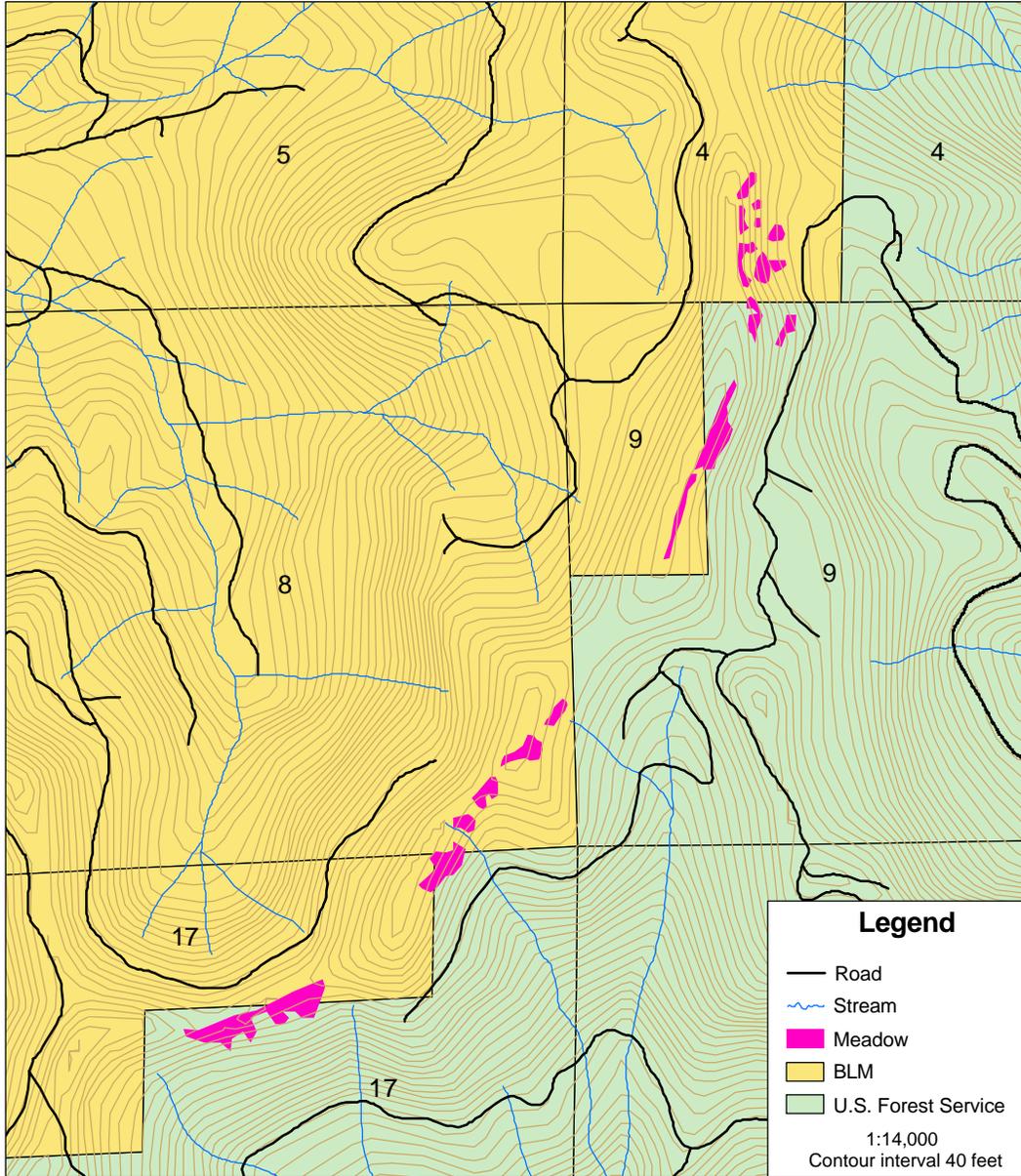
**Mitigation Measures**

- *Impacts to trails* – If disturbed or impacted, rehabilitate trails to pretreatment conditions.
- *Visitor use period* – Treatment operation timing should avoid high visitor use periods (May 15<sup>th</sup> – October 15<sup>th</sup>), minimizing visitor contact and viewing of pile burned areas.
- *Visual characteristics* – Cutting should be timed to allow quick growth response by the newly released ground cover.
- *Noxious weed prevention* – All cutting and removal equipment is to be cleaned and free of soil, brush, weeds, and any other propagative plant material prior to entering BLM land to prevent spreading noxious weeds.
- *Wildflower seed bed protection* – Burn piles, should be located away from meadow wildflowers, especially Gorman’s Aster (*Aster gormanii*).
- *Fuels risk* – To minimize any human related fire starts associated with driving, create a twenty-five foot fuel reduction corridor either side of access roads prior to treatment operations.

- *Soil protection* – In order to reduce disturbance of surfaces, particularly on steep slopes with shallow soils, limit the number of people walking over these areas during project activities to the minimum necessary to implement the project. Avoid activities that will involve dragging brush, trees and limbs across the soil surface, particularly on steep slopes.

**Map 2. Project Site: Baty Butte Trail Meadows**

Molalla Meadow Restoration EA (OR080-03-14)



Map 2

**Baty Butte Trail Meadows**

T. 7 S., R. 5 E., WM



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## **2.2 No Action Alternative**

The No Action Alternative proposes no changes to the current conditions at this time - no action would take place. This alternative serves as a baseline from which to understand the changes associated with the action alternative. Conifer encroachment of the meadows would be permitted to continue.

## **2.3 Alternatives Dropped From Detailed Study**

### **Rooster Rock Meadow Treatment**

After analyzing Wilderness concerns, treating conifer encroachment in Rooster Rock Meadow was dropped from further consideration in this EA. Rooster Rock Meadow restoration actions are deferred until consideration under the future Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan update. The *IDT* acknowledges that if encroaching conifers are never treated, special habitat and meadow values may be permanently lost.

### **Lost Creek Meadow Treatment**

During site visits, the IDT noted no apparent conifer encroachment (except for a very few Alaska Yellow Cedar trees). There is no need for any treatment activities. The IDT recommends setting up photo monitoring points on a five-year cycle.

### **Prescription Burn**

Topography and access to Baty Butte Trail meadows preclude an operationally manageable prescription burn.

### **Provide Stream Habitat Logs**

The Proposed Action will not provide any large diameter trees with root wads that are suitable for stream habitat enhancement.

## **3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

<p>This first part of this chapter describes the present condition and the alternatives' effects on Issues (identified in Chapter 1) to allow the Field manager to make an informed decision. Tables 4 and 5 document the effects of the Proposed Action on resources or values, as required by statute, regulation, or Executive Order in order to support a Finding of No Significant Impact.</p>
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### **3.1 General Setting**

The proposed project sites are on the eastern side of Cascades Resource Area located at 4,700-4,900 feet elevations (foothills of the Cascade Range). These meadows are a series of east and southeast-facing rocky balds along a ridge. Volcanic soils and short growing seasons contributed to meadow conditions. The open canopy, sunlight, and elevation support native wildflowers uncommon throughout the Cascades. A mix of Mountain Hemlock, Silver Fir, and scattered Alaska Yellow Cedar divide the meadows patches. The southernmost meadow was maintained in part by a historic Forest Service helicopter landing spot used for fire suppression. The helispot has not been used for at least 30 years.

## **3.2 Issues: Visual Resources and Recreation**

### **Affected Environment**

Baty Butte Trail meadows project sites are classified as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class IV. Management Objectives for Class IV lands allow for management activities which require major modification of the existing landscape. The Baty/Silver King trail traverses a series of ridges and saddles crossing over Forest Service and BLM lands. Baty Butte Trail meadows project sites are located on the Baty/Silver King trail network comprised of existing trails which were used by early forest fire lookouts and their support staff. Currently these trails are used by hikers and horseback riders. Although the actual number of trail users is currently unavailable, estimates put the number of visitors to the trails and meadows over 100 people a year. Visitors to the trail system generally seek solitude, enjoying vista opportunities of the high cascades and the display of wildflowers, butterflies and wildlife viewing along the way. The trail system is maintained by volunteers and BLM staff.

Due to the topography of the land and the relatively small areas of the project sites all key observation points are located inside the meadow areas or along trails which travel through the area of Baty Butte Trail meadow. Limited vista opportunities exist along the trails. Views from Baty Butte meadow display timber management activities which are observable in the middle ground and background.

It does not appear that the proposed project sites would be observable from other areas adjacent to the project sites. There are limited roads, recreation opportunities and trails in the area are limited to the project sites. A graveled, forest road runs along the lower edge of Baty Butte Trail and offers a glimpse of Baty Butte trail meadow.

Visual resource concerns in the immediate vicinity of the proposed units are often more closely associated with providing a visual setting for recreation activities such as plant, wildlife and insect viewing. Public use of the meadows is estimated to be low, given that the trails accessing the meadows require moderate to advanced hiking, horseback riding and orienteering skills. None of the proposed units are in a Rural Interface Area or near residential property.

### **Environmental Effects**

#### Visual Resources

##### *Proposed Action*

Visually, the cutting, girdling and removing trees will have a short-term effect to the existing landscape and vegetation. This short-term effect will last throughout one growing season as the cut and removed treed areas have time to adapt and heal. The tree girdling will have a longer-term effect as the dying trees change colors from green to red to brown to dark brown and finally to white, which will contrast with the green color that currently dominates the existing surrounding vegetation. These color changes will last from the first year and transition throughout the project time span.<sup>2</sup> These changes are in compliance by definition of the Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class IV which states: "Management Objectives for Class IV lands allow for management activities which require major modification of the existing landscape." Due to the size and scope of the Proposed Action there will be no anticipated cumulative impacts to visual resources.

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<sup>2</sup> Visual Contrast Rating Worksheets, project file

### *No Action*

As the natural ecological process occurs there will be a long-term effect in landscape and vegetation features. Visually, as the conifers grow and encroach upon the meadows there will slight noticeable changes in the size of the meadows. This effect will last throughout natural processes. The visual effects of natural ecological processes are not expected to dominate the view of the casual observer.

### Recreation

#### *Proposed Action*

The noise and sight of a helicopter removing logs will affect and disrupt visitor's recreational experience as they recreate in adjacent areas within sight and sounds of helicopter use. This effect will occur during helicopter operations which may last one day. The sight and smell of smoke from pile burning will affect and disrupt visitor's recreational experience as they recreate in adjacent areas within sight and smell of the pile burning. This effect will occur during pile burning which may last one day. The sight and sound of chainsaws will affect and disrupt visitor's recreational experience as they recreate in adjacent areas within sight and sounds of chainsaw use. This effect will occur during chainsaw operations which may last one week. These effects are expected to be low and be minimized by implementing seasonal restrictions and other design features described in 2.1 Proposed Action. Due to the size and scope of the Proposed Action there will be no anticipated cumulative impacts to recreation.

#### *No Action*

The loss of vistas, wildflowers, wildlife and butterfly viewing opportunities will affect and disrupt visitors, who have a history in the area, recreational experience as they recreate along the trails and in the meadows. This effect will occur after repeated visits to the site over a period of many years.

### **3.3 Effects by Elements of the Environment**

The following critical elements of the human environment and other potential concerns listed as either "Not Present" or "Not Affected" are not discussed further in this EA. Unless otherwise noted, the effects apply to the Proposed Action; the No Action Alternative is not expected to have adverse effects to these elements. No cumulative impacts to these resource elements are expected due to the scope of the Proposed Action.

**Table 2: Critical Elements of the Human Environment; subject to statute, regulation, or policy requirements (BLM H-1790-1, Appendix 5). The *Interdisciplinary Team*'s predicted environmental effects are listed by element.**

Critical Elements Of The Human Environment	Status	Remarks or Environmental Effects (if not affected – why) if Affected (summary of environmental effects)
** Specialist's reports, listed in section 6.1, are located in the project file and are available upon request.		
Adverse Impacts on the National Energy Policy	Not Present	-
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	Not Present	-
Environmental Justice	Not Present	-
Flood Plains	Not Present	-
Hazardous or Solid Wastes	Not Present	-
Invasive, Nonnative Species	Not Present	-
Prime or Unique Farm Lands	Not Present	-
Threatened or Endangered Fish Species or Habitat	Not Present	-
Threatened or Endangered Plant Species or Habitat	Not Present	-
Wetlands/Riparian Zones (including structural diversity)	Not Present	-
Wild and Scenic Rivers	Not Present	-
Wilderness	Not Present	-
Cultural, Historic, Paleontological	Not Affected	No subsurface disturbance proposed. Cut trees would be left where they are felled or lifted (not dragged) off site (Cultural Resources input in project file).
Native American Religious Concerns	Not Affected	<b>Scoping</b> letter sent to Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indian, and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs – no religious concerns identified (Project File, scoping section).
Water Quality (Surface and Ground) (including stream temperature, sedimentation)	Not Affected	Stream temperature - There is no surface flow in most summers; increased direct solar radiation would likely be offset by increased soil water storage. Sedimentation – Measurable changes to the local sediment regime are unlikely, since available sediment is far greater than stream energy available to transport it (i.e. streams are energy-limited) (** Hydrology/Soils Report, p. 4).
Threatened or Endangered Wildlife Species or Habitat	Northern Spotted Owl: May Affect/not likely to adversely effect  Bald Eagle: Not Present	Northern Spotted Owl – Based on potential to degrade dispersal habitat and possibly retard the development of additional suitable habitat within the LSR land use allocation (by cutting and girdling meadow perimeter trees) Bald Eagle – Never observed in project area vicinity (** Wildlife Report, p. 6).
Air Quality	Affected	Pile burning at will produce approximately 10 tons of smoke and will be burned during the fall or winter. Following Oregon Smoke Management Plan and burning during low recreation use periods will mitigate most smoke problems. (** Fuels Management/Fire Ecology Report, p. 3)

**Table 3: Other Elements of the Environment; subject to statute, regulation, or policy requirements.** The Interdisciplinary Team’s predicted environmental effects are listed by element.

Other Elements Of The Environment		Status: (i.e., Not Present , Not Affected, or list species or elements affected by this project)	Remarks or Environmental Effects (if not affected – why) if Affected (summary of environmental effects)
Coastal zone		Not Present	-
Fish Species with Bureau Status and Essential Fish Habitat		Not Present	There are no fish bearing streams within the project area.
Mining claims, mineral leases, etc		Not Present	-
Rural Interface Areas		Not Present	-
Special Areas outside ACECs (Within or Adjacent) (RMP pp. 33-35)		Not Present	-
SEIS Special Status and Special Attention Wildlife Species/Habitat (including Survey & Manage, excluding Threatened & Endangered) (RMP pages 28-33, Appendix B-1:1- B-2:4 )		Survey & Manage molluscs: Not Present  Red Tree Vole: Not Present	Survey & Manage molluscs – no suitable habitat Red Tree Vole - no suitable habitat (** Wildlife Report, pp. 1-6)
Maintain late successional and old growth species habitat and ecosystems in Late Successional Reserves, Riparian Reserves and Special Management Areas (RMP p. 5).		Not Affected	Late successional habitat not adversely impacted (** Wildlife Report, p. 4).
Maintain biological diversity associated with native species in all land use allocations (RMP p. 5).		Not Affected	Biological diversity maintained. Native meadow species habitat enhanced and augmented (** Botany Report, p. 2; Wildlife Report, pp. 3,5)
Soils (Site Productivity)		Affected	Some increases in surface erosion and exposure to direct raindrop impact may occur; where pile burning would occur, short term small increase in some available nutrients and pH and reduction in C, N, P, and S; resulting soil changes would not irreparably impact soil productivity or quality; (** Hydrology/Soils Report, p. 4-5).
SEIS Special Status and Special Attention Plant Species/Habitat (including Survey & Manage) (RMP pages 28-33, Appendix B-1:1- B-2:4 )		Bureau Sensitive <i>Aster gormanii</i> : Not Affected	Proposal will benefit <i>A. gormanii</i> by reopening meadow and rocky bald habitat; avoiding further habitat fragmentation (** Botany report, pp. 2, 4-5).
Water Resources	Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives	Not Affected	This proposal is unlikely to impede and/or prevent attainment of the stream flow and basin hydrology, channel function, or water quality objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) (**Hydrology/Soils Report, p. 3).
	Other water components (DEQ 303d listed stream, DEQ 319 assessment, water quantity)	Not Present	-

Other Elements Of The Environment		Status: (i.e., Not Present, Not Affected, or list species or elements affected by this project)	Remarks or Environmental Effects (if not affected – why) if Affected (summary of environmental effects)
Downstream Beneficial Uses (Salem FEIS pp. 3-9)		Not Affected	<p><i>Baty Butte Trail meadows</i>            &lt;1 mile downstream in Collawash (Clackamas River): Resident fish &amp; aquatic life            &gt;10 miles below Baty Butte Trail meadow site: Domestic, irrigation, &amp; livestock watering            &gt;10 miles below North Fork Clackamas Reservoir: Municipal and Salmonid rearing &amp; spawning</p> <p>The proposal is unlikely to affect the above beneficial uses with 25 foot buffer protecting stream channels, burn conditions that minimize the loss of soil surface organic material/does not produce water repellent surfaces, and avoiding dragging brush, trees, and limbs across soil surfaces (Hydrology/Soils Report, pp. 3-6).</p>
Key Watershed (ACS component 2)		Not Present	-
Recreation	Recreational visitor experience		See section 3.2 Issues: Visual Resources and Recreation.
Visual Resources	Visual vegetation characteristics; visual air quality		See section 3.2 Issues: Visual Resources and Recreation.

#### 4 LIST OF PREPARERS

Resource	Name	Initial	Date
Interdisciplinary Team Lead	Wesley Wong	WW	9/11/03
Botany TES and Special Attention Plant Species	Marilyn Lowery	ML	9/14/03
Cultural Resources	Fran Philipek	FMP	9/12/03
Fuels Management/Fire Ecology	Sam Caliva	CDS for SC	9/17/03
Hydrology/Water Quality/Soils	Patrick Hawe	DH	9/12/03
NEPA/Plans	Carolyn Sands	CDS	9/17/03
Recreation/Wilderness	Nick Teague	NT	9/16/03
Wildlife TES and Special Attention Animal Species	Jim Irving	JIR	9/15/03

## 5 CONTACTS AND CONSULTATION

### 5.1 Agencies, Organizations, and Persons Consulted

US Forest Service Clackamas River Ranger District (Estacada Ranger Station) received the scoping letter. NEPA planner, Jim Roden and wildlife biologist, Sharon Hernandez, of Clackamas River Ranger District, provided positive support for the project (see project file).

#### **ESA Section 7 Consultation**

*US Fish and Wildlife Service* – After consultation, the USFWS found that the proposal would not likely jeopardize the continued existence of the spotted owl (Biological Opinion #1-7-03-F-0008 (February 27, 2003), pp. 1, 45-46).

*NOAA Fisheries (NMFS)* – Consultation with NOAA Fisheries is required for projects that “may affect” listed species. A determination has been made that this proposed project would have “no effect” on Lower Columbia River steelhead trout, chum, chinook salmon, or Upper Willamette River chinook salmon due to the distance upstream (approximately 3 miles) from habitat that may be occupied by these species, minimal ground disturbance associated with the proposal and a negligible likelihood of project-related effects on stream temperature or sediment regime.

### 5.2 Public Notification

In compliance with *NEPA*, a scoping letter dated May 19, 2003 was mailed to 32 potentially affected and/or interested individuals, groups, and agencies outlining the Proposed Action and requesting initial public input (Project file, scoping). This scoping letter was also published online at Salem BLM’s website, <http://www.or.blm/salem> (under Planning). A press release was submitted to the *Molalla Pioneer* newspaper May 14, 2003 (Project file, scoping). Two phone calls and one e-mail written response was received as a result of this scoping (Project file, scoping). The IDT reviewed, clarified, and assessed the public comments. Responses were mailed to the commenting parties (Appendix 2). Chapter 3 addresses the Issues raised by public comments.

A legal notice announcing availability of the EA for public review and comment will be submitted to the *Molalla Pioneer* (Molalla, Oregon). The EA will be mailed to parties who responded to initial public input. The EA and FONSI are available for review on the internet at Salem BLM’s website, <http://www.or.blm/salem> (under Planning). Comments received in the Cascades Resource Area Office, 1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, Oregon 97306, on or before October 20, 2003 at 4:00 PM, Pacific Daylight Saving Time, will be considered in making the final decisions for these projects.

## 6 MAJOR SOURCES AND GLOSSARY

### 6.1 Major Sources

\*\* Caliva, S. 2003. *Molalla Meadow Restoration: Fuels Management /Fire Ecology Interdisciplinary Team Report*. Cascades Resource Area, Salem District, Bureau of Land Management. Salem, OR.

\*\* Hawe, P. 2003. *Molalla Meadow Restoration: Soils/Hydrology Interdisciplinary Team Report..* Cascades Resource Area, Salem District, Bureau of Land Management. Salem, OR.

\*\* Irving, J. 2003. *Molalla Meadow Restoration: Wildlife Interdisciplinary Team Report*. Cascades Resource Area, Salem District, Bureau of Land Management. Salem, OR.

\*\* Lowery, M. 2003. *Molalla Meadow Restoration: Botany Interdisciplinary Team Report*. Cascades Resource Area, Salem District, Bureau of Land Management. Salem, OR.

Magee, T.K., and J.A. 1992. *Tree invasion into a mountain-top meadow in the Oregon Coast Range, USA*. Journal of Vegetation Science. 3:485-494.

Miller, E.A., and C.B. Halpern. 1998. *Effects of environment and grazing disturbance on tree establishment in meadows of the central Cascade Range, Oregon, USA*. Journal of Vegetation Science. 9.8:265-282.

Peterson, D.L. 2003. *Subalpine Forests of Western North America*. National Biological Service. <http://biology.usgs.gov/s+t/noframe/r108.htm>. Accessed 22 August 2003.

Teague, N. 2003. *Molalla Meadow Restoration: Recreation/Visual/Wilderness Interdisciplinary Team Report*. Cascades Resource Area, Salem District, Bureau of Land Management. Salem, OR.

USDA. Forest Service. 1995. *Collawash/Hot Springs Watershed Analysis*. Gresham, OR

USDA. Forest Service., USDI. Bureau of Land Management. 1994. *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*. Portland, OR.

USDA. Forest Service., USDI. Bureau of Land Management. 1994. *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*. Portland, OR.

USDA. Forest Service., USDI. Bureau of Land Management. 2001. *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation measures Standards and Guidelines*. Portland, OR.

\*\* Specialist's reports

USDA, Forest Service; USDI. Bureau of Land Management. September 3, 2002. *Biological Assessment on Fiscal Year 2003-2004 projects within the Willamette Province which would modify the habitats of the bald eagle and the northern spotted owl.*

USDA. Forest Service., USDI. Bureau of Land Management. March 14, 2003. *Implementation of 2002 Survey and Manage Annual Species Review.* BLM Information Bulletin No. OR-2003-050. California, Oregon, and Washington.

USDI. Bureau of Land Management. 1994. *Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement.* Salem, OR.

USDI. Bureau of Land Management. 1995. *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan.* Salem, OR.

USDI. Bureau of Land Management. 1999. *Molalla River Watershed Analysis.* Salem, OR.

USDI. Bureau of Land Management. 2000. *Oregon and Washington Bureau of Land Management Special Status Species List - January 2000.* BLM Information Bulletin No. OR-2000-092. Oregon State Office, Portland, OR.

USDI. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2003. *Formal and Informal Consultation on Fiscal Year 2003-2004 Routine Habitat modification Projects within the Willamette Province.* [Bald Eagle & Northern Spotted Owl Habitat Modification Biological Opinion – FWS reference: 1-7-03-F-0008]. Portland, OR.

Vale, T.R. 1981. *Tree invasion of montane meadows in Oregon.* The American Midland Naturalist. 105(1):61-69.

## 6.2 Glossary

**Diameter Breast Height (DBH)** - The width of a tree approximately 4 ½ feet above the ground.

**Interdisciplinary Team (IDT)** - A group of resource specialists who conduct the environmental assessments.

**Land Use Allocation (LUA)** - All Federal lands covered by the Northwest Forest Plan are identified to be in one of seven designations called Land Use Allocations. The NFP (*SEIS/ROD*) and RMP describe what activities are allowed in each LUA.

**Late Successional Reserve (LSR)** - Land use allocation designed to: protect, enhance, and maintain functional, interacting late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems.

**Matrix** – Federal Lands outside of reserves, withdrawn areas, and Managed Late-Successional areas; land use allocation designed to: provide a sustainable supply of forest commodities to provide jobs and contribute to community stability; provide connectivity between Late-Successional Reserves; provide both late-successional and younger forest habitat; provide for important ecological functions (i.e. species dispersal) and ecologically valuable structural components (i.e. down logs, snags, and large trees).

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** - The basic national charter for the protection of the environment. It establishes policy, sets goals (section 101), and provides means (Section 102) for carrying out the policy.

**Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (May 1995) (RMP)** - The Management Plan that addresses resource management on all Bureau of Land Management administered land within the Salem District.

**Scoping** - An ongoing process to determine the breadth and depth of an environmental analysis.

**Snag** - Any standing dead, partially dead, or defective (cull) tree at least 10 inches in diameter at breast height and at least 6 feet tall. A hard snag is composed primarily of sound wood, generally merchantable. A soft snag is composed primarily of wood in advanced stages of decay and deterioration, generally not merchantable.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives

AQUATIC CONSERVATION STRATEGY OBJECTIVES REVIEW SUMMARY (RMP, pp. 5-6)		
ACS Objective	Does the project retard or prevent attainment of this ACS objective?	Remarks / References If yes, how? If no, why not?
1) Maintain and restore distribution, diversity, and complexity of watershed and landscape features to ensure protection of aquatic systems.	Yes ___ No ___ N/A <u>X</u>	-
2) Maintain and restore spatial connectivity between watersheds.	Yes ___ No ___ N/A <u>X</u>	-
3) Maintain and restore physical integrity of the aquatic system including shorelines, banks and bottom configurations.	Yes ___ No ___ N/A <u>X</u>	-
4) Maintain and restore water quality necessary to support healthy riparian, aquatic, and wetland ecosystems.	Yes ___ No ___ N/A <u>X</u>	-
5) Maintain and restore the sediment regime under which the system evolved.	Yes ___ No <u>X</u> N/A ___	No measurable changes to sediment regime. Though, small increases in sediment available for transport for 1-2 years, but streams are “energy limited.”(Hydrology/Soils Report, p. 3-4).
6) Maintain and restore in-stream flows.	Yes ___ No <u>X</u> N/A ___	In-stream flows unaffected. Potential slight lengthening of the season of observable surface flow in ephemeral channels (Hydrology/Soils Report, p. 3-4).
7) Maintain and restore the timing, variability, and duration of flood plain inundation and water table elevation in meadows and wetlands.	Yes ___ No ___ N/A <u>X</u>	-
8) Maintain and restore the species composition and structural diversity of plant communities in riparian zones and wetlands to provide thermal regulation,	Yes ___ No ___ N/A <u>X</u>	-

**AQUATIC CONSERVATION STRATEGY OBJECTIVES REVIEW SUMMARY (RMP, pp. 5-6)**

ACS Objective	Does the project retard or prevent attainment of this ACS objective?	Remarks / References If yes, how? If no, why not?
nutrient filtering, and appropriate rates of bank erosion, channel migration and CWD accumulations.		
9) Maintain and restore habitats to support well-distributed populations of native plant, invertebrate, and vertebrate riparian dependent species.	Yes ___ No ___ N/A <u>X</u>	-

## Appendix 2 – Responses to public comments

Record of public comments can be found in the Project file (scoping).



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Salem District Office  
1717 Fabry Road S.E.  
Salem, Oregon 97306

IN REPLY REFER TO: 1790 (084.0)

July 30, 2003

Bob Freimark, Director, NW Region  
The Wilderness Society  
1424 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. #816  
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Mr. Freimark,

Thank you for your July 16 phone call and July 17 e-mail regarding the Molalla Meadow Restoration project (EA# OR080-03-14). I appreciate your concerns; your input has helped the Interdisciplinary Team in project planning and Environmental Assessment preparation. Please let me know if I have adequately captured and addressed your concerns here.

### *Treatment of Meadow in Wilderness vs. Other Meadows*

The proposed action is designed with the long term in mind, and in Rooster Rock Meadow to preserve wilderness characteristics “unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness,” according to the Wilderness Act. The Oregon Wilderness Act provides guidance to “protect watersheds and wildlife habitat, preserve scenic and historic resources” in Table Rock Wilderness. We have reviewed the Wilderness Act, the Oregon Wilderness Act, and Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan and are utilizing a Minimum Requirement Decision Guide to incorporate the minimum impact tools and design features compliant with the Wilderness Act.

Proposed restoration treatments differ somewhat between project sites, since site characteristics vary. Rooster Rock Meadow has more potential for a positive plant community response following a prescription burn than other sites. Baty Butte Trail meadows provide an opportunity for potential native planting/seeding (including *Aster gormanii*, a BLM Sensitive Species) not present in other sites. Since current conifer encroachment is negligible at Lost Creek Meadow, the Interdisciplinary Team dropped that site from the proposal.

### *Fire Management Plan*

Due to the surrounding private industrial timber values, the Table Rock Wilderness Fire Management Plan calls for suppression of all fires, lightning or human caused. The role of fire has been greatly diminished in this ecosystem, since past area fires which could have conflagrated have been suppressed. Although a “let burn” policy would allow a lightning-caused fire to run its course through Table Rock Wilderness, changing the current Fire Management Plan is outside the scope of this Environmental Assessment.

Conifers growing into a meadow such as Rooster Rock Meadow are a natural succession process. A lightning-caused fire intense enough to kill these trees is also a natural succession process. However due to the current fire suppression strategy, it is highly unlikely that a natural fire would be allowed to burn through Rooster Rock Meadow.

The Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan adopted in 1987 emphasizes resource protection with a secondary emphasis on recreation use. The plan neither promotes nor prohibits prescribed fire as a management tool. An alternative management strategy that further emphasized resource protection and limited recreation use included prescribed fire “to enhance diversity where appropriate for sensitive plants and certain vegetative characteristics in small limited areas” (Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan). This alternative plan was rejected in order to protect surrounding private timberlands.

*Removal of Material by Helicopter*

The proposed conifer treatment will generate a fuel hazard and helicopter removal of this material is one fuel disposal option being analyzed in the Environmental Assessment. Other options include piling and burning on site and dispersing the material by scattering.

Historic human use of Rooster Rock meadow, surrounding timber values, the current Table Rock Wilderness Fire Management Plan, Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan, the Wilderness Act, the Oregon Wilderness Act, and present recreation, aesthetic, and ecological values are all key considerations for this Environmental Assessment. We are evaluating the proposed restoration activities and alternatives in Rooster Rock meadow to preserve special habitat resource values and “wilderness character” that contributed to the designation of Table Rock Wilderness.

The Molalla Meadow Restoration Environmental Assessment will be available for public review in late August. It will be published on the Salem BLM internet page: [http://www.or.blm.gov/salem/html/planning/ea\\_tables/ea\\_tables.htm](http://www.or.blm.gov/salem/html/planning/ea_tables/ea_tables.htm) and I will also mail you a hard copy. If you would like an electronic version of the Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan or have further concerns please feel free to contact me again, (503) 589-6844 or send e-mail to [salem\\_mail@blm.gov](mailto:salem_mail@blm.gov), attn: Wesley Wong.

Sincerely,

/s/ Wesley Wong  
Natural Resources Specialist  
Bureau of Land Management

WW



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Salem District Office  
1717 Fabry Road S.E.  
Salem, Oregon 97306

IN REPLY REFER TO: 1790 (084.0)

July 25, 2003

Bill Taylor  
30054 South Sprague Road  
Molalla, OR 97038

Dear Mr. Taylor,

Thank you for your July 9 phone call regarding your concerns with the Molalla Meadow Restoration project (EA# OR080-03-14). I appreciate your correspondence with our state wilderness coordinator and Cascades Resource Area recreation planners; your input has helped the Interdisciplinary Team in project planning and Environmental Assessment preparation. Please let me know if I have adequately captured and addressed your concerns here.

### *Wilderness Act Compliance*

We have reviewed the Wilderness Act and Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan and are utilizing a Minimum Requirement Decision Guide to incorporate the minimum impact tools and design features compliant with the Wilderness Act. The proposed action is designed with the long term in mind, and particularly in Rooster Rock meadow to preserve wilderness characteristics "unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness," according to the Wilderness Act.

### *Fire Regime*

A 100 – 250 plus year fire return interval and very small fires (less than 1 acre) or large, high intensity conflagrations characterize the fire regime in Table Rock Wilderness. The Wilderness' current stands (secondary growth) resulted from a large stand replacing fire that swept across the area in 1868. The lack of large tree remnants from this event indicates that much of Table Rock Wilderness was not a forested plant community prior to 1868. A review of the available information indicates Rooster Rock Meadow was maintained as an open area by fire events (human-caused and/or natural burning) prior to the last large fire. Native Americans used fire to promote huckleberry growth and forage for game animals. Additionally, sheep grazing and pack animals would have also benefited from keeping the meadow areas open.

### *Natural Processes*

Due to the surrounding private industrial timber values, the Table Rock Wilderness Fire Management Plan calls for fire suppression of all fires, lightning or human caused. Conifers growing into a meadow are a natural succession process. A lightning-caused fire intense enough to kill these trees is also a natural succession process. However due to the current fire suppression strategy, it is highly unlikely that a natural fire would be allowed to burn through Rooster Rock Meadow.

### *Scientific Study*

BLM encourages “development of... physical/biological resource information” through scientific studies and research projects that are “compatible with other wilderness management objectives” (Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan). The Oregon Wilderness Act also promotes scientific research in Wilderness.

### *Fire Exclusion*

The role of fire has been greatly diminished in this ecosystem, since past area fires which could have conflagrated have been suppressed. Although a “let burn” policy would allow a lightning-caused fire to run its course through Table Rock Wilderness, changing the current Fire Management Plan is outside the scope of this Environmental Assessment.

The Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan adopted in 1987 emphasizes resource protection with a secondary emphasis on recreation use. The plan neither promotes nor prohibits prescribed fire as a management tool. An alternative management strategy that further emphasized resource protection and limited recreation use included prescribed fire “to enhance diversity where appropriate for sensitive plants and certain vegetative characteristics in small limited areas” (Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan). This alternative plan was rejected in order to protect surrounding private timberlands.

Historic human use of Rooster Rock meadow, surrounding timber values, the current Table Rock Wilderness Fire Management Plan, Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan, the Wilderness Act, and present recreation, aesthetic, and ecological values, are all key considerations for this Environmental Assessment. We are evaluating the proposed restoration activities and alternatives in Rooster Rock meadow to preserve resource values and characteristics that contributed to the designation of Table Rock Wilderness.

The Molalla Meadow Restoration Environmental Assessment will be available for public review in late August. It will be published on the Salem BLM internet page: [http://www.or.blm.gov/salem/html/planning/ea\\_tables/ea\\_tables.htm](http://www.or.blm.gov/salem/html/planning/ea_tables/ea_tables.htm) and I will also mail you a hard copy. Please feel free to contact me again if you have further concerns, (503) 589-6844 or send e-mail to [salem\\_mail@blm.gov](mailto:salem_mail@blm.gov), attn: Wesley Wong.

Sincerely,

/s/ Wesley Wong  
Natural Resources Specialist  
Bureau of Land Management

WW