

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

DECISION RECORD

Molalla Meadow Restoration

Environmental Assessment Number: OR-080-03-14

Section 4, 8, 9, & 17 of
Township 7 South, Range 5 East, Willamette Meridian.
Clackamas County, Oregon

A. Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to restore meadow habitat perimeter, structure, and species composition to conditions believed to have existed prior to conifer encroachment in sections 4, 8, 9, & 17, T. 7 S., R. 5 E., W.M. This area is located in Clackamas County approximately 20 miles southeast of Molalla, Oregon

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. These diminishing special habitats contribute biodiversity (variety of plants, animals, and ecosystems) to the Cascades Range landscape.

An environmental analysis was conducted and documented in the Molalla Meadow Restoration Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), Environmental Assessment (EA) Number OR080-03-14.

A copy of the EA and FONSI can be obtained from the BLM Salem District Office, 1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, Oregon 97306. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., closed on holidays. A copy is also available online at [http://www.or.blm.gov/salem/html/planning under Environmental Assessments](http://www.or.blm.gov/salem/html/planning%20under%20Environmental%20Assessments).

B. Decision

Based on the analysis contained in the Molalla Meadow Restoration EA, and management direction contained in the Salem District Resource Management Plan (RMP), I have decided to implement Alternative 1, the proposed action as described in the EA, herein known as the “selected alternative”.

The selected alternative entails cutting and removing conifer trees that have encroached upon meadow habitat, girdling trees 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. A monitoring plan would identify a schedule for future treatments.

C. Reasons For The Decision

Considering public comment, the content of the Molalla Meadow Restoration EA, the supporting project record, and the management direction contained in the Salem District RMP, I have decided to implement the selected alternative, as previously described. My rationale for this decision follows:

- Maintaining meadow habitat contributes to the variety of plants, animals, and ecosystems across the Cascades Range landscape.
- The “no action” alternative would lead to a decline of special habitats and eventual loss of wildlife habitat, wildflower habitat, vistas, and recreational value.
- Cutting and removing conifers from the meadows would reopen habitat for many wildflowers endemic to open regional meadows and rocky balds, including *Aster gormanii* a Bureau Sensitive Species. Manual 6840 directs BLM to “manage the habitat to conserve the species” (.06C).
- The selected alternative meets Visual Resource Management (VRM) objectives.
- Public use of the meadows is relatively low; the selected alternative will not impair trail use.
- The selected alternative complies with *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP)* (pp. 24, 26) and recommendations in the Northwest Forest Plan (aka *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 selected alternative implements recommendations in *Collawash/Hot Springs Watershed Analysis* (1995) (pp. 1-4) and *Molalla River Watershed Analysis* (1999) (pp. 21-22).
- There is public support for the project.

D. Alternatives Considered

The alternatives considered in detail included a “no action” alternative, and the proposed action alternative which initiated the environmental analysis process. Descriptions of the alternatives analyzed in detail are contained in the Molalla Meadow Restoration EA (pp. 4-8).

E. Public Involvement and Comment Period

A scoping press release was sent to the City of Molalla’s *Molalla Pioneer* newspaper on May 14, 2003. On May 19, 2003, thirty-two scoping letters were sent out to potentially affected and/or interested individuals, groups, and agencies. Two individuals responded to the letter via phone and e-mail. Both individuals opposed activity in one site initially proposed in Table Rock Wilderness – which was later dropped from the proposed action – and general support for the proposed action in other sites. The BLM response to the scoping comments received are contained in Appendix 2 of the Molalla Meadow Restoration EA.

The Molalla Meadow Restoration EA and FONSI were made available for a 30-day public review period starting on September 18th, 2003 and ending on October 20th, 2003. Copies of the EA and FONSI were sent to the three individuals who commented. Thirty letters announcing the availability of the EA and FONSI were sent out to notify agencies, tribes, groups, legislators, and individuals that have expressed general interest in environmental planning and decision-making processes. A legal notice announcing the availability of the EA and FONSI was also published on September 20th, 2003 in the City of Molalla’s *Molalla Pioneer*. A copy of the EA and FONSI was also made available for review in the visitor area at the Salem District Office, Cascades Resource Area Office, 1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, Oregon 97306 and online at <http://www.or.blm.gov/salem/html/planning>.

F. Implementation

Implementation of this decision may begin 30 calendar days after the public notice of the Decision Record appears in the City of Molalla’s *Molalla Pioneer*. The public notice is scheduled to appear in the *Molalla Pioneer* on Wednesday, September 29th, 2004.

G. Right to Appeal

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (Board), Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4 and Form 1842-1 (online at <http://www.or.blm.gov/salem/html/planning/>). If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in this office within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4939, January 19, 1993) or 43 CFR 2804.1 for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Board and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

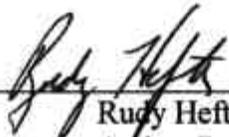
Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

H. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the appeal process, contact Wesley Wong at (503) 589-6844 or Carolyn Sands at (503) 315-5973, Cascades Resource Area, Salem District Office, 1717 Fabry Road SE Salem, OR 97306.

Approved by: _____


Rudy Hefter

Acting Cascades Field Manager

7/28/04
Date