

DECISION DOCUMENTATION and DECISION RATIONALE

Little Boulder Creek Thinning Project

Environmental Assessment Number OR080-01-16

USDI - Bureau of Land Management
Oregon State Office, Salem District, Marys Peak Resource Area

Section 11, Township 8 South, Range 8 West Willamette Meridian

Polk County, Oregon

I. BACKGROUND

This document serves as the Decision Document for the Little Boulder Creek Thinning Project which will begin to be implemented in FY 2004. An Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) analyzed approximately 200 acres for a thinning proposal in an Environmental Assessment (EA Number OR080-01-16) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) which were made available for public review in for 30 days beginning September 3, 2003.

The proposed action was to perform density management thinning on approximately 180 acres within Adaptive Management and Riparian Reserve Land Use Allocations (LUA). The proposed action also included felling trees to create Class 1 coarse woody debris (CWD) in the uplands and Riparian Reserve, and increasing diameter growth to achieve increase the potential for future recruitment of coarse woody debris in the uplands and in riparian areas. Road construction, road renovation, road improvement and road reconstruction were also part of the proposal.

Since that time, further field reconnaissance and IDT discussion has resulted in some minor changes to the proposal. The changes are described in the following section, which also describes any changes to the analysis and determination of effects as presented in the August 27, 2003 EA.

II. MODIFICATIONS TO THE PROPOSED ACTION / CHANGES TO AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

1. Changes to the Project Design Features/Mitigation Measures

a. Timber hauling restrictions would change from December 1 to April 1 (EA p.13) to November 1 to April 1. All hauling would be restricted at any time of the year if necessary to avoid excessive soil, water and fisheries impacts.

b. Debris accumulations on landings and along roads would be machine piled, covered and burned under favorable smoke dispersal conditions in the fall, in accordance with the State of Oregon's smoke management plan. Landing debris would be burned on stable locations within Riparian Reserves and outside stream protection zones.

All design features and mitigation measures will be incorporated into the timber sale contract.

There would be no measurable changes to the Environmental Consequences

III. DECISION

Based on site-specific analysis in the Environmental Assessment, the supporting project record, management recommendations contained in the Watershed Analysis (Upper Siletz) dated December, 1996, as well as the management direction contained in the RMP (*Salem District Resource Management Plan*), dated May, 1995, I have decided to implement the Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) described in the Little Boulder Creek Thinning Project Environmental Assessment (EA # OR080-01-16) (EA pp. 6-15, with the modifications in Section II -1, above, hereafter referred to as the "selected action" (see attached map).

The following is a summary of this decision.

1. Commercially thin approximately 180 acres from Adaptive Management and Riparian Reserve Land Use Allocations. The following is a description of treatment acres and logging method.
 - a. Density management (thinning) of approximately 177 acres, patch cut of 2 acres and clearcut (road construction, reconstruction) of 1 acre within Adaptive Management and Riparian Reserve lands. Approximately 70 acres would be ground-based yarded and approximately 109 acres would be skyline yarded.
2. Road construction (approximately 915 feet), reconstruction (approximately 3,370), improvement (approximately 250 feet; culvert removal and installation) and renovation (approximately 3,600 feet; brushing, blading, spot rocking, minimal excavation) would

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occur. Quantities are approximate and therefore could change slightly after further field measurements and contract preparation.

3. Road Blocking and/or waterbarring: Approximately 2,100 feet of new road construction and reconstruction would be waterbarred and blocked after completions of operations. Approximately 1,650 feet of road to be reconstructed would be waterbarred after completion of logging operations.
4. Adaptive Management and Riparian Reserve Enhancement: Conifer coarse woody debris will be created within the Adaptive Management and Riparian Reserves by retaining on site any residual trees incidentally felled to facilitate access and operability that are greater than 20 inches DBHOB and trees less than 20 inches DBHOB could be removed if a minimum of 2 trees per acre are retained as down logs.
5. Compliance with Direction

The selected action is consistent with applicable land use plans, policies, and programs

a. Programmatic documents covering this proposal are the:

- *Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and Other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (ROD, January, 2001).*
- *Salem District Resource Management Plan (May 1995),*
- *Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (April 1994),*
- *Western Oregon Program-Management of Competing Vegetation Record of Decision (August 1992).*
- *Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program Final EIS (USDI, 1985) and the associated Record of Decision (USDI, April 7, 1986), and the Supplement to the Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program (USDI, March 1987) and the it's associated Record of Decision (May 5, 1987).*
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All of these documents may be reviewed at the Marys Peak Resource Area office.

b. Monitoring activities related to this sale will be done as described in Appendix J of the RMP (May, 1995).

IV. DECISION RATIONALE

Considering public comment, the content of the EA and supporting project record, the management recommendations contained in the Upper Siletz Watershed Analysis, and the management direction contained in the RMP, I have decided to implement the selected action as described above. My rationale for this decision follows:

The selected action addresses the identified purpose and need for action in that it will;

- a. Enhance late-successional forest characteristics in relatively uniform dense conifer stands by density management.
- b. Create terrestrial large down wood by increasing diameter growth to achieve future potential coarse woody debris and in-stream large wood sources.
- c. Test new management approaches to achieve ecological and economic health.

I have not selected the following alternatives because:

Alternative 2 - "Reduced Road Reconstruction, elimination of culvert installations and additional new road construction" was not selected because the additional new road construction would remove approximately 0.5 acres of forested land converting it to non-forest land. This additional road construction would be located on a ridge top subject to high winds and subsequently prone to future wind throw within the thinned stand. In addition some western hemlock trees infected with mistletoe would be removed within the road to be constructed, consequently reducing some future potential nesting habitat for spotted owls and marbled murrelets. The reduced road reconstruction (existing road) and elimination of 2 culverts (1 intermittent stream and 1 perennial stream) would not significantly reduce the potential for long-term increase of sedimentation.

Alternative 3, the "No Action" alternative, and "Alternatives Considered but Eliminated" would not satisfactorily fulfill the Purpose and Need for action, (EA p. 1) as late-successional forest habitat would not be enhanced through density management of dense conifer stands, immediate coarse down wood and future potential coarse wood and in-stream large wood would not be created. A portion of Road No. 8-8-12 was under consideration for decommissioning, however Weyerhaeuser Company who controls the road did not agree to this request since they plan to use the road for in the future.

V. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/ CONSULTATION/COORDINATION

1. Scoping

A description of the proposal was included in the Salem Bureau of Land Management *Project Update* which is mailed to more than 900 individuals and organizations four times each year. A letter asking for scoping input on the proposal was mailed on April 17, 2002 to adjacent landowners and individuals who have expressed an interest in management activities in the resource area as a whole or in this drainage. Letters were also sent to the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde; Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians; Federal, State, County and local government organizations; and Special Interest groups.

2. Comment Period and Comments

The EA was mailed to approximately 5 agencies, individuals and organizations on August 27, 2003. A legal notice was placed in local newspapers soliciting public input on the action from September 3, 2003 to October 3, 2003. No public comments were received:

3. Consultation/Coordination

The Little Boulder timber sale was not submitted for Informal Consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fish), as provided in Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and the Magnuson-Stevens Act section 305 (b)(2) as a determination was made that the proposed project would have 'no effect' on Oregon coast coho salmon.

The Little Boulder timber sale was submitted for Formal Consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as provided in Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16U.S.C. 1536 (a)(2) and (a)(4) as amended). Consultation was completed on September 30, 2002 (Reference number 1-7-02-F-958). As a result of consultation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that the sale would not likely jeopardize the continued existence of the northern spotted owl or marbled murrelet.

VI. CONCLUSION

I have determined that change to the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI - August 2003) for the Little Boulder Thinning Project is not necessary for these reasons:

The existing EA for the Little Boulder Timber Sale, along with additional information contained in this document, fully covers the project. There are no significant new circumstances or facts relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the modification to the proposed action or its impacts, which were not addressed in the EA. The action is within the scope of the alternatives identified in the original EA, and the environmental impacts are within those described in the original EA and are less than or the same as those anticipated for the proposed action in that assessment.

Protests

In accordance with Forest Management Regulations at 43 CFR 5003.2, the decision for this timber sale will not become effective or be open to formal protest until the Notice of Sale is published "in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located". Protests of this sale must be filed within 15 days of the first publication of the notice. For this project, the Notice of Sale will be published in the *Polk County Itemizer Observer* on or around November 21, 2003. The planned sale date is December 17, 2003.

Contact Person

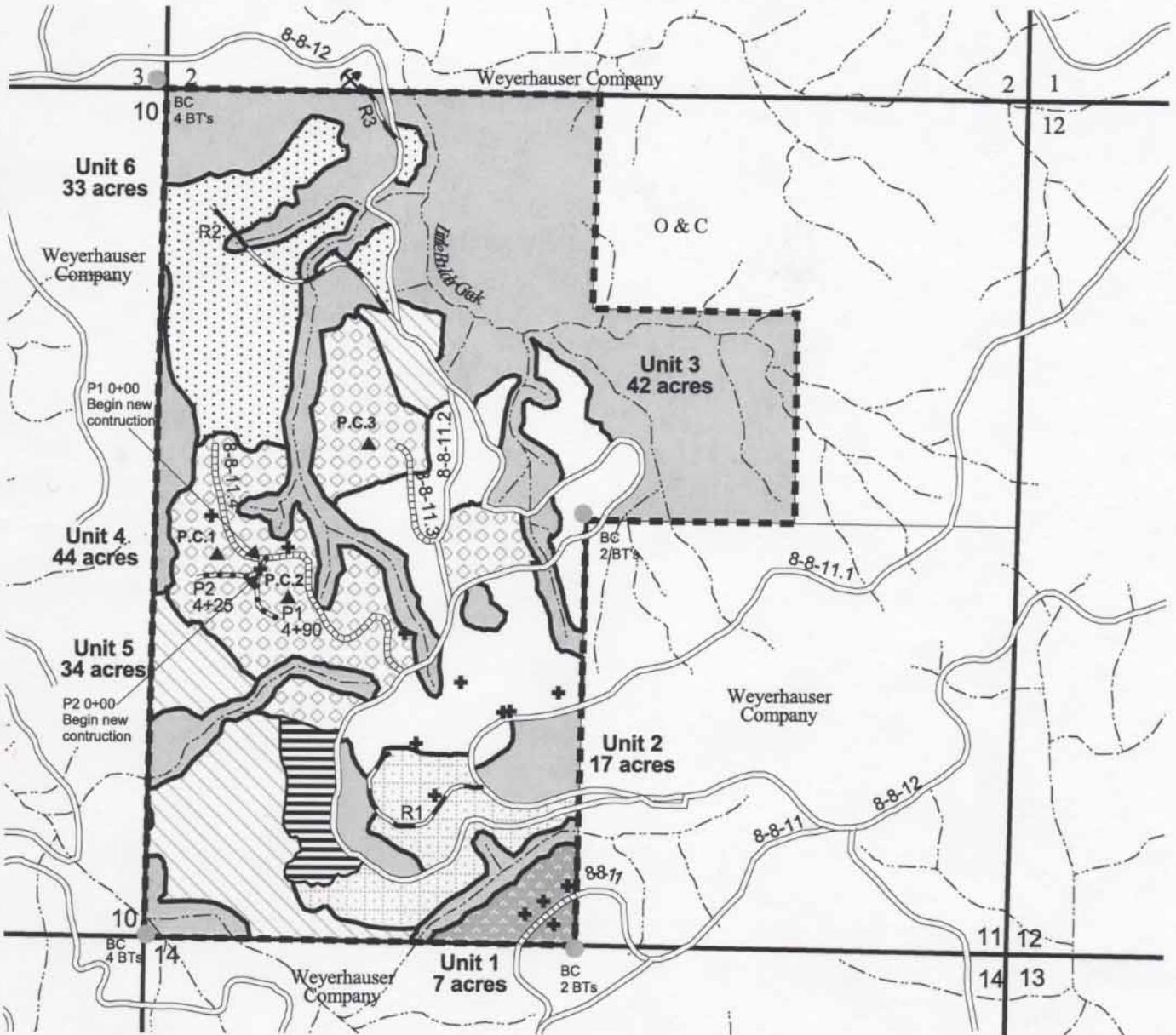
For additional information concerning this decision contact Gary Humbar (503) 315-6981, Marys Peak Resource Area, Salem BLM, 1717 Fabry SE, Salem, Oregon 97306.

Approved by: Cindy Enstrom
Cindy Enstrom
Marys Peak Resource Area Field Manager

November 7, 2003
Date

TIMBER SALE CONTRACT MAP - CONTRACT NO. OR080-TS4-301

T. 8 S., R. 8 W., Section 11, W. M. - SALEM DISTRICT - OREGON



LEGEND

- Corner found
- ▲ Patch cut
- ⊕ Superior tree
- ⚡ Quarry to be enlarged

- Existing road
- - - Road to be constructed
- Road to be reconstructed
- ⋯ Road to be renovated
- Streams

- Boundary - cutting area
- - - Boundary - contract area
- ▨ Area in which skyline yarding will be allowed in reserve
- Reserve area

- ▨ Unit 1
- ▨ Unit 2
- Unit 3
- ▨ Unit 4
- ▨ Unit 5
- ▨ Unit 6

Notes:
Boundary of partial cut areas adjacent to reserve area and Weyerhaeuser Company and rights of way of new construction and reconstruction are painted orange and posted.
Boundary of partial cut areas between units are delineated with yellow and white flagging.
Unit acres do not include existing, new or reconstructed roads.
Units are shown on map 1, yarding method on map 2.

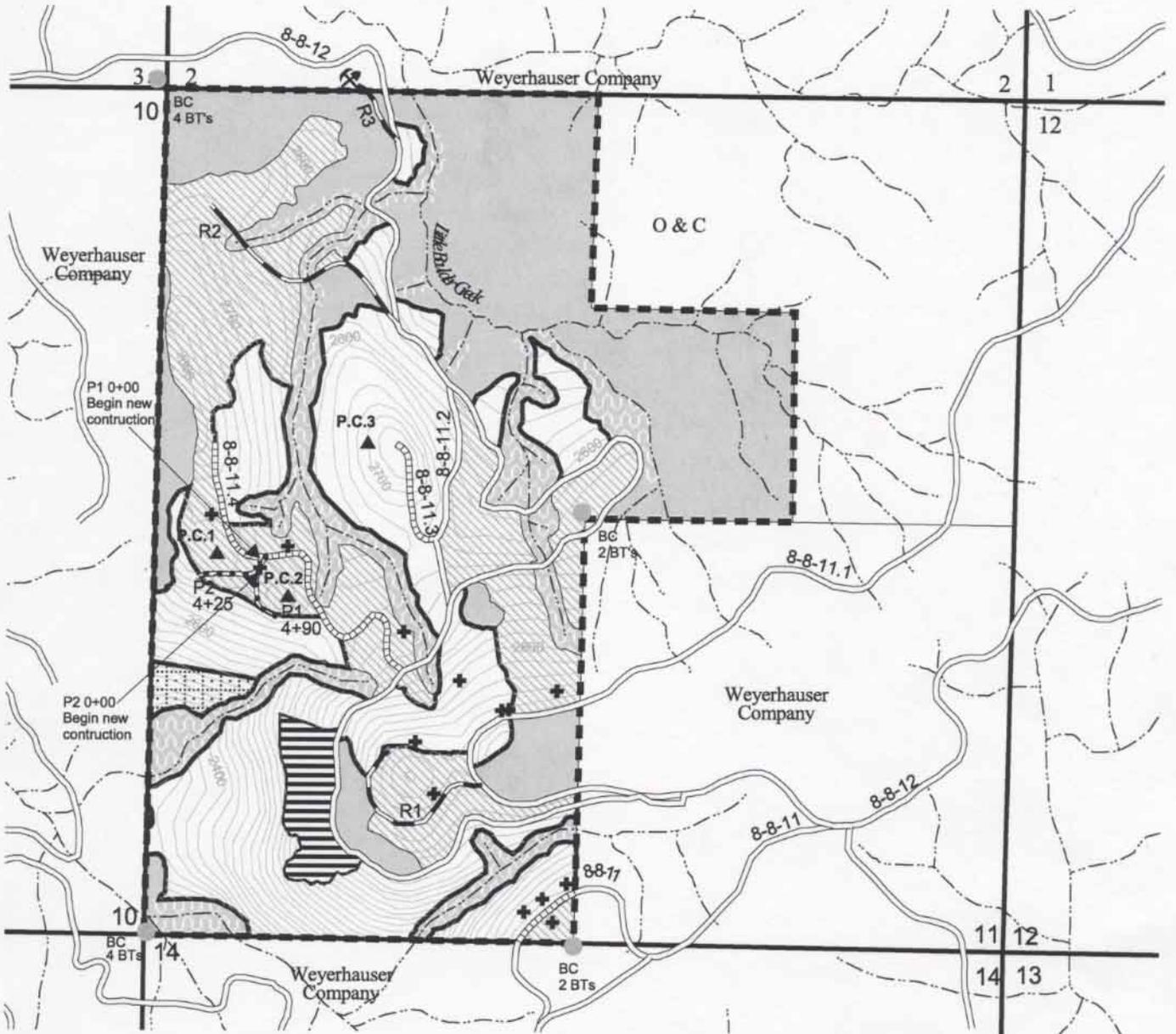
Partial cut area	177 acres
R/W clearcut area	1 acre
Patch cut	2 acres
Reserve area	180 acres
Total	360 acres

Scale: 1" = 1,000'



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- ▬ Boundary - cutting area
- - - Boundary - contract area
- ▨ Area in which skyline yarding will be allowed in reserve
- Reserve area
- ▨ Partial cut area - Ground-based yarding
- Partial cut area - Skyline yarding
- ▨ Partial cut area - Special yarding area
- ▨ Stream protection zone

Notes:
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Scale: 1" = 1,000'
Contour interval is 20 feet.

