U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Roseburg District, Oregon

Galagher Commercial Thinning Harvest

Decision Document

An Interdisciplinary (ID) Team of the Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management has analyzed the proposed **Galagher Commercial Thinning Harvest** project. This analysis and the "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) were documented in Environmental Assessment (EA) No. OR-104-01-03. The thirty-day public review and comment period was completed on March 18th, 2004. The BLM had issued a decision, signed on March 22, 2004, but failed to consider one letter of comments. In order to correct this error, the BLM is replacing the previous decision with this decision. Two letters (ONRC and Umpqua Watersheds) with comments were received as a result of public review.

This proposal is in conformance with the *"Final - Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (PRMP/EIS) dated October 1994 and its associated *Roseburg District Record of Decision and Resources Management Plan* (RMP) dated June 2, 1995.

The EA analyzes the implementation of the "Proposed Action Alternative". The proposed action involves commercial thinning harvest and density management of young-growth timber that would occur in the Upper Umpqua Watershed located in Sections 9, 17, and 19; T24S, R6W, W.M.

Decision

It is my decision to authorize the implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative in the EA (Section II, pg. 4). This decision incorporates the following refinements from the EA:
The EA (pg. 5 and Appendix C) cites that ground-based logging would occur on approximately 160 acres. Final analysis shows that ground-based logging would occur on 180 acres (note: up to ten acres of incidental ground-based logging beyond this amount was assumed in the analysis).

The project design criteria for this alternative are listed on pages 5-11 of the EA. These features have been developed into contract stipulations and will be implemented as part of the timber sale contract.

The following specifics should be noted as the result of project layout. The figures cited in the EA may vary from those cited and are considered as preliminary estimates and not final figures.

1) Harvest activities will occur on 431 acres and harvest approximately 6200 MBF (12,000 CCF) of timber. Cable yarding will occur on 251 acres and ground-based logging will occur on 180 acres.

2) The 0.1 mile of permanent new road referred to in the EA (page 4) will become a temporary spur and be put to bed after use. A total of 13,250 ft. (2.5 mi.) of temporary road will be constructed. A total of 11,583 (2.2 mi.) of existing road will be improved (i.e., improved beyond its original condition). Eighteen (18) additional culverts will be placed to improve road drainage.

3) Approximately 250 trees in the Riparian Reserve will be felled or girdled to provide for enhanced riparian habitat.

This decision also includes the following actions to be accomplished by the Swiftwater Field Office:

1) Prior to any wet season haul on surfaced roads, the stream crossings along the haul route will be evaluated for the need for turbidity reducing measures (ex., placement of weed-free straw bales and/or silt fences). If needed, these structures will be put in place prior to haul.

2) The need for amelioration of soil compaction resulting from ground-based operations will be evaluated by the Soil Scientist after completion of operations in accordance with RMP criteria. If needed, skid trails will be subsoiled after use.

Decision Rationale

The Proposed Action Alternative meets the objectives for lands in the Matrix (General Forest Management Area – GFMA) and Riparian Reserve Land Use Allocations and follows the management actions/directions set forth in the *Final - Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (PRMP/EIS) dated October 1994 and its associated *Roseburg District Record of Decision and Resources Management Plan* (RMP) dated June 2, 1995.

Section II of the EA describes two alternatives: a "No Action" alternative and a "Proposed Action" alternative. The No Action alternative was not selected because the EA did not identify any impacts of the Proposed Action that would be beyond those identified in the PRMP/EIS and would not meet the objective of producing a sustainable supply of timber and other forest commodities.

Cultural clearance with the State Historical Preservation Office was completed and resulted in a "No Effect" determination.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for this project is covered under the *Formal consultation and written concurrence on FY 2003-2008 management activities (Ref.# 1-15-03-F-160)* with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service which concluded (pg. 29) that the project was ". . . not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the spotted owl, murrelet and bald eagle, and are not likely to adversely modify spotted owl or murrelet critical habitat . . .".

Informal consultation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA-fisheries) has been completed. Their Letter of Concurrence (February 17, 2004) concurred with BLM's determination ". . . that the proposed project is NLAA [not likely to adversely affect] . . ." for the Oregon Coast [OC] coho salmon. At the time of this decision, Coho salmon are no longer listed under the Endangered Species Act.

This decision is based on the fact that the Proposed Action Alternative implements the Standards and Guidelines (S&G's) as stated in the NFP and the Management Actions / Directions of the RMP. The project design criteria as stated in the EA would protect the Riparian Reserves, minimize soil compaction, limit erosion, protect slope stability, wildlife, air, water quality, and fish habitat, as well as protect other identified resource values. This decision recognizes that impacts could occur to some of these resources, however, the impacts to resource values would not exceed those identified in the *Final - Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (PRMP/EIS). The Decision provides timber commodities with impacts to the environment at a level within those anticipated in the RMP/EIS.

Comments were solicited from affected tribal governments, adjacent landowners and affected State and local government agencies. No comments were received from these sources. During the thirty-day public review period, comments were received from two organizations. In addition, comments from one organization regarding the original process (2001) were

considered. The EA was originally issued and open to comments in 2001. However, no decision was made at that time. Because of the elapsed time, an additional comment period was provided. This decision addresses comments received in both 2001 and 2004. None of the comments provided new information, showed flawed analysis or assumptions, or revealed an error in data that would alter the conclusions of the analysis thereby requiring new analysis or reconsideration of the proposed action.

The following clarifications of the EA are provided to address certain issues raised in the 2001 public comments:

- "*. . . the "existing" road (24-6-9.1B) to Diamondback unit 1 was not an existing road at all. . . . If it wasn't brushed, you would never find it. There are 18" DBH trees growing in the middle of it. To correctly consider the impacts of this project, this must be considered a new road to be built into the north east corner of Galagher unit 9A*."
  Response: The road in question is an actual road and is in the BLM road records data base. Old aerial photos and type maps show this road to be part of an old jeep road system that was built in the 1940's for fire control access. This road is approximately 1900 feet long with the first 1000 feet currently driveable. The road is a minimum standard, unsurfaced road and has not been maintained for years. The last 0.1 mile (690 ft.) of the 9.1 road is new construction (EA page 4) which under this decision becomes a temporary spur. The EA (pg. 4) states that road improvement would consist of "some clearing, widening and reshaping the road surface". Very few trees would need to be removed, that being to establish full road width. The impact of road construction/improvement is disclosed in the EA (pg. 18).

- "***Please consider an alternative that does not build this road****. It goes through a significant old-growth forest -- one that you want to eventually log. The forest could be prematurely degraded by the new road, and more threatened with logging once a new road is put in.*"
  Response: The only option to log this unit, other than construction/improvement of this road, is helicopter logging. This road is on stable ridge top or near ridge top location. The ID Team analysis did not show that any significant degradation would result in reconstructing this road that would need to be mitigated through a helicopter alternative. This section is in the Matrix land use allocation and therefore could be subject to future regeneration harvest.

The following clarifications of the EA are provided to address certain issues raised in the 2004 public comments:

- *The BLM failed to analyze the level of impacts of road construction and reconstruction (reconstruction is assumed to mean renovation and improvement). "…[C]ertain short and long term degradation to public forest are downplayed and prospective and uncertain benefits are used to justify implementing the proposed action." "The NEPA document completely failed to analyze the impacts of the new roads and vastly overestimated the impacts of road decommissioning."*
  Response: The comments fail to specify what impacts the BLM failed to disclose or fully analyze. The EA (pages 18-23) gives site specific analysis of the effects of roads including effects on: soil productivity, sedimentation, peak flow and fish. While the amount of decommissioning is small at the project scale it is substantial on a cumulative basis at the watershed scale. The Upper Umpqua watershed analysis (page 74) indicates over six miles of road has been decommissioned.

- *The EA did not adequately analyze snags and mature remnants.*
  Response: The EA on page 9 specifies the number of snags and mature remnants that were inventoried in the project area and how they would be managed. All snags and mature remnants would be retained to the greatest extent possible.

- *The BLM must do away with the caveat that they will protect snags "except where they create a safety hazard."*
  Response: BLM will continue to comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements.

- *The method of thinning would result in uniform spacing and lack diversity.*
  Response: The EA under the PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION incorporates by reference the Upper Umpqua Watershed Analysis which describes marking guidelines with varying tree spacing, leaving clumps of trees and small open areas (pages 112 and 113 Upper Umpqua WA). Variable spacing is part of the marking guidelines. In addition, the proposed action follows RMP management direction for thinnings (RMP page 151).

- *Road improvements are really new roads. The last half or third of the existing 24-6-9.1 road should be considered new road construction.*
  Response: Road improvement is defined in the EA (page 4) as …"(improving the road beyond its original design). This would consist of installing, replacing or maintaining drainage structures (culverts and ditches), and some clearing, widening and reshaping the road surface". The last 0.1 mile (690 ft.) of the 9.1 road is new construction (EA page 4).

- *The EA claims that no mature or old growth would be cut within the road right-of-way. "The EA failed to consider the impacts to the old-growth forest the new roads will be built through."*
  Response: The EA (page 4) discloses "…10 acres of right-of-way clearing." The EA (pg. 4) states that road improvement would consist of "some clearing, widening and reshaping the road surface". For the thinning portion of the project, the EA (page 9) states: "Mature and old growth remnant trees in the thinning would be retained to the greatest extent possible…." The road in question, within the "old-growth", is an actual road and is in the BLM road records data base. Old aerial photos and type maps show this road to be part of an old jeep road system that was built in the 1940's for fire control access. This road is approximately 1900 feet long with the first 1000 feet currently driveable. The road is a minimum standard, unsurfaced road and has not been maintained for years. The EA (pg. 4) states that road improvement would consist of "some clearing, widening and reshaping the road surface". Very few trees would need to be removed, that being to establish full road width. The cruising report indicates 3 trees over 24 inch dbh would be removed from the road right-of-way. The last 0.1 mile (690 ft.) of the 9.1 road is new construction (EA page 4) which under this decision becomes a temporary spur. The right-of -way for this segment is approximately one-half acre, within which no large trees (24 inch dbh or greater) would be felled.

- *Old growth will be degraded. The matrix land use allocation cannot be used as an excuse for degrading the watershed.*
  Response: Page 15 of the EA states "The Roseburg RMP/EIS analyzes the environmental impacts in a broader context. This EA does not attempt to reanalyze impacts that have already been analyzed in these documents but rather to identify the particular site specific impacts that could reasonably occur. Environmental impacts to the 'Critical Elements of Human Environment' are analyzed in Appendix D and E." Page 9 and page 4 Appendix D of the EA states "Mature and old growth remnant trees in the thinning would be retained to the greatest extent possible…". In addition page 25 (Cumulative Impacts Analysis) of the EA identifies the area as subject to regen harvest, and old growth or mature forest could be harvested under existing RMP management direction.

- *Temporary roads within the EA should be called semi-permanent. The biological opinion for the RMP specifies:*
    1) *Reduce the density or impact of existing roads in the watershed by at least an equivalent mileage or impacts of the new road(s). Opportunities for decommissioning or reduced impacts from existing roads should be identified in watershed analysis reports.*
    2) *Appropriate efforts to mitigate new road impacts by reducing existing road density or impacts shall be identified prior to or concurrent with construction of new road miles*

  Response: Overall road decommissioning and new road construction, under the RMP, is made public in the Roseburg District Annual Program Summary and Monitoring Report (RMP page 85) through a wide mailing list and on the Roseburg District web site. The Roseburg District Annual Program Summary and Monitoring Report for fiscal year 2003 reports that, for the Upper Umpqua watershed, over 5 miles of road have been decommissioned while less than ½ mile of new road has been constructed. The Roseburg District has reduced the density or impact in the watershed by decommissioning approximately 10 times the equivalent mileage of new roads. The EA (page 21) explains how mitigation efforts would be used to minimize road impacts.

Compliance and Monitoring

Monitoring will be conducted as per the direction given in the RMP (Appendix I).

Protest Procedures

Forest Management Regulation 43 CFR 5003.2 states that "[w]hen a decision is made to conduct an advertised timber sale, the notice of such sale shall constitute the decision document." This notice will be placed in *The News Review* and constitute the decision document with authority to proceed with the proposed action. As outlined in Federal Regulations 43 CFR, 5003.3, "Protests of ... Advertised timber sales may be made within 15 days of the publication of a ... notice of sale in a newspaper of general circulation." Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer (Glenn W. Lahti) and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision and specifically state which portion or element of the decision is being protested and cite applicable Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) pertinent to the point(s) of protest. Protests received more than 15 days after the publication of the notice of sale are not timely filed and shall not be considered. Upon timely filing of a protest, the authorized officer shall reconsider the decision to be implemented in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available to him/her. The authorized officer shall, at the conclusion of his review, serve his decision in writing to the protesting party. Upon denial of a protest ... the authorized officer may proceed with the implementation of the decision.

For further information, contact Glenn W. Lahti, Acting Field Manager, Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management, 777 NW Garden Valley Blvd, Roseburg, OR 97470, 541 440-4931.

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Glenn W. Lahti, Field Manager (Acting) Date
Swiftwater Field Office