U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Eugene District Office
P.O. Box 10226
Eugene, Oregon 97440-2226

July 2003

Draft Environmental Impact Statement Upper Siuslaw Late-Successional Reserve Restoration Plan

Lane and Douglas Counties, Oregon

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

BLM/OR/WA/PL-03/035+1792

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Upper Siuslaw Late-Successional Reserve Restoration Plan
Lane and Douglas Counties, Oregon

COVER SHEET

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ABSTRACT

The BLM, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, proposes to adopt and implement a forest and aquatic ecosystem restoration plan for BLM-administered lands within a Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) in the Coast Range Mountains west of Eugene, Oregon. The plan will provide a 10-year management approach and specific actions needed to achieve the LSR goals and Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives set out in the Eugene District Resource Management Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan. The purpose of the action is to:

- protect and enhance late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems;
- foster the development of late-successional forest structure and composition in plantations and young forests; and
- reconnect streams and reconnect stream channels to their riparian zones and upslope areas.

The Draft EIS analyzes six alternatives, designed to represent different overall management approaches to restoration:

Alternative A- No Action;
Alternative B - plantation and road management with no timber harvest;
Alternative C - continue current management approach;
Alternative D - threatened and endangered species recovery;
Alternative E - reduce stand densities as quickly as possible;
Alternative F - multi-entry and multi-trajectory thinning.

The preferred alternative is Alternative D.

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Eugene District Office
P.O. Box 10226
Eugene, OR 97440-2226

In Reply Refer To:
1736A

Dear Reader:

Thank you for your interest in the proposed Upper Siuslaw Late-Successional Reserve Restoration Plan. Please find enclosed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzing the impacts of alternative restoration plans. The Bureau of Land Management is the lead agency for this Draft EIS, and the Fish and Wildlife Service is a cooperating agency. I would appreciate your comments on this Draft EIS. Comments should be as specific as possible, and address the adequacy of the EIS or the merits of the alternatives discussed, or both. To enable us to analyze and use fully all information acquired during the review of this Draft EIS, reviewers need to provide their comments during the established 60-day review period. Comments on the Draft EIS must be submitted in writing by October 15, 2003, to me at:

Bureau of Land Management
Eugene District
P.O. Box 10226
Eugene, OR 97440-2226
or by e-mail at or090mb@or.blm.gov Attn: Rick Colvin.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Eugene District office during regular hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the environmental analysis or other related documents. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organization or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Questions concerning this Draft EIS may be directed to Rick Colvin, LSR Restoration Team Leader, at the address above, by telephone at (541) 683-6600 or (1-888) 442-3061, or by e-mail at or090mb@or.blm.gov Attn: Rick Colvin. I appreciate your interest in the management of these public lands.

Sincerely,

Steven Calish
Field Manager, Siuslaw Resource Area

Enclosure
(Draft EIS)

Executive Summary

Introduction

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzes alternatives for a plan for forest and aquatic ecosystem restoration within a Late-Successional Reserve (LSR 267) in the Coast Range Mountains, west of Eugene, Oregon. The proposed plan would be a 10-year management approach and contain specific actions needed to achieve the LSR goals and Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives set out in the Northwest Forest Plan.

LSR 267 lies almost entirely within the Siuslaw River basin in the Oregon Coast Province, with a very small portion in the Umpqua River basin. The portion of LSR 267 addressed by this proposed restoration plan encompasses 24,400 acres of BLM-managed land. The planning area extends from the eastern edge of LSR 267, just west of the Lorane Valley, to Oxbow Creek. The northern boundary is defined by the ridge between the Siuslaw and Wolf Creek watersheds. The southern boundary is defined by the boundary between the Eugene and Roseburg Districts, which approximates the ridge between the Siuslaw and Umpqua River basins.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the action is to:

- protect and enhance late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems;
- foster the development of late-successional forest structure and composition in plantations and young forests; and
- reconnect streams and reconnect stream channels to their riparian zones and upslope areas.

This action will be developed consistent with the decisions of the *Eugene District Resource Management Plan* (RMP) and will address the recommendations of the *Late-Successional Reserve Assessment for the Oregon Coast Province - Southern Portion – RO267, RO268* (LSR Assessment) and the *Siuslaw Watershed Analysis.*

The need for the action is established in Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for the Northwest Forest Plan, the Eugene District RMP, the LSR Assessment, and the Siuslaw Watershed Analysis. These documents establish the need for forest and aquatic restoration in the planning area and the role of active management in restoration.

Issues

The issues for analysis were developed based on public scoping, interdisciplinary team discussion, and agency staff comments. The issues are summarized below and serve to focus the analysis and comparison of alternatives.

1. *How would road decommissioning and road management actions alter public access to BLM lands?*

2. *How much new road construction would be needed to implement restoration actions?*

3. *What level of risk to existing late-successional forest would result from restoration activities?*

4. *How would thinning affect development of late-successional forest structural characteristics?*

5. *What are the effects of restoration activities on marbled murrelet habitat?*

6. *What are the effects of restoration activities on northern spotted owl habitat?*

7. *What are the effects of restoration activities on coho salmon habitat?*

8. *How would restoration activities affect the presence and spread of noxious weeds?*

9. *What would be the economic effects of restoration activities?*

10. *What are the costs of restoration?*

Alternatives

This EIS analyzes six alternatives in detail: the No Action alternative and five action alternatives.

Alternative A – No Action
This alternative would take no management actions to achieve the purpose of the action. Only those management actions specifically required by the RMP or by law or policy would occur.

Alternative B – Plantation and Road Management with No Timber Harvest
Alternative B is designed to accomplish restoration without timber harvest. It would thin Douglas-fir plantations, but not unmanaged stands or any stands over 50 years old. No trees would be intentionally felled or pulled into streams, and no in-stream structures would be constructed. Alternative B would decommission all roads where legally possible and would not construct any new roads.

Alternative C – Continue Current Management Approach
Alternative C is designed to continue the current pace of restoration, using current silvicultural techniques and stream restoration strategies. Alternative C would decommission eroding roads and would construct new roads as needed.

Alternative D – T&E Species Recovery
Alternative D is designed to take advantage of restoration opportunities that would have the least short-term adverse effects with the most long-term benefits to habitat for northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets, and coho salmon. All commercial thinning would be completed within the next 10 years. Riparian stands would be thinned without timber removal. In-stream woody debris structures would be constructed, and some structures would be cabled for stability. Alternative D would decommission eroding roads and roads in or adjacent to late-successional forest. New road construction would be limited to short, temporary spur roads.

Alternative E – Reduce Stand Densities as Quickly as Possible
Alternative E is designed to achieve tree densities typical of local late-successional forests as soon as possible. All commercial thinning would be completed within the next 10 years. Trees would be felled or pulled into all streams adjacent to stands ≤80 years old, but woody debris would not be cabled for stability. Alternative E would decommission eroding roads and roads in or adjacent to late-successional forest. New roads would be constructed as needed.

Alternative F – Multi-entry and Multi-trajectory Thinning
Alternative F is designed to accomplish restoration using multiple thinning of stands to maintain stand vigor and develop stand stability while maintaining canopy closure. In-stream woody debris structures would be constructed on larger streams, and some would be cabled for stability. Alternative F would decommission eroding roads and roads in late-successional forest and would construct new roads as needed.

Preferred Alternative

Alternative D is the BLM preferred alternative, because it would:

- effectively foster the development of late-successional forest structure;
- thin stands to a wide range of stand densities, which would maintain future management options;
- maintain the current amount of dispersal habitat for northern spotted owls;
- decommission the most damaging roads;
- moderate the risk of wildfire over time; and
- generate revenue greater than the costs, indicating the feasibility of implementing the overall restoration program.

Environmental Consequences

The effects of the alternatives differ most notably for the effects on the road system, the attainment of late-successional structure, northern spotted owl dispersal habitat, and the economic costs and revenues. The risk to existing late-successional forest and the effects on coho habitat are substantially similar for all action alternatives, but the effects of action alternatives differ substantially from the No Action alternative. The effects of the alternatives on marbled murrelet habitat parallel the effects on the attainment of late-successional structure. The effects of the alternatives on noxious weeds are directly tied to the effects on the road system.

Alternative A (No Action) would leave the existing road system intact and would generate no economic activity. Alternative A would pose a high risk of catastrophic fire, because almost all young stands would go through a prolonged period of stand stagnation. Stands currently ≤40 years old would quickly become spotted owl dispersal habitat, but would not attain late-successional structure within the 100-year analysis period. Alternative A would produce the most chronic sedimentation to streams and would pose a high risk of catastrophic sedimentation from culvert failures.

Alternative B would decommission the greatest length of roads and build no new roads. It would not slow the development of spotted owl dispersal habitat. It would have limited

effectiveness in speeding the attainment of late-successional forest structure. It would have no revenue and moderate costs.

Alternative C would decommission a short length of roads and would build a moderate length of new roads. It would not slow the development of spotted owl dispersal habitat. It would not effectively speed the attainment of late-successional structure. The revenues would be slightly lower than the costs.

Alternative D would decommission a moderate length of roads and would build a small length of new roads. It would slow the development of spotted owl dispersal habitat (although it would always maintain the current amount). It would effectively speed the attainment of late-successional structure. The moderate revenues would exceed the costs.

Alternative E would decommission a moderate length of roads, but would build the greatest length of roads. It would slow the development of spotted owl dispersal habitat (and temporarily reduce it below the current amount). It would be the most effective at speeding the attainment of late-successional structure. It would generate the most economic activity and would have the highest revenues, which would substantially exceed the costs.

Alternative F would decommission a short length of roads and build a considerable length of new roads. It would not slow the development of spotted owl dispersal habitat. It would have limited effectiveness in speeding the attainment of late-successional forest structure. It would generate almost as much economic activity as Alternative E, and the revenues would substantially exceed the costs.

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