

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE
DECISION RECORD and FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Rock Fish Timber Sale
Environmental Assessment No. OR090-EA-03-14
Sale Tract No. E-04-506**

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) which analyzed the effects of this Proposed Action and alternatives. The EA and a preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were made available for public comment in October, 2003. One public comment was received.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the EA (OR090-EA-03-14), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the "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 "Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan," (June 1995); (2) the Proposed Action and alternatives are in conformance with the Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan; and (3) the Proposed Action and alternatives do not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

DECISION

It is my decision to select the Proposed Action (Alternative 5) as described in the Rock Fish EA. This EA and the FONSI analyzed the selected alternative and found no significant impacts. Implementation of this decision will result in forest management activities, including thinning of Matrix and Riparian Reserve by commercial timber harvest, using cable yarding only, and road construction, renovation, and decommissioning within the Matrix. All design features identified in the EA will be implemented.

The selected alternative is in conformance with the "Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl," (NSO ROD, April 1994), and the "Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan," (RMP, June 1995), as amended by the "Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines," (January 2001).

ALTERNATIVES

In addition to the selected alternative, the EA considered five other alternatives. Alternative 1 would allow no new road construction or road renovation, and would use only cable yarding systems; as a result, fewer acres would be harvested than under the Proposed Action. Alternative 2 would allow road renovation, but no new construction, and would utilize cable and ground-based yarding systems. Under this alternative, more acres would be harvested than under Alternative 1, but fewer than under the Proposed Action. Alternative 3 would harvest the same acres as the Proposed Action, would allow new road construction and renovation, and would utilize cable and ground-based yarding systems. Alternative

4 would harvest the same acres as the Proposed Action, but would use a helicopter yarding system, and would neither construct new roads nor renovate existing roads. Alternative 6 is the "No Action" alternative, and would carry out no management activities at this time.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTION

The purpose of the action is to provide a sustainable supply of timber while maintaining forest health and productivity, and to contribute to attainment of Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) objectives. All of the action alternatives meet the purpose for taking action, to some degree.

The Proposed Action would most effectively meet the purpose of the action. It would thin much of the project area to maintain healthy growth and vigor in the stand. It would use a cost effective yarding system, while avoiding potential compaction of sensitive soils. It would provide timber volume to meet Northwest Forest Plan and RMP objectives. It would accelerate development of late-successional forest structure by treating land within the Riparian Reserves as other alternatives. Finally, this alternative would decommission seven of the 12 existing old roads in the project area.

Based on the analysis discussed and presented in the EA, the Proposed Action is consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy and the objectives for the Riparian Reserves, and would not prevent or retard attainment of any of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives (EA, pp. 22-26). Silvicultural actions in the Riparian Reserves will help accelerate acquisition of desired vegetation characteristics needed to attain ACS objectives (EA, pp. 22-26).

Alternative 1 provides the least impact to soil compaction because there would be no new road construction or renovation, and because only cable yarding would be used. Under this alternative, fewer acres of northern spotted owl dispersal habitat would be degraded. However, because fewer acres would be treated, Alternative 1 provides the least amount of timber and the least amount of Riparian Reserve treated to accelerate attainment of ACS objectives. Under Alternative 1, fewer acres would receive important silvicultural treatments to maintain healthy growth and vigor in the stand. In addition, all of the 12 existing old roads in the project area would remain vulnerable to off-highway vehicle (OHV) use.

Alternative 2 provides more timber for harvest, treats slightly more Riparian Reserve, and only five of the existing old roads would remain vulnerable to OHV use. However, because this alternative would include ground-based yarding on sensitive soils, an estimated 12 acres would remain compacted after amelioration.

Alternative 3 is similar to Alternative 2, except more timber would be harvested, and an additional 10 acres of Riparian Reserve would be treated to accelerate attainment of ACS objectives. However, because of the increased area that would be yarded using ground-based systems on sensitive soils, the amount of soil compacted after amelioration would increase to an estimated 16 acres.

Alternative 4 would provide the same level of timber harvest as the Proposed Action, the same number of Riparian Reserve acres treated as the Proposed Action, and would have a negligible effect on soil compaction, similar to the Proposed Action. However, helicopter yarding would cost \$475,000-\$1,240,000 more than the Proposed Action, and all of the 12 existing old roads in the project area would remain vulnerable to OHV use.

Alternative 6 (No Action) would not meet the purpose of the action within the Matrix or Riparian Reserves. It would not maintain stand vigor or produce timber. It would result in slower development of late-successional forest structural characteristics in Riparian Reserves than the action alternatives (EA, pp. 18-30). Alternative 6 would have no short-term effects on northern spotted owl dispersal habitat (EA, p. 20) and would have no effect on soil productivity (EA, p. 21).

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A public notice advertising the availability of the EA and FONSI appeared in the Eugene Register-Guard on October 29, 2003. Additionally, the EA and FONSI were mailed to interested individuals and organizations. A 30-day public comment period closed on November 28, 2003. One comment letter was

received via e-mail. The letter was acknowledged by e-mail on December 1, 2003. A letter responding to comments and a copy of the Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact will be mailed to the commenter.

Pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, consultation was completed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which found that the action "May Affect but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect" the northern spotted owl and "May Affect, Likely to Adversely Affect" the marbled murrelets, because of disturbance to potential nesting murrelets in unsurveyed habitat northeast of the project area.

The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde were notified of this project during the scoping process, requesting information regarding tribal issues or concerns relative to the project. No response was received.

IMPLEMENTATION

A timber sale contract will implement the road construction, timber harvest, and decommissioning of roads used for timber harvest operations as described in the Proposed Action (EA, pp. 7-8).

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

The decision to implement this timber sale project may be protested under 43 CFR 5003 – Administrative Remedies. In accordance with 43 CFR 5003.2, the decision will not be subject to protest until the notice of sale is first published in the Eugene Register-Guard on January 28, 2004. This published notice of sale will constitute the decision document for the purpose of protests of this timber sale project (43 CFR 5003.2b). Protests of this timber sale decision must be filed with this office within fifteen (15) days after first publication of the notice of sale.

/s/ Steven Calish
Field Manager
Siuslaw Resource Area

1/27/2003
Date