

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE

DECISION RECORD
Blackberry Hole Timber Sale
Environmental Assessment No. OR090-EA-02-24

Background:

An Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Blackberry Hole Timber Sale were prepared by the McKenzie Resource Area, Eugene District Office. Timber harvest, road construction, road improvement and road decommissioning would occur on Matrix lands as identified in the Northwest Forest Plan. Density management would occur on Riparian Reserves to acquire desired vegetation characteristics needed to attain Aquatic Conservation Objectives. The Blackberry Hole Timber Sale is located in Sections 23 of T. 18 S., R. 1W., Will. Mer.

Management objectives are to:

! Fulfill the BLM's mission and policy of providing wood products and jobs in the Matrix Land Use Allocations for Fiscal Year 2003.

! Manage Matrix lands by commercial thinning to capture mortality, reduce stocking density and redistribute growth and yield to the remaining stand.

! Improve the Riparian Reserves stand complexity, develop late seral characteristics and large woody debris for recruitment into the stream channel.

! Construct temporary roads for timber harvest.

! Manage the existing road network through improvement and/or road decommissioning.

Consultation:

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was accomplished in the "*Programmatic Biological Assessment for Projects with the Potential to Modify the Habitats of Northern Spotted Owls and/or Bald Eagles or Modify the Critical Habitat of the Northern Spotted Owl - Willamette Province FY 2003-2004*" and will conform to the guidance in this document. Based on this document, the project is determined to be a "no effect" action for bald eagles and a "may affect but not likely to adversely affect" action for spotted owls. There will be "no effect" to spotted owl critical habitat.

There will be no effect to spring Chinook salmon or their habitat. Consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service for Essential Fish Habitat is not required for "Not Likely to Adversely Affect" activities.

Public Comment:

Comments on the project proposal were solicited from affected tribal governments, adjacent landowners, and from the general public by the inclusion of this project in the Eugene District Planning Update "Eye to the Future," August 2002.

Three alternatives were developed. Another alternative, a "no roading" alternative, was considered but eliminated from detailed study because it would not meet the proposed objectives (Section 2.4).

This EA and FONSI were advertised on September 11, 2002 in the Eugene Register Guard. The EA and FONSI were also available on the internet at <http://www.edo.or.blm.gov/nepa>. Copies of the EA and FONSI were also mailed to interested individuals. The public comment period ended on October 11, 2002.

One comment letter was received. Comments from this letter did not provide new information or request clarification of an issue.

Finding of No Significant Impact:

On the basis of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment (OR090-EA-02-24), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that implementation of the Proposed Action or Alternative will not have significant environmental impacts not already addressed in the 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) and the Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (June 1995) as amended by the Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines, January 2001. Environmental Assessment OR 090-EA-02-24 is in conformance with the above documents and does not, in and of itself, constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a supplement to the existing EIS is unnecessary and will not be prepared.

Decision:

Based on site-specific analysis in the Environmental Assessment, the supporting record, management recommendations contained in the Watershed Analysis (Little Fall Creek and Hills Creek Watershed Analysis, 2000) as well as management direction contained in the RMP (Eugene District Resource Management Plan) dated June 1995, I have decided to implement the Proposed Action in the Blackberry Hole Timber Harvest Environmental Assessment as analyzed in EA OR090-EA-02-24. This Alternative will thin an estimated 412 acres in the Matrix land use allocation, density management on approximately 44 acres in Riparian Reserves, construct approximately 1.9 miles of native surface temporary road (to be decommissioned after completion of harvesting), temporarily improve 0.93 miles of existing road (to be decommissioned after completion of harvest), and decommission an estimated 0.93 miles of existing road. An estimated 4.5 MMBF of timber will be harvested. The mitigation measures, design features and management requirements, logging methods, and road decommissioning goals as described in the EA, are hereby adopted.

The following changes or clarifications are included in the decision:

- Harvest Area 2 and the associated spur road “I” has been dropped from this timber sale.

Rationale for the Decision:

This proposed action best meets the purpose and needs as described in the EA. This action will:

1. Contribute to meeting the need for a sustainable supply of timber by making more than 4.5 MMBF of timber available for harvest.
2. Reduce stocking, increase vigor, increase growth rates, and capture mortality on an estimated 412 acres.
3. Assist in the attainment of the ACS objectives by 1) Density management on an estimated 44 acres in the Riparian Reserves, 2) decommissioning approximately 0.93 miles of existing road, and approximately 1.9 miles of temporary roads.

The “No Action” alternative, and Alternative III, were not selected because they would either provide less timber for harvest, treat fewer acres, and contribute less to the attainment of the ACS objectives.

Administrative Remedies:

This Decision Record cannot be protested at this time. The purpose of this Decision Record is to let the public know that a decision has been made to select Alternative II (Proposed Action). In accordance with 43 CFR 5003, a notice of sale published in the newspaper, rather than this Decision Record, will constitute the decision document for the purpose of protests. The decision to conduct a sale will be subject to protest for 15 days following first publication of the notice of sale. The tentative date for publishing the notice of sale is July 2, 2003, although this date is subject to change without notice.

Approved by: Emily Rice
Field Manager, Upper Willamette Resource Area

Date: June 4, 2003