

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

DECISION RECORD
Starks Creek Timber Sale
Environmental Assessment No. OR090-EA-02-18

Background:

An Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Starks Creek 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 Starks Creek Timber Sale is located in Sections 15, 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," March 2002.

Four alternatives were developed, including a "no new road construction" alternative. Another alternative, a "helicopter logging" alternative, was considered but eliminated from detailed study (section 2.5).

This EA and FONSI were advertised on August 21, 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 September 21, 2002. One comment letter was received. Comments from this letter did not provide new information or request clarification of an issue. A suggestion was made to seek an alternative for harvesting Area 5 to avoid temporary road construction. Two alternatives were considered in the EA, helicopter logging and no harvest.

Finding of No Significant Impact:

On the basis of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment (OR090-EA-02-18), 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-02-18 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.

Clarifications:

1. The EA, on page 36, designated a wash area for washing equipment. Washing of equipment prior to entry onto BLM lands would be allowed off-site instead of at a designated wash area. Equipment that goes off of the gravel roads and is not transported via a trailer would need to be washed prior to leaving the project area. This would meet the objectives of the design feature stated in the EA and no additional impacts are expected.
2. The EA, on page 36, states that no landings would be used or constructed in the Riparian Reserves. The EA should have stated that, "The use and construction of landing in the Riparian Reserves would be minimized." Up to 4 existing and new landings would be used within the Riparian Reserves. Two – three new landings would be constructed along the west side of the existing 18-1-15.2 road. The - 15.2 road lies between the landings and the stream. Impacts to the Riparian Reserve would be the removal of trees. Impacts to water quality are not expected due to the distance from the stream and maintenance of the road bed and ditches, which would reduce the potential for sediment to be delivered to the stream.
3. The EA, on page 36, states that, "there would be no ground based equipment in the Riparian Reserves." Of the three acres chosen for ground base yarding, approximately one acre is in the Riparian Reserve. Therefore, ground based equipment would be in the Riparian Reserve. The use of existing skid trails and mechanical cutting design features would minimize soil compaction. Tilling

existing skid trails where appropriate would reduce the soil compaction in the ground based harvest. No other additional impacts are expected.

4. Mechanized cutting equipment may be used in the project area under the following design features:
 - during seasonally dry periods,
 - limit movement off of primarily skid trails to a single pass
 - operate equipment on top of slash whenever possible
 - operate only on slopes less than 45 percent

The use of existing skid trails and mechanical cutting design features would minimize soil compaction. No other additional impacts are expected.

5. There will be an option to rock temporary Road Nos. 18-1-16 and 18-1-16.1 to allow for winter harvest. Temporary Road No. 18-1-16 may have approximately 150 feet of rock placed at the end to allow for winter harvest. If rocked, this road would not be decommissioned and the rock would remain in place. The impact would be 1/10 of an acre of productive soil committed to roads. Rocking the road would not have any additional impacts. To allow for winter harvest temporary Road No. 18-1-16.1 maybe rocked. The rock would be removed and piled on site. There are no additional impacts to soils or hydrology since this road would still be tilled.

Decision:

Based on site-specific analysis in the Environmental Assessment, the supporting record, management recommendations contained in the Watershed Analysis (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 Starks Creek Timber Harvest Environmental Assessment as analyzed in EA OR090-EA-02-18. This Alternative will thin an estimated 177 acres in the Matrix land use allocation, thin approximately 44 acres in Riparian Reserves, construct approximately 1.58 miles of native surface temporary road (to be decommissioned after completion of harvesting), temporarily improve 0.15 mile of existing road (to be decommissioned after completion of harvest), and decommission an estimated 0.81 mile of existing road. An estimated 3.0 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.

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 2.2 MMBF of timber available for harvest.
2. Reduce stocking, increase vigor, increase growth rates, and capture mortality on an estimated 221 acres.
3. Assist in the attainment of the ACS objectives by 1) thinning an estimated 44 acres in the Riparian Reserves, 2) decommissioning approximately 0.96 miles of existing road, and approximately 1.58 miles of temporary roads, 3) removing four poorly functioning culverts.

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

Administrative Remedies:

The decision to implement the timber sale may be protested under 43 CFR 5003 - Administrative Remedies. In accordance with 43 CFR 5003.2, the decision for the timber sale will not be subject to protest until the notice of sale is first published in the Eugene Register-Guard on August 27, 2003. This published notice of sale will constitute the decision document for the purpose of protests of the timber sale (43 CFR 5003.2(b)). Protests of this decision must be filed with this office within fifteen (15) days after first publication of the notice of sale.

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

Date: August 25, 2003