



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Medford District Office
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, Oregon 97504
email address: Medford_Mail@blm.gov

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1792 (OR-115) (OR-116)

MAY 28 2008

Dear Neighbor:

The Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is seeking your input on a proposal to salvage trees blown down in early January 2008 from a series of winter storms that hit the West Coast. The storms brought strong winds with heavy rain and snow to southern Oregon and northern California. Wind gusts up to 60 miles per hour downed power lines and uprooted trees. Patches of green trees were blown down across the Butte Falls and Ashland Resource Areas.

The BLM is considering salvage on these lands within the blowdown area in accordance with direction provided in the 1995 *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (RMP). The BLM intends to inventory and perform the required *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) compliance measures in order to offer timber for sale in the summer and fall of 2008. NEPA compliance documentation will be completed through two Environmental Assessments: *Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage EA* (Butte Falls Resource Area) and *Windy Soda Salvage EA* (Ashland Resource Area). These EAs will analyze the affects of salvaging trees blown down during the storm, storm-damaged trees not likely to survive, and trees hazardous to workers and the public. Because of the scattered nature of the blowdown trees, salvage would occur in a broad geographic area within the BLM's Butte Falls and Ashland Resource Areas (see General Location Map).

What is the BLM Proposing?

Trees proposed for salvage would include trees blown down by the windstorm that are in excess of those needed to meet the requirements for coarse woody debris and snags as established in the Northwest Forest Plan (p. C-40-43 and D-10) and Medford District RMP (p. 39 and 40). Broken trees with no or very little green (less than 25 percent live crown) would be salvaged. Standing portions or portions of trees on the ground would be left on-site to meet snag or coarse woody debris requirements along with trees too scattered on the ground to make salvage economically feasible. Merchantable coarse woody debris in excess of the amounts identified as minimum levels could be removed as part of the salvage activities. Tractor, shovel, skyline, and helicopter yarding methods will be considered for removing the salvaged trees.

Northern spotted owl critical habitat units CHU OR-36 and CHU OR-37 sustained severe damage during the windstorm. Salvage is proposed on matrix lands located in these critical habitat units in areas no longer considered northern spotted owl suitable habitat, and in areas where salvage activities would not alter the function of suitable and dispersal northern spotted owl habitat.

Enclosed is a map displaying the areas of consideration. The BLM is in the process of developing this project and the exact locations of the proposed salvage units have not been determined. The heavy snows during the storm and the snow that continued to fall through April has made it difficult for BLM foresters to fully assess the magnitude of the blowdown. Changes or additions to those projects described in this letter may occur as more information becomes available.

Why is the BLM Proposing Salvage of Windthrown Trees?

Stands damaged during winter storms are in need of immediate salvage. These stands contain trees blown down during high winds and standing trees damaged by other falling trees. The BLM will assess the possibility of recovering economic value, reducing potential insect infestations, restoration of stands to allow for planting of trees and natural regeneration, and reducing increased fire danger from dead and damaged trees. Immediate salvage is needed to allow the BLM to recover as much of the economic value of the dead and damaged trees as possible before natural rot and bug infestation destroy the timber.

Dead trees provide potential breeding habitat for bark beetles, wood borers, and other insects. Edges of windthrow and snow damage are especially at risk for infestations. The two primary problems involving insects after the blowdown event are the degrading of downed timber resulting from the feeding of bark beetles and wood borers and the threat to standing live trees by beetles attracted to or emerging from the downed timber.

The majority of the trees blown down during the storms were green trees. As these down trees begin to dry, the fuel loadings will increase until the fine fuels decay. Down trees would also make suppression activity more difficult in the event of a fire. There is a need to mitigate the risk to the local neighborhood communities, individuals, fire fighters, and the environment from severe, unwanted, and unplanned wildfire events.

The blowdown event produced large quantities of coarse woody debris and snags. In places, excessive amounts of coarse woody debris may prevent stand regeneration. There is a need to remove dead and damaged trees to allow for planting and natural regeneration while retaining an adequate amount of coarse woody debris on-site.

What Happens Next?

The BLM will prepare written documentation of the project proposals and the environmental effects. This will be distributed to the public through Environmental Assessments (EA) for the *Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage EA* (Butte Falls Resource Area) and *Windy Soda Salvage EA* (Ashland Resource Area). At this time, we would like to hear any comments, issues, and concerns you have that would help shape or further develop the project proposals.

We are contacting you at this time so your concerns or ideas can be considered early in the development of the project proposal. Your initial comments will be most useful if they are received by June 20, 2008. However, comments will be accepted and reviewed up until the time the decisions on the projects are made.

Please send comments to Jean Williams, Butte Falls Resource Area Planning and Environmental Coordinator, Medford District BLM, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, Oregon 97504, telephone (541) 618-2385, or Ed Reilly, Ashland Resource Area Planning and Environmental Coordinator, Medford District BLM, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, Oregon 97504, telephone (541) 618-2384, or e-mail your comments to Medford_Mail@blm.gov (be sure to include "Attention: Jean Williams" or "Attention: Ed Reilly").

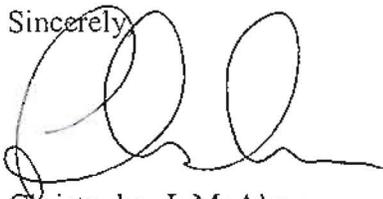
This is not the only opportunity you will have to comment on this project. When the EAs have been prepared and distributed, you will have an opportunity to make further comments. If you would like to be kept informed about this project, please complete and return the attached "Interest Response Form" and you will be placed on the mailing list.

Pursuant to 7 CFR Part 1, Subpart B, Section 1.27, all written submissions in response to this notice will be made available for public inspection, including the submitter's name and address, unless the submitter specifically requests 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 at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses submitted on official letterheads and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Public Meeting

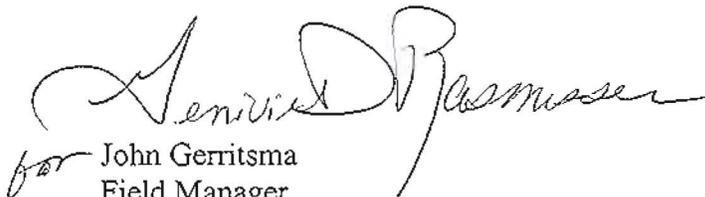
The Butte Falls Resource Area will host an information sharing meeting for the Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage Project on Thursday, June 12, 2008. The meeting will be held at the Butte Falls Community Center in Butte Falls, Oregon from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. The Butte Falls Community Center is located at 555 Oak Street, Butte Falls, Oregon. Our objective is to share information about proposed salvage, answer questions, gather ideas, and listen to your concerns.

Sincerely,



Christopher J. McAlear
Field Manager
Butte Falls Resource Area

Sincerely,



for John Gerritsma
Field Manager
Ashland Resource Area

Enclosures (as stated)

Interest Response Form

Please include me on the mailing list for

Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage EA (Butte Falls Resource Area)

Windy Soda Salvage EA (Ashland Resource Area)

as described in the attached letter.

Complete this form and return to:

Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Butte Falls Resource Area Planning
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, OR 97504

Please Print Clearly:

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

We are trying to save paper and conserve resources. Please respond if you wish to be kept informed and receive future mailings for this project.

Blowdown Salvage General Location

