

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for the

White Fir Urban Interface Fuels Reduction Project

EA# OR-117-04-12

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA

February 2005

Dear Reader:

We appreciate your interest in the BLM's public land management activities. We also appreciate your taking the time to review this environmental assessment (EA). If you would like to provide us with written comments regarding this project or EA, please send them to Abbie Jossie, Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area at 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504 or email them to or110mb@or.blm.gov.

If you would like to comment confidentially, please be aware that comments, including names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review or may be held in a file available for public inspection and review unless you request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this clearly at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or officials of organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

I look forward to your continued interest in the management of our public lands.

Abbie Jossie
Field Manager
Grants Pass Resource Area

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1.0 Introduction

This environmental assessment (EA) will assist in the decision-making process by assessing the environmental and human effects resulting from implementing the proposed project or alternatives. The EA will also assist in determining if an environmental impact statement (EIS) needs to be prepared or if a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is appropriate.

This EA tiers to or is consistent with the following documents:

1. *Final EIS and ROD for the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP)* (June 1995)
2. *Final Supplemental EIS on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (February 1994) and the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* and its attachment A *Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (NFP)*(April 1994).
3. *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (March 2000), and the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (January 2001)
4. *Final Supplemental EIS for Clarification of Language in the 1994 Record of Decision for the Northwest Forest Plan National Forests and Bureau of Land Management Districts Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl: Proposal to Amend Wording about the Aquatic Conservation Strategy* (October 2003), and the *Record of Decision Amending Resource Management Plans for Seven Bureau of Land Management Districts and Land and Resource Management Plans for Nineteen National Forests Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl: Decision to Clarify Provisions Relating to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy* (March 2004)
5. *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to remove or Modify the survey and Manage Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (January 2004) and the *Record of Decision to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Document within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl.* (March 2004)
6. *Record of Decision and Resource Plan Amendment for Management of Port-Orford-Cedar in southwest Oregon, Coos Bay, Medford, and Roseburg Districts* (May 2004) and the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Management of Port-Orford-Cedar in Southwest Oregon* (January 2004)

This project also implements the National Fire Plan and falls within the authority of the 2003 Healthy Forests Restoration Act, Title 1, which authorizes expedited vegetation treatments on certain types of lands that are at risk of wildland fire.

1.1 Purpose of and Need for Action

The urban-wildland interface areas around Grants Pass and Merlin, Oregon have been identified in the National Fire Plan as communities at risk for wildland fire. The project area is completely bordered by private land and private residences. In most cases, the dense vegetation found throughout the project

area occurs right up to residential property boundaries, prompting a request from a homeowner for the BLM to address this fuel hazard. In 1970, wildfire burned through the project area. Since then, 35 or more years of flammable vegetation accumulation has resulted in severe wildfire hazard. The absence of frequent wildfire has led to high tree and brush densities.

The primary purpose of the project is to reduce vegetation density (surface and ladder fuels) and alter vegetation structure in order to moderate fire behavior and reduce the potential for high severity fire, resource damage or property loss. This will complement fuel hazard reduction work that is being done by adjacent private property owners thereby leveraging the work of all project vicinity landowners. National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) fuel model changes characterize this objective:

- In brush fields where vegetation is continuous and at least 6' tall (fuel model 4), reduce brush from 13 tons/acre to approximately 4 tons/acre and break up fuel continuity (fuel model 5). Given a moderate 5 mph summer wind, flame length would decrease from 19' to 4'.
- In timbered conifer and hardwood stands, reduce stand density and litter accumulation (fuel model 9 reduced to a fuel model 8). With the same weather conditions as above, ground fire flame length would decrease from 2.6' to 1'.

Reduced fuel loadings and fire hazard would be maintained over time with follow-up treatments.

A secondary purpose is to maintain or improve wildlife habitat, especially in oak woodlands.

1.2 Project Location

The 120 acre project area is in the Grants Pass and Jumpoff Joe 5th field watersheds in T35S, R6W, Sec. 33, northwest quarter (see Appendix A, Vicinity Map).

The BLM has no legal road access to the project area. Implementation will rely upon private landowners granting permission to the BLM and work crews to cross their property.

1.3 Land Use Allocations and Objectives

The project area is in the matrix land allocation. Management objectives for this land allocation are in the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP) and the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP).

1.4 Commonly Used Terms

Hazard is defined herein as the existence of a fuel complex that constitutes a threat of wildland fire ignition, unacceptable fire behavior and severity, or suppression difficulty. *Fuels* include dead or down wood and live vegetation. Dead, down fuels are woody materials that can support fire ignition and spread and is usually expressed in tons/acre. Live fuels grow vertically and are typically described in terms of crown base height and crown bulk density. *Crown base height* is the vertical distance from the ground to the bottom of tree crowns. The greater the crown base height, the longer the flame length needed to ignite the crowns. *Crown bulk density* is the amount of crown fuels within a given area and is usually expressed as pounds of foliage per cubic foot. The greater the crown bulk density, the easier it is for crown fire to spread.

2.0 Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1 Alternative 1: No Action

The no action alternative is defined as not implementing the proposed action. The no action alternative also serves as a baseline for evaluating the environmental effects of the action alternative. Inclusion of this alternative is done without regard to whether or not it is consistent with the Medford District RMP.

The no action alternative is not static, existing conditions will continue to change. This includes the continuation of current environmental conditions and trends including vegetative succession, habitat changes, erosion, and fuel hazard increases.

2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

2.2.1 Proposed Treatments

Initial fuel reduction: Vegetation would be thinned using manual techniques. Trees cut would be $\leq 7''$ DBH. Trees and brush $\leq 7''$ DBH may be left standing to achieve spacing between leave trees of 14' to 30'. Cutting and piling would take approximately 6-8 weeks and may occur over several months during the fall, winter or spring. Slash would be piled by hand, covered to provide a dry ignition point and then burned in the winter months. Some down material may be removed from the site in the form of poles or firewood.

Follow-up maintenance: Within 5 years following the initial treatment, approximately 90% of madrone (and some oak) resprouts (one stem on each plant would be retained) would be cut. The project area would be divided into 3 to 4 burn units and fire line would be cut around each unit. Fire lines would be $<18''$ wide and would be cut using hand tools only. The area would then be under burned in a low intensity, mosaic pattern. Approximately 70% of the slash that was left over from the initial treatment and from this follow-up treatment would be consumed.

Woodland habitat

Douglas-fir $\leq 7''$ DBH would be cut to achieve leave tree spacing of 14' to 30'. In areas dominated by pine or cedar, all Douglas-fir $\leq 7''$ DBH would be cut.

Single stem madrones $\leq 3''$ DBH and oaks $\leq 7''$ DBH would be cut.

Trees with live crown ratios $\geq 30\%$ would be retained at a density of 16-35 trees/acre. Priority species for retention would be oak, madrone, pine and cedar followed by Douglas-fir. Some cedar and oak seedlings and saplings would also be retained.

Tall, old manzanita that produce large berry crops would be retained at a density of ≤ 6 /acre. Shrub clumps up to 10' in diameter spaced approximately 25'-35' apart would also be retained.

Approximately 15-20% of each treatment area would remain untreated. These areas would be $\frac{1}{4}$ acre or larger, at least 100' apart, and would be well distributed throughout the project area. Within 5 years following the initial treatment, additional hardwoods and conifers would be cut and left on site in some areas to achieve greater leave tree spacing (closer to the 30' upper limit). Untreated oak woodland islands (approximately two per acre) would be 25' to 35' in diameter.

In areas dominated by dense brush, at least two islands per acre of brush would be left untreated. These islands would be approximately 25' to 35' in diameter and would be approximately 50-100' apart measured from the outer perimeter. In addition to islands, moister microsites (often found on north aspects or in land form depressions) would also remain untreated. These moist sites historically would have had less frequent fire compared to surrounding areas and would likely have contained larger, more mature shrubs. Acceptable loss of these islands during burning would be <20%.

On the outer edges of these islands, ceanothus and manzanita tops would be cut to promote crown growth and wildlife forage.

2.2.2 Project Design Features

2.2.2.1 Soils and Hydrology

Areas of known or potential soil instability would not be treated.

Neither under burning ignition nor hand pile burning would occur within 10' of ephemeral draw bottoms. However, fire would be allowed to creep into draw bottoms.

Under burns would be cool burns, typically occurring in the spring, late fall or winter. Mineral soil exposure would be discontinuous and would not exceed 20% of the project area.

Motorized vehicles (trucks, ATVs, etc.) would not be used in the project area.

2.2.2.2 Botany and Weeds

Native grasses and forbs would be seeded on burn pile scars and hand lines to reduce non-native species invasion.

2.2.2.3 Wildlife

Snags >12" DBH would be protected from thinning treatments or hand pile burning. Snags felled during hand line construction and existing large down wood would be left on site and protected from burning. No treatments (thinning, hand pile burning or fire line construction) would occur within one tree height of hazardous snags. No hand pile burning or fire line construction would occur within one tree height of retained snags (>20" DBH).

Down wood \geq 16" diameter would be retained.

Habitat islands would be protected from under burning by pulling back cut vegetation from these areas.

If raptors are found nesting in the project area, seasonal operating restrictions appropriate to the species would be implemented to minimize potential impacts to reproductive success.

2.2.2.4 Fisheries

No treatments would occur within 50' of stream channels (there are four intermittent channels). Under burns would be allowed to creep into the 50' stream buffer.

2.2.2.5 Cultural Resources

No project activities would occur in cultural resource buffers and trees would be felled away from buffers. If any additional cultural sites are found during project implementation, activities around the site would halt until a BLM archaeologist reviews the site and determines appropriate protection.

2.2.2.6 Health and Safety

Burning would be conducted under weather and fuel moisture conditions that would result in a low intensity burn and help ensure safety and controllability. Adequate fire suppression resources would be available during burning. A helicopter with water bucket may be used during mop up to help extinguish larger burning fuels and prevent reburn through the mosaic of remaining vegetation.

Prescribed burning would comply with the Oregon Department of Forestry's Smoke Management Program and the Department of Environmental Quality's Air Quality and Visibility Protection Program. Additional measures to reduce smoke would include: mopping up as soon as practical after the fire; burning with lower fuel moisture in the smaller fuels to facilitate quick and complete combustion; burning with higher fuel moisture in the larger fuels to minimize consumption and burn out time; and covering hand piles to permit burning during the rainy season where there is a stronger possibility of atmospheric mixing and smoke dispersal.

3.0 Environmental Effects

3.1 Soils and Hydrology

3.1.1 Affected Environment

The project area is located in the Vannoy Creek and Ewe Creek 7th field watersheds which are in the Lower Jumpoff Joe and the Lower Rogue-Grants Pass 6th field watersheds. Elevation ranges from 1,100-1,360' and the average annual precipitation is 30-40". The project area contains ephemeral draws and four intermittent streams. The two 7th field watersheds do not have any streams listed on the DEQ 303(d) list as water quality limited.

Soils in the project area are mapped in the Soil Survey of Josephine County as Holland-Barron-Siskiyou and Siskiyou-Tethrick which are derived primarily from granitic parent material. The Holland-Barron-Siskiyou soil is deep, fine textured, poorly drained and is susceptible to stream bank erosion. The Siskiyou-Tethrick soil has low cohesion and tends to erode easily when subject to concentrated flow. Siskiyou soils usually have thin surface duff layers that help protect the mineral soil; however, because the duff and litter layer is usually less than an inch deep, these soils are vulnerable to concentrated flow erosion. Furthermore, the top soil is thin and can be easily lost, resulting in low soil productivity.

3.1.2 Alternative 1: No Action

Under the no action alternative, soil and water conditions would remain the same. However, a high intensity wildfire could adversely impact soils and water due to the following:

- Increased erosion and sedimentation over the short term. Revegetation would occur slowly.

- Reduced soil productivity and organic matter due to loss of the nutrient rich duff/litter layer.
- Increased soil compaction due to road development or heavy equipment use for fire suppression.
- Increased peak flows and water yield due to reduced vegetative cover and evapotranspiration.

3.1.3 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Duration	Indicator	Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)
Short term (1-5 yrs)	Disturbance / Erosion	No change	Minimal negative
	Organic Matter		
Long term (5-20 yrs)	Disturbance / Erosion	Slight negative (assumes occurrence of a moderate to high intensity fire)	No change
	Organic Matter		

During under burning, large woody debris would not be consumed and the majority of the duff layer would be maintained, thus minimizing any risk of erosion.

A short term, minimal reduction of vegetative cover and evapotranspiration (and consequent increase in infiltration) could lead to a localized, negligible/non-measurable increase in water yield. In the event of a wildfire following fuel hazard reduction, fire intensity would be less than without treatment. No short or long term increase in stream temperature is anticipated. All treatments would cause minimal exposure of mineral soil with no continuous routes to stream channels. There would be little slope distance (about 6 feet per burn spot) of exposed mineral soil, thus minimal localized erosion and no additions to stream sediment. Stream shade would not be reduced. Vegetation would recover rapidly after treatment due to shrub sprouting and seed germination. Root strength would be maintained or enhanced and leaf litter would increase rapidly. No long term adverse effects are expected.

No cumulative hydrologic effects at the 5th, 6th, or 7th field level are anticipated due to the context of minimal, localized, short term anticipated impacts described above. Even with the knowledge and expectation that similar treatments are occurring and will occur on private land and approximately 1,200 BLM acres in the watershed, no adverse cumulative effects are anticipated. This is primarily due to: 1) treatments on BLM lands are designed to have no effect or, at the most, only very minimal adverse effects on hydrology and soils such that when the effects are combined, they would still be minimal at the 7th field scale; and 2) because the treatments are likely to occur at different times, and their effects are minimal and short term, it is not anticipated that their impacts would be cumulative. This project would not contribute cumulatively to adverse impacts on long term soil productivity, stream channel integrity, water quality, surface water yield, or peak or low flows.

3.2 Botany and Weeds

3.2.1 Affected Environment

Protocol surveys for Bureau special status (BSS) were completed in April 2004 for vascular plant species and in September 2002 for nonvascular species. The project area is located within the range of the federally endangered *Fritillaria gentneri*. Although suitable habitat exists, no plants were found.

3.2.2 Alternative 1: No Action

Since no BSS plants were discovered, no effects are anticipated. In general, no action would benefit species that prefer high canopy closure and adversely impact species that prefer more open conditions.

With no disturbance, the current low rate of introduction and spread of noxious and non-native species would likely continue. Most of the noxious weeds that are of the greatest concern are shade intolerant species. If wildfire were to occur, the risk of weed invasion and spread would likely increase, especially near trails and where roads and developed areas approach the project area.

3.2.3 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

No BSS plants were discovered but the project area does provide potential habitat for BSS species such as *Cypripedium*. Although *Cypripedium* species enjoy high canopy closure, post-treatment canopy closures would be sufficient to maintain acceptable *Cypripedium* habitat since they are known to occur and persist in partially open environments for short periods of time. Habitat conditions would improve for BSS plant species that enjoy more open canopy conditions and reduced competition, such as *Fritillaria gentneri*.

The current low rate of introduction and spread of noxious and non-native species is expected to be maintained over the long term. Pre-project canopy levels should be nearly achieved in 3-5 years, except in areas where natural openings occur or where large patches of brush were removed. Soil exposure would be increased in the short term after pile or under burning but are expected to revegetate naturally (including some weedy species) along with manual seeding of native species. The reduced fire risk would correspondingly reduce the risk of weed invasion and spread, especially near trails and where roads and developed areas approach the project area.

3.3 Wildlife

3.3.1 Affected Environment

The White Oak plant association occurs in the project area. Habitat is diverse and includes a mosaic of white oak woodland and hardwood stands dominated by madrone and a few large diameter ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. Trees in the project area include ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, madrone, white oak and incense cedar. Chaparral habitat, consisting of shrub species such as manzanita and wedge-leaf ceanothus, is found throughout the project area and include dense thickets of decadent manzanita taller than 4'. In general, conifers are in the mature age class and there are few relict trees. There are very few large diameter snags and coarse wood >16" DBH. A few small isolated conifer stands are in the project area.

Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species. The project area is not considered suitable nesting, roosting, or foraging habitat for northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*). The nearest known site is more than four miles away. There is no suitable nesting bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) habitat in the project area and no known sites in or adjacent to the project area.

BLM Sensitive Species. The project area provides potential habitat for a number of BLM sensitive species including birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. The project area provides potential habitat for sensitive bat species in the form of green trees and snags which could be used as roosts. Typically,

foraging bats are strongly associated with bodies of water. Although the project area has no year round pools, it is still considered suitable foraging habitat.

Neotropical Migratory Land Birds. The project area provides habitat for migratory birds on the Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern list, such as Lewis' woodpecker, rufous hummingbirds and flammulated owls. The project area provides potential suitable nesting habitat for Lewis' woodpecker and the flammulated owl; however, based on the lack of mature conifers and large snags, this habitat is considered marginal. The project area provides potential suitable nesting habitat for the rufous hummingbird.

Other Wildlife. There is no Medford RMP-designated deer winter range in the project area. Deer are likely in the project area year round. However, forage is declining in areas of dense and decadent manzanita. The project area is isolated from public access for any but adjacent homeowners.

Unique Habitats. The project area contains approximately 10 acres of oak woodland habitat which is important to several wildlife species. This habitat type is declining due to lack of disturbance and encroaching brush and conifers.

3.3.2 Alternative 1: No Action

Under the no action alternative, shrubs and small trees would continue to encroach upon mature hardwood and conifer forests. Competition for resources would continue to increase, causing stress to the larger, dominant trees. Big game forage would decline and become more decadent. The increased density of decadent wedge leaf would limit travel for wildlife species. Encroachment by brush and small conifers upon the oak woodland would continue. Fuel hazard would continue to build, putting suitable special status species habitat at risk if a large stand replacing fire were to occur.

3.3.3 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The primary impacts associated with the project would be changes in the horizontal and vertical structure of shrubs and small trees resulting in more open canopies and reduced hiding cover. As a result, some loss of nesting habitat for neotropical birds would be expected. However, habitat islands would be retained in a mosaic pattern throughout the project area. Untreated woodland and brush islands would provide escape, hiding, thermal, foraging and nesting cover for a wide range of animals (e.g., big game and neotropical birds). Large diameter snags would maintain nesting, roosting and foraging habitat for primary and secondary cavity excavators and species dependent on cavity excavators such as the flammulated owl. Snags would maintain bat habitat. Snags felled for safety reasons would become habitat for reptiles and amphibians. Trees felled and left in place as part of the follow-up treatment would help replace coarse woody material incidentally burned during under burning.

Species that benefit from greater tree and shrub densities may be impacted. However, other wildlife species would benefit in the long term as vegetation density is reduced and habitat diversity is increased. Big game forage would improve due to greater nutrient content of herbaceous species and shrubs (sprouts and new top growth).

Disturbance due to project activities (thinning, burning, etc.) would be of short duration (approximately six weeks) and would occur during the fall, winter or spring. This disturbance could cause temporary displacement and modified wildlife behavior during project implementation.

This project would have long term beneficial effects on oak woodland habitat and associated species. Stand thinning would promote a more complex and diverse understory of native grasses, forbs, and shrubs, which would support more diverse wildlife species.

Because of the small size of the project area and the diversity of habitats that would exist after the proposed treatment, there is no evidence that the proposed action would adversely affect T&E wildlife species or BLM listed special status species at the watershed level. The proposed action would not lead to the need to list any special status species as T&E species.

There are approximately 1,240 acres of BLM land in the vicinity that have received or are planned for similar fuel hazard reduction treatments. The cumulative effects to wildlife species dependent on these chaparral and oak woodland habitats and intermixed small patches of conifer stands would be beneficial. Habitats would be restored or improved and the risk of a large stand replacing wildfire would be reduced. Fuel hazard reduction on private lands are also likely and may entail heavier treatments with less emphasis on leaving untreated patches. Treatments on private lands and the creation of subdivisions would further fragment and isolate these chaparral and oak woodland habitats and intermixed small patches of conifer stands.

3.4 Fire and Fuels

3.4.1 Affected Environment

The last time a large fire occurred in the project vicinity was 35 years ago. In 1970 the Azalea II fire burned more than 200 acres including 60 acres through the center of the project area. Throughout the project area, vegetation is uncharacteristically dense due in part to fire exclusion. Approximately 20% of the project area contains brush fields at least 6' high (fuel model 4). The rest of the project area is primarily a conifer-hardwood mix (fuel model 9). High fuel densities could contribute to active crown fires and significant tree mortality, both of which can reduce public safety and increase property damage in the event of a wildfire during high to extreme fire weather conditions. The project area is in fire regime III(a) (mixed severity conifer stand with 35-50 year fire intervals). The fire condition class is 3, which means fire regimes have been significantly altered from their historical range.

3.4.2 Alternative 1: No Action

Fire hazard would continue to increase as fuels increase. Therefore, the risk of intense, high severity, stand replacing fire would also increase. Increased difficulty of suppression would likely result in loss of or damage to resources and property.

3.4.3 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Fuel reduction treatments would alter the live and dead fuel profile on approximately 70% of the project area. Crown bulk density, fuel continuity, and crown fire risk would be reduced. In the conifer-hardwood areas, crown base height (the vertical distance from the ground to burnable vegetation) would increase, requiring greater flame lengths to ignite remaining vegetation. This fuel profile would slow wildfire spread and enable fire suppression personnel to more safely and efficiently control fires. Untreated islands or buffers could burn more severely than treated areas. However, fire behavior would still be reduced due to modified fuel structure throughout the project area.

Following fuel hazard reduction treatments, fire hazard would likely rebuild more quickly in shrub lands, due to vegetation resprouting, than in forested areas. Within five years following treatment, fire hazard in shrub lands could begin to rebuild. In forested areas, fire hazard could rebuild within 10 years. However, proposed fuel maintenance treatments would retard this fuel buildup.

3.5 Cultural Resources

3.5.1 Affected Environment

A cultural resource survey of the project area was completed in April 2003. A total of 63 acres (52% of project area) was surveyed. During the survey, one historic site was recorded.

3.5.2 Alternative 1: No Action

Conifers and hardwoods would continue to encroach upon the historic site area. Fuels would increase and could result in fire that would threaten or destroy the historic site.

3.5.3 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Fuel reduction would occur near the cultural resource site but not in the buffered area. Therefore, no impacts due to project implementation are expected. The overall potential for wildfire would be reduced, thus reducing the potential for damage to the site.

3.6 Visual Resources

3.6.1 Affected Environment

The area is VRM Class III. VRM Class III objectives are to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. Moderate levels of change to the characteristic landscape are acceptable. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. The upper ridgeline of the project area is visible for approximately two hundred yards along Azalea Drive between Pinon and Peco Road, traveling north. There is also a quick view of the upper ridgeline of the project area traveling south along Azalea Drive at the intersection of Robertson Bridge Road. Foreground screening and topography would block the lower part of the project area.

3.6.2 Alternative 1: No Action

In the no action alternative, the short term view will remain the same as the existing view. However, without treatment of the fuels in the project area, the view may be altered if a large scale fire occurs in the area.

3.6.3 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Due to the limited visibility, the design of the project, reservation of trees >7" DBH, leave trees and the clumps of untreated vegetation, the project would not dominate the view of the casual observer. The project is not in a high sensitivity area, and will conform to VRM III objectives.

4.0 Agencies and Persons Consulted

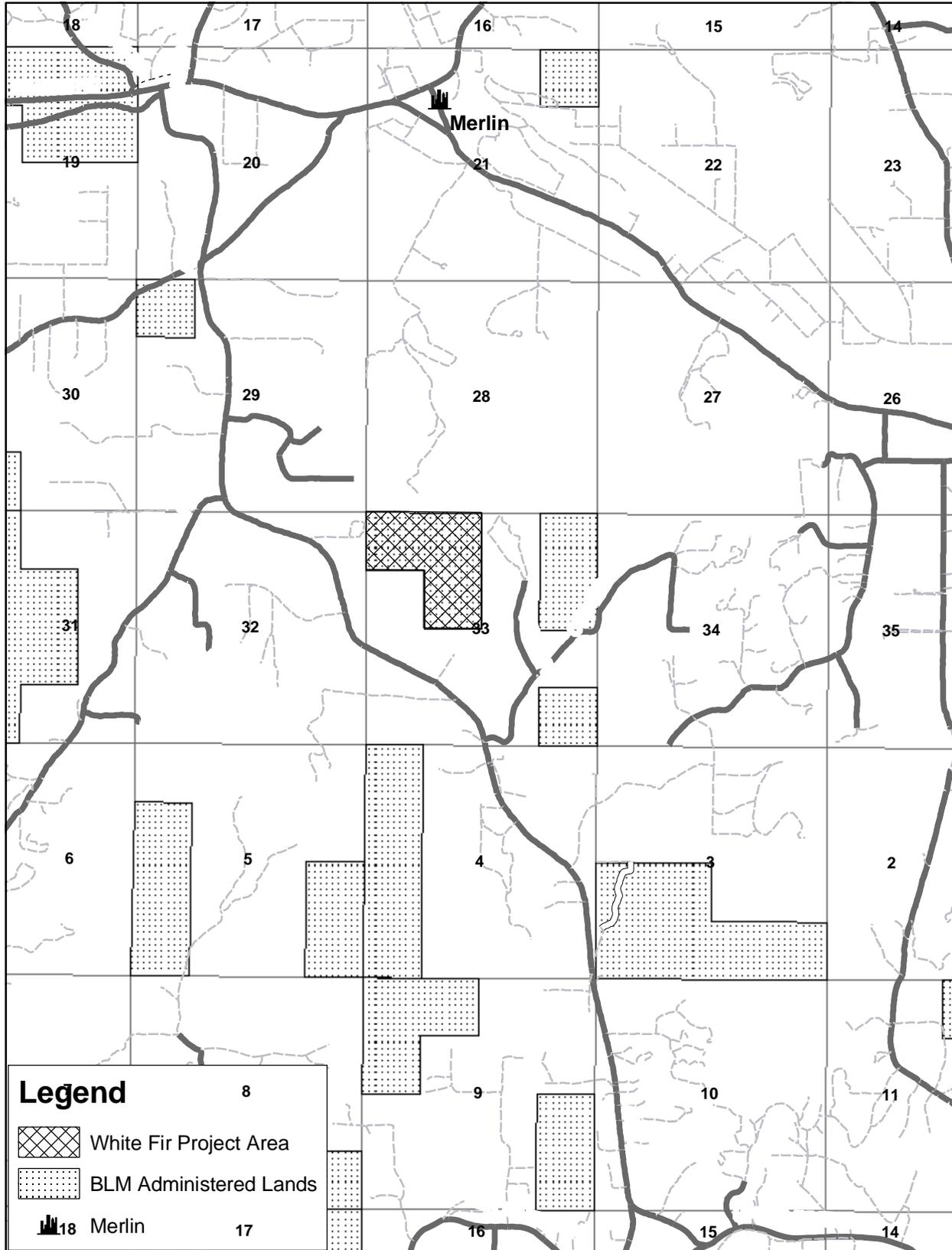
4.1 Public Involvement

During scoping, 45 letters describing the proposal were sent to interested individuals, local and state governments, organizations and neighboring land owners. Scoping comments were received by two organizations that expressed general support for fuel hazard reduction projects of this type. No site specific issues were identified during public scoping. Adjacent landowners were contacted to discuss the project. Extensive discussions about the Resource Area's prescribed burning program have been held with Josephine County and Oregon State Department of Forestry and during development of the Josephine County Fire Plan, which was completed in November, 2004.

4.2 Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

Copies of the EA will be available for public review in the BLM Medford District Office, the Greenfield Office in Grants Pass and online at www.or.blm.gov/Medford/planning. A formal 15-day public comment period will be held following an announcement in the Grants Pass Daily Courier. Written comments should be addressed to Abbie Jossie, Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area, at 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504. E-mailed comments may be sent to or110mb@or.blm.gov.

Map 1 - White Fir Urban Interface Fuels Reduction Vicinity Map

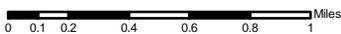


Legend

-  White Fir Project Area
-  BLM Administered Lands
-  Merlin

T35S-R6W

1:40,000

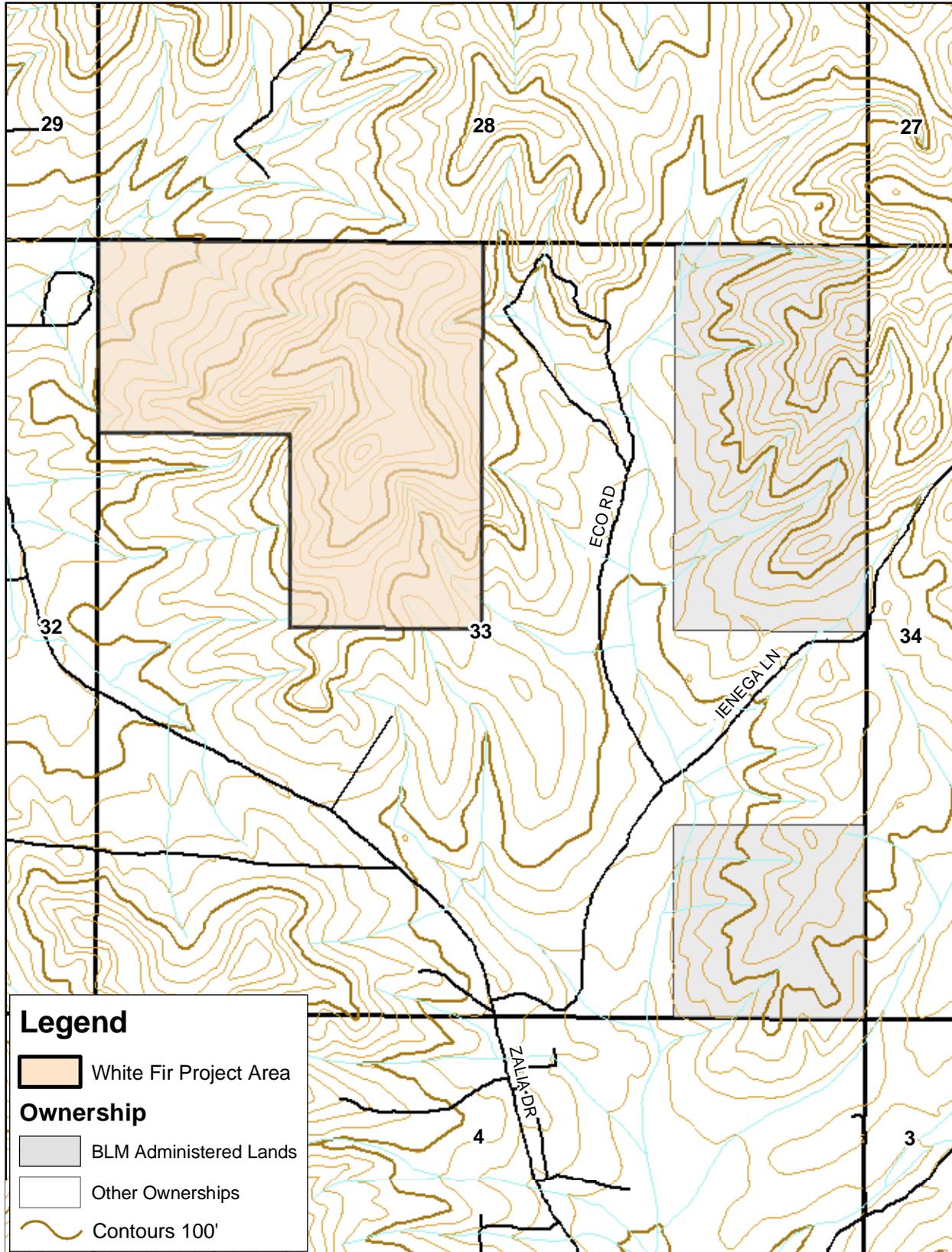


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Map 2 - White Fir Urban Interface Fuels Reduction Treatment Map



Legend

- White Fir Project Area

Ownership

- BLM Administered Lands
- Other Ownerships
- Contours 100'

T35S-R6W
1:12,000

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Appendix B. Tools

The following descriptions of vegetation treatments are generic and designed to present a general overview. They describe how the tools could be used in a variety of situations. For specific details on how they would be used for this project, refer to section 2.0, Proposed Actions.

A. Understory Burning

Under burning is low intensity prescribed fire over a majority of the burn area. It typically results in a mosaic of burned and unburned vegetation. Under burning reduces ground litter, down woody material and ladder fuels. It also stimulates growth of some plant species. Under burning would occur at any time throughout the year when fuel and weather conditions ensure safe and successful operations, typically fall through late spring. Summer or early fall burning is less common, but may be used as conditions permit. The burn window is usually narrow due to smoke management constraints.

B. Hand Piling and Burning

This treatment reduces slash created by vegetation treatments such as thinning, brushing and slashing and can be used where under burning is not feasible. Fuels 1-6" in diameter and greater than 2' in length are stacked in piles by hand, covered to maintain a dry ignition point and then burned in the fall or winter after the project area has received enough precipitation to prevent fire spread. Pile burning is designed to remove approximately 75-90% of the pile. Burning piles during wet periods reduces the potential for fire spread, the need for aggressive mop-up, and the potential for scorch and mortality of remaining trees and shrubs. The smoke management burn window for pile burning is broader than for understory burning.

C. Selective Slashing

Chainsaws are used to cut small diameter material (living and dead) near ground level, including brush. Live vegetation treated would be <6" DBH and remaining stump heights <6". Conifer spacing would range from 14' to 30'. Hardwood and shrub spacing would be 20' to 30'. The number of leave trees and shrubs would be determined by spacing (e.g., 14'x 14' spacing equals 220 trees/acre). Criteria for leave vegetation may include size, vigor, form, number of stems in multi-stem hardwoods, and species. The resulting down material may be piled and burned or lopped (cut into smaller pieces).